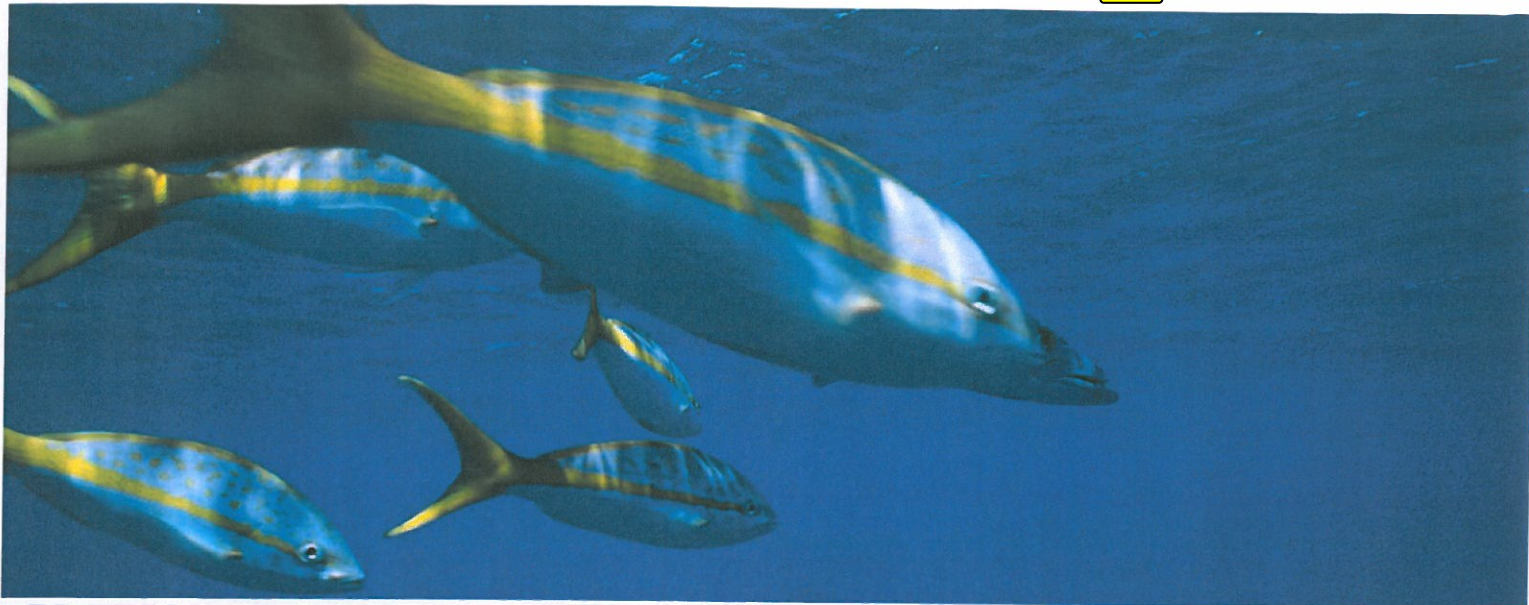




Part 3

GROUPS, TEAMS AND LEADERSHIP

- 8 The Nature of Work Groups and Teams
- 9 Working in Groups and Teams
- 10 The Nature of Leadership



**ONLINE VIDEO
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Inspirational Leadership

Visit www.pearsoned.co.uk/mymanagementlab to access the online video case study that complements Part 3: Groups, Teams and Leadership. The *Eden Project* was one of the most surprising success stories of the early 2000s. The garden and conservation project now attracts over 2 million visitors annually. In this video, two founding members, Chief Executive Tim Smit and Managing Director Gaynor Coley, describe the early development of the project and the leadership and teamwork that made it happen.



8

THE NATURE OF WORK GROUPS AND TEAMS

Groups and teams are a major feature of organisational life. The work organisation and its sub-units are made up of groups of people. Most activities of the organisation require at least some degree of co-ordination through the operation of groups and teamwork. An understanding of the nature of groups is vital if the manager is to influence the behaviour of people in the work situation. The manager must be aware of the impact of groups and teams and their effects on organisational performance.

Learning outcomes

After completing this chapter you should be able to:

- explain the meaning and importance of work groups and teams;
- distinguish between groups and teams, and between formal and informal groups;
- explain the main reasons for the formation of groups and teams;
- examine factors which influence group cohesiveness and performance;
- analyse the nature of role relationships and role conflict;
- review the characteristics of an effective work group;
- evaluate the importance of groups and teams for effective organisational performance.

Critical reflection

'People value their individuality and enjoy the right of self-expression. Membership of a group means giving up some of that personal identity. The real skill of management is therefore to make full use of people's individuality for the mutual benefit of the group as a whole.'

If you were a manager how would you attempt to achieve this balance?

THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF GROUPS AND TEAMS

Work is a group-based activity and if the organisation is to function effectively it requires collaboration and co-operation among its members. **Groups** are an essential feature of any organisation. Individuals seldom work in isolation from others. Although there is no single accepted definition, most people will readily understand what constitutes a group. The essential feature is that its members regard themselves as belonging to the group. A popular definition defines the group in psychological terms as:

*any number of people who (1) interact with one another; (2) are psychologically aware of one another; and (3) perceive themselves to be a group.*¹

Another useful way of defining a work group is a collection of people who share most, if not all, of the following characteristics:

- a definable membership
- group consciousness
- a sense of shared purpose
- interdependence
- interaction
- ability to act in a unitary manner.²

Groups are a characteristic of all social situations and almost everyone in an organisation will be a member of one or more groups. The working of groups and the influence they exert over their membership is an essential feature of human behaviour and of organisational performance. Members of a group must co-operate in order for work to be carried out, and managers themselves will work within these groups. People in groups influence each other in many ways and groups may develop their own hierarchies and leaders. Group pressures can have a major influence over the behaviour of individual members and their work performance.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GROUPS AND TEAMS

The use of the word 'teams' has become increasingly fashionable in recent years. *Crainer* refers to the use of 'teamworking' as a side effect of increasing concentration on working across functional divides and fits neatly with the trend towards empowerment. However, despite the extensive literature about teams and teamworking, the basic dynamics of teamworking often remain clouded and uncertain.

*Teams occur when a number of people have a common goal and recognise that their personal success is dependent on the success of others. They are all interdependent. In practice, this means that in most teams people will contribute individual skills many of which will be different. It also means that the full tensions and counter-balance of human behaviour will need to be demonstrated in the team.*³

In common usage and literature, including to some extent in this book, there is a tendency for the terms 'groups' and 'teams' to be used interchangeably. It is not easy to distinguish clearly between a group and a team. According to ACAS: 'the term "team" is used loosely to describe many different groupings and a variety of labels are given to the types of teams. It is doubtful whether any definitions of types of teams would be universally acceptable.'⁴

According to *Holpp*, while many people are still paying homage to teams, teamwork, empowerment and self-management, others have become disillusioned. *Holpp* poses the question: What are teams?

It's a simple enough question, but one that's seldom asked. We all think we know intuitively what teams are. Guess again. Here are some questions to help define team configurations.

- Are teams going to be natural work groups, or project-and-task oriented?
- Will they be self-managed or directed?
- How many people will be on the teams; who's in charge?
- How will the teams fit into the organisation's structure if it shows only boxes and not circles or other new organisational forms?

Holpp also poses the question: why do you want teams?

If teams are just a convenient way to group under one manager a lot of people who used to work for several downsized supervisors, don't bother. But if teams can truly take ownership of work areas and provide the kind of up-close knowledge that's unavailable elsewhere, then full speed ahead.⁵

Teamwork as a fashionable term

Cane suggests that organisations are sometimes unsure whether they have teams or simply groups of people working together.

It is certainly true to say that any group of people who do not know they are a team cannot be one. To become a team, a group of individuals needs to have a strong common purpose and to work towards that purpose rather than individually. They need also to believe that they will achieve more by co-operation than working individually.⁶

Whereas all teams are, by definition, groups, it does not necessarily follow that all groups are teams.

Belbin points out that to the extent that teamwork was becoming a fashionable term, it began to replace the more usual reference to groups and every activity was now being described as 'teamwork'. He questions whether it matters whether one is talking about groups or teams and maintains that the confusion in vocabulary should be addressed if the principles of good teamwork are to be retained. Belbin suggests there are several factors that characterise the difference between groups and teams (see Figure 8.1). The best differentiator is size: groups can comprise any number of people but teams are smaller with a membership between (ideally) four and six. The quintessential feature of a small, well-balanced team is that leadership is shared or rotates whereas large groups typically throw up solo leaders.⁷

Figure 8.1 Differences between a team and a group

	 Team	 Group
Size	Limited	Medium or large
Selection	Crucial	Immaterial
Leadership	Shared or rotating	Solo
Perception	Mutual knowledge understanding	Focus on leader
Style	Role spread co-ordination	Convergence conformism
Spirit	Dynamic interaction	Togetherness persecution of opponents

Source: Belbin, R. M. *Beyond the Team*, Butterworth-Heinemann (2000). Copyright © 2000. Reproduced with permission from Elsevier Ltd.

While acknowledging the work of Belbin it appears that the term 'group' is often used in a more general sense and 'team' in a more specific context. We continue to refer to 'group' or 'team' according to the particular focus of attention and the vocabulary of the quoted authors.

Another possible distinction is based on the development and maturity of the 'group'. For example, in terms of Tuckman's model (discussed later in this chapter), not until a group proceeds beyond the stages of forming, norming and storming and successfully reaches the performing stage does it become a team.

GROUP VALUES AND NORMS

The classical approach to organisation and management tended to ignore the importance of groups and the social factors at work. The ideas of people such as F. W. Taylor popularised the concept of the 'rabble hypothesis' and the assumption that people carried out their work, and could be motivated, as solitary individuals unaffected by others. The human relations approach, however (discussed in Chapter 2), gave recognition to the work organisation as a social organisation and to the importance of the group, and group values and norms, in influencing behaviour at work.

One experiment involved the observation of a group of 14 men working in the bank wiring room. The men formed their own sub-groups or cliques, with natural leaders emerging with the consent of the members. Despite a financial incentive scheme where workers could receive more money the more work they did, the group decided on 6,000 units a day as a fair level of output. This was well below the level they were capable of producing. Group pressures on individual workers were stronger than financial incentives offered by management.

Informal social relations

The group developed its own pattern of informal social relations and codes and practices ('norms') of what constituted proper group behaviour.

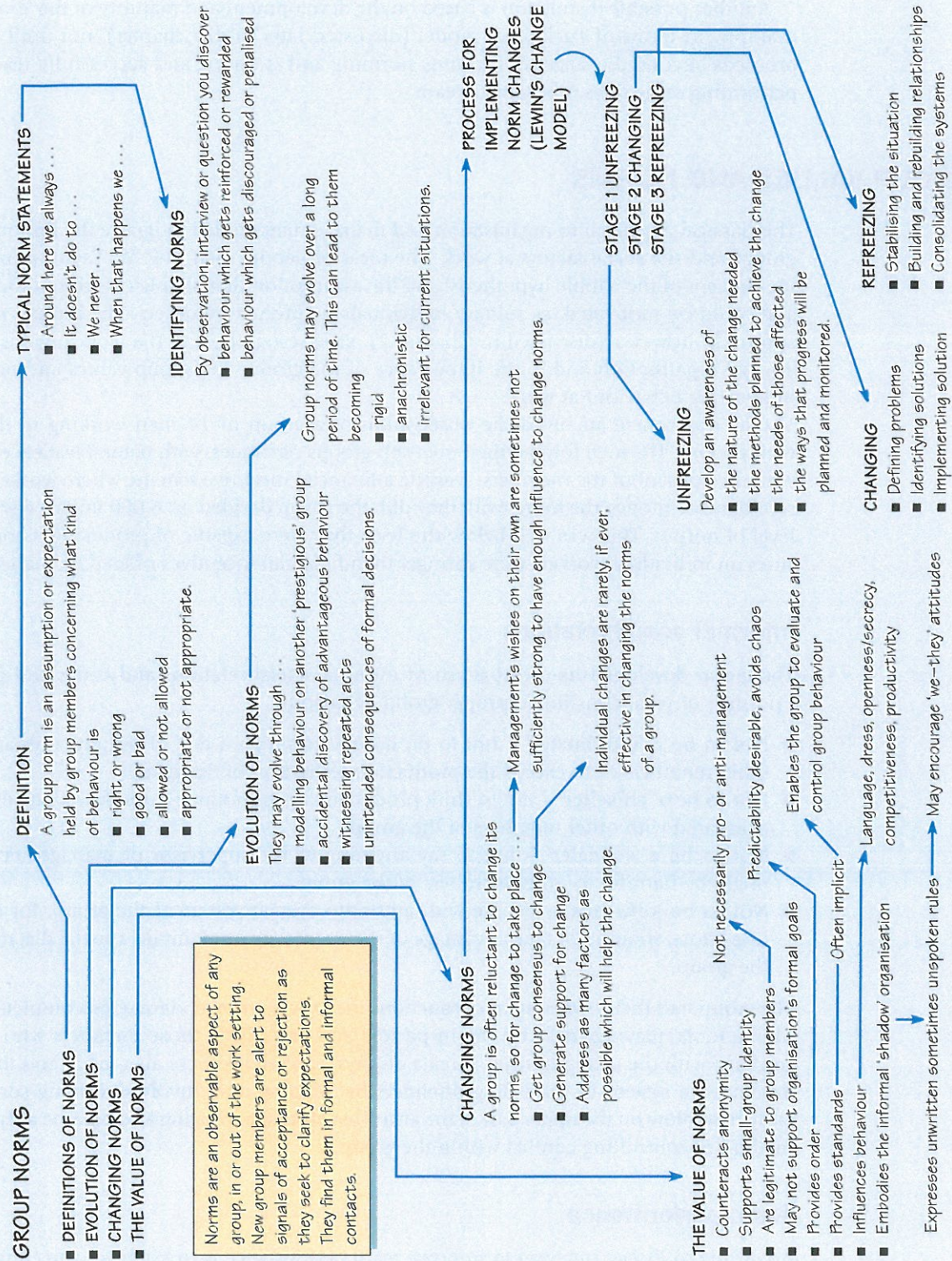
- **Not to be a 'rate buster'** – not to produce at too high a rate of output compared with other members or to exceed the production restriction of the group.
- **Not to be a 'chiseller'** – not to shirk production or to produce at too low a rate of output compared with other members of the group.
- **Not to be a 'squealer'** – not to say anything to the supervisor or management which might be harmful to other members of the group.
- **Not to be 'officious'** – people with authority over members of the group, for example inspectors, should not take advantage of their seniority or maintain a social distance from the group.

The group had their own system of sanctions including sarcasm, damaging completed work, hiding tools, playing tricks on the inspectors and ostracising those members who did not conform with the **group norms**. Threats of physical violence were also made and the group developed a system of punishing offenders by 'binging' that involved striking someone a fairly hard blow on the upper part of the arm. This process of binging also became a recognised method of controlling conflict within the group.

Team performance

According to *Riches*, one way to improve team performance is to establish agreed norms or rules for how the team is to operate and rigorously stick to them. Norms could address the obligations of individual members to the team, how it will assess its performance, how it will work together, what motivation systems will be used, how it will relate to customers, and the mechanisms to facilitate an honest exchange about the team norms and behaviour.⁸

Figure 8.2 Concept map of group norms



Source: Copyright © 2008 The Virtual Learning Materials Workshop. Reproduced with permission.

A 2003 study by the Economic & Social Research Council draws attention to the importance of social norms among employees and questions whether employees are guided not only by monetary incentives but also by peer pressure towards social efficiency for the workers as a group. 'Intuitively, social norms among workers must be important if they work in teams where bonuses are dependent on group rather than individual effort.'⁹ (You may see some similarity here with the bank wiring room experiment, discussed above.)

A concept map of group norms is set out in Figure 8.2.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL GROUPS

Groups are deliberately planned and created by management as part of the formal organisation structure. However, groups will also arise from social processes and the informal organisation that was discussed in Chapter 3. The informal organisation arises from the interaction of people working within the organisation and the development of groups with their own relationships and norms of behaviour, irrespective of those defined within the formal structure. This leads to a major distinction between formal and informal groups.

Formal groups

Groups are formed as a consequence of the pattern of organisation structure and arrangements for the division of work, for example the grouping together of common activities into sections. Groups may result from the nature of technology employed and the way in which work is carried out, for example the bringing together of a number of people to carry out a sequence of operations on an assembly line. Groups may also develop when a number of people of the same level or status within the organisation see themselves as a group, for example departmental heads of an industrial organisation or chief officers of a local authority. **Formal groups** are created to achieve specific organisational objectives and are concerned with the **co-ordination of work activities**. People are brought together on the basis of defined roles within the structure of the organisation. The nature of the tasks to be undertaken is a predominant feature of the formal group. Goals are identified by management, and certain rules, relationships and norms of behaviour established.

Formal groups tend to be relatively permanent, although there may be changes in actual membership. However, temporary formal groups may also be created by management, as with for example the use of project teams in a matrix organisation. Formal work groups can be differentiated in a number of ways, for example on the basis of membership, the task to be performed, the nature of technology, or position within the organisation structure.

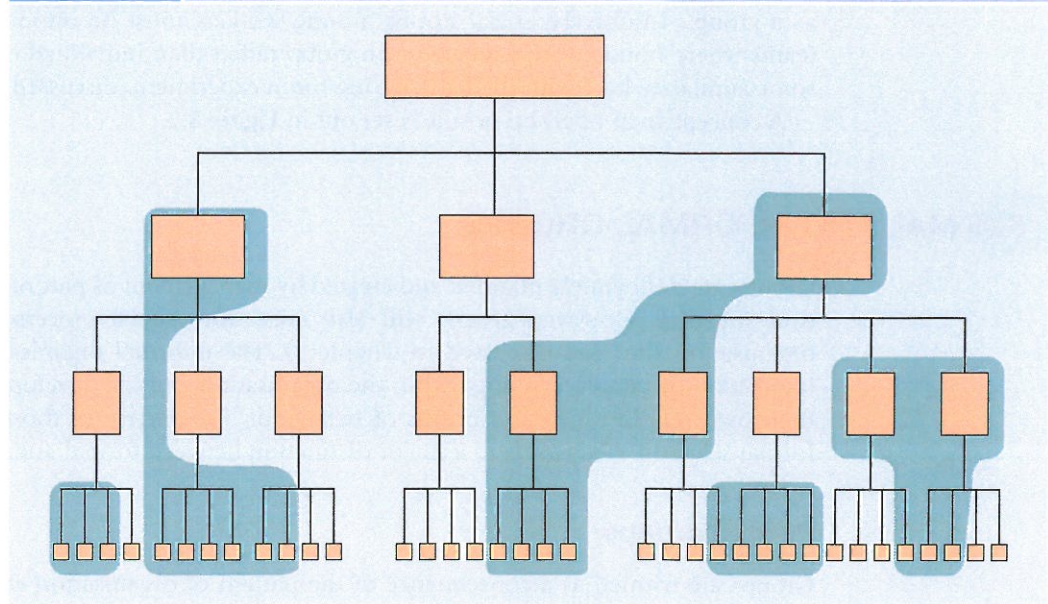
Virtuoso teams

Boynton and Fischer draw attention to '**virtuoso teams**' that are formed specifically for big change in organisations. They are comprised of individual superstars or virtuosos with a single clear, ambitious mandate and are not intended to remain together over multiple initiatives or projects. Virtuoso teams require a special kind of leadership and to be managed in a manner that unleashes the maximum contribution from each individual superstar. Although most organisations rarely form such teams, they are required for radical change opportunities that represent a significant departure from prior practice and/or how an organisation conducts its business. Examples of big changes that required a virtuoso team are the Manhattan Project, Thomas Edison's incandescent light bulb and Roald Amundsen's polar expedition.¹⁰

Informal groups

The formal structure of the organisation, and system of role relationships, rules and procedures, will always be augmented by interpretation and development at the informal level.

Figure 8.3

Examples of informal groups within the formal structure of an organisation

Informal groups are based more on personal relationships and agreement of group members than on defined role relationships. They serve to satisfy psychological and social needs not related necessarily to the tasks to be undertaken. Groups may devise ways of attempting to satisfy members' affiliation and other social motivations lacking in the work situation. Membership of informal groups can cut across the formal structure. They may comprise individuals from different parts of the organisation and/or from different levels of the organisation, both vertically and diagonally, as well as from the same horizontal level. An informal group could also be the same as the formal group, or it might comprise a part only of the formal group (see Figure 8.3).

Members of an informal group may appoint their own leader who exercises authority by the consent of the members themselves. The informal leader may be chosen as the person who reflects the attitudes and values of the members, helps to resolve conflict, leads the group in satisfying its goals, or liaises with management or other people outside the group. The informal leader may often change according to the particular situation facing the group. Although not usually the case, it is possible for the informal leader to be the same person as the formal leader appointed officially by management.

Major functions of informal groups

Lysons suggests four main reasons for informal groups:

- **The perpetuation of the informal group 'culture'.** Culture in this context means a set of values, norms and beliefs which form a guide to group acceptance and group behaviour. Unless you broadly subscribe to the group culture, you will not belong and will be an 'outsider' or 'isolate'.
- **The maintenance of a communication system.** Groups want all the information that affects their welfare, either negatively or positively. If groups are not apprised of policies and motives behind actions, they will seek to tap into formal communication channels and spread information among group members.
- **The implementation of social control.** Conformity to group culture is enforced by such techniques as ridicule, ostracism and violence. This is illustrated, for example, by the enforcement of group norms in the bank wiring room discussed in the previous section.

- **The provision of interest and fun in work life.** Many jobs are monotonous and fail to hold workers' attention. Work may also offer few prospects. Workers may try to compensate by interpersonal relations provided by the group and in such activities as time wasting by talking, gambling, practical joking and drinking.¹¹

We humans are a gregarious lot. We like to gather together and establish our own social networks, which are often the real key to creativity and innovation in organisations . . . But many managers are unaware that seemingly pointless social networking does in fact play a crucial part in the way people interact with each other and get work done.

Sue Law¹²

An example of informal groups

A lack of direction and clear information flow within the formal structure can give rise to uncertainty and suspicion. In the absence of specific knowledge, the grapevine takes on an important role, rumours start and the informal part of the organisation is highlighted, often with negative results. A typical example concerned an industrial organisation in a highly competitive market and experiencing a drop in sales. Two top managers had suddenly lost their jobs without any apparent explanation and there were board meetings seemingly every other day. Although there was no specific information or statements from top management, the general feeling among the staff was that whatever was about to happen was most unlikely to be good news.

At lunchtime three junior members of staff, one female and two male, each from different departments, were having a chat. With a half smile the female member said to the others that she could well be seeing a lot more of both or at least one of them before long. She said that she had heard, unofficially, from her manager that the department was about to be awarded a very profitable order. She surmised that other departments, which she had also heard had lost their parts of the same contracts and not had many orders recently, would have to integrate into the successful department with the possible loss of certain jobs. The other two members both believed this and talked about it within their own departments as if it were a fact. The result? Even more uncertainty throughout the organisation, increased gloom and distraction from the task. In fact, no such integration did take place, only a minor restructuring of the organisation with no direct loss of jobs other than through voluntary early retirement. However, it proved very difficult for top management to quash effectively the rumour and restore trust and morale.

Critical reflection

'Given the obvious importance of social networks and interpersonal relationships for both the morale and job satisfaction of staff and their levels of work performance, the main focus in the study of organisational behaviour should be on the operations and management of the informal organisation.'

Can you present a counter argument to this contention?

REASONS FOR FORMATION OF GROUPS OR TEAMS

Individuals will form into groups or teams, both formal and informal, for a number of reasons.

- **Certain tasks can be performed only through the combined efforts of a number of individuals working together.** The variety of experience and expertise among members

provides a synergetic effect that can be applied to the increasingly complex problems of modern organisations.

- **Collusion between members** in order to modify formal working arrangements more to their liking – for example, by sharing or rotating unpopular tasks. Membership therefore provides the individual with opportunities for initiative and creativity.
- **Companionship and a source of mutual understanding and support from colleagues.** This can help in solving work problems and also to militate against stressful or demanding working conditions.
- **Membership provides the individual with a sense of belonging.** It provides a feeling of identity and the chance to acquire role recognition and status within the group or team. See the discussion on social identity theory later in this chapter.
- **Guidelines on generally acceptable behaviour.** It helps to clarify ambiguous situations such as the extent to which official rules and regulations are expected to be adhered to in practice, the rules of the game and what is seen as the correct actual behaviour. The informal organisation may put pressure on members to resist demands from management on such matters as higher output or changes in working methods. Allegiance to the group or team can serve as a means of control over individual behaviour and individuals who contravene the norms are disciplined – for example, the process of 'binging' in the bank wiring room, mentioned earlier in this chapter.
- **Protection for its membership.** Group or team members collaborate to protect their interests from outside pressures or threats.

Individuals have varying expectations of the benefits from group membership, relating to both work performance and social processes. However, working in groups may mean that members spend too much time talking among themselves rather than doing. Groups may also compete against each other in a non-productive manner. It is a question of balance. It is important, therefore, that the manager understands the reasons for the formation of groups and is able to recognise likely advantageous or adverse consequences for the organisation.

GROUP COHESIVENESS AND PERFORMANCE

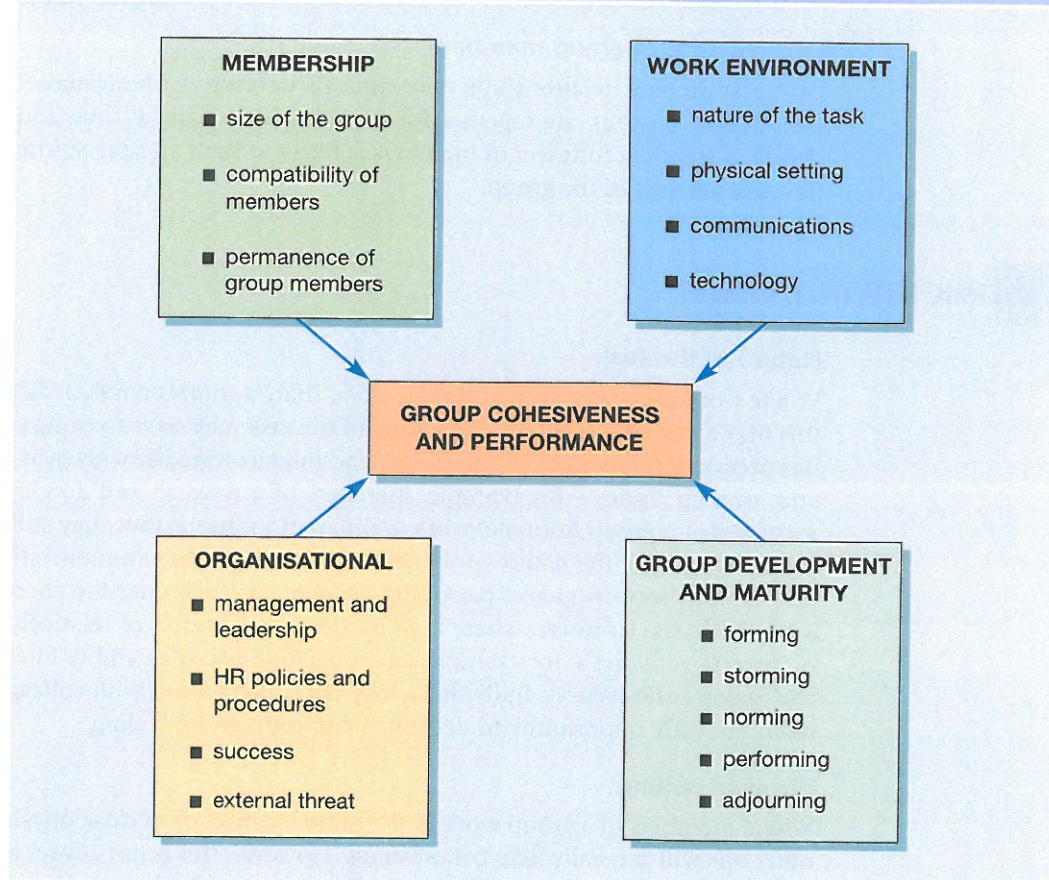
Social interaction is a natural feature of human behaviour but ensuring harmonious working relationships and effective teamwork is not an easy task. The manager's main concern is that members of a work group co-operate in order to achieve the results expected of them. Co-operation among members is likely to be greater in a united, cohesive group. Membership of a cohesive group can be a rewarding experience for the individual, can contribute to the promotion of morale and can aid the release of creativity and energy. Members of a high-morale group are more likely to think of themselves as a group and work together effectively. Strong and cohesive work groups can, therefore, have beneficial effects for the organisation. There are many factors which affect group cohesiveness and performance that can be summarised under four broad headings, as shown in Figure 8.4.

MEMBERSHIP

Size of the group

As a group increases in size, problems arise with communications and co-ordination. Large groups are more difficult to handle and require a higher level of supervision. Absenteeism also tends to be higher in larger groups. When a group becomes too large it may split into smaller units and friction may develop between the sub-groups.

It is difficult to put a precise figure on the ideal size of a work group and there are many conflicting studies and reports. Much will depend upon other variables, but it seems to be

Figure 8.4 Factors contributing to group cohesiveness and performance

generally accepted that cohesiveness becomes more difficult to achieve when a group exceeds 10–12 members.¹³ Beyond this size the group tends to split into sub-groups. A figure of between five and seven is often quoted as an apparent optimum size for full participation within the group. Many readers will be familiar with the classic 1957 movie *Twelve Angry Men* in which one juror persuades the other 11 to change their minds over a murder verdict. This drew attention to a range of intra-group conflicts and the difficulty in groups of more than ten people attempting to reach consensus.

Cane asks the question: how many people should be in a team?

*The answers from different organisations as to what is the perfect number vary from between four and fifteen depending on a whole range of variables. Fifteen is about the maximum number of people anyone can communicate with without having to raise their voice significantly and any less than four has a restriction in the amount of creativity and variety that can be produced. It is interesting to note that these figures range between the maximum and minimum numbers of sports teams – perhaps less of a coincidence than it seems.*¹⁴

Compatibility of members

The more homogeneous the group in terms of such features as shared backgrounds, interests, attitudes and values of its members, the easier it is usually to promote cohesiveness. Variations in other individual differences, such as the personality or skills of members, may serve to complement each other and help make for a cohesive group. However, such differences may be the cause of disruption and conflict. Conflict can also arise in a homogeneous

group where members are in competition with each other. Individual incentive payment schemes, for example, may be a source of conflict.

Permanence of group members

Group spirit and relationships take time to develop. Cohesiveness is more likely when members of a group are together for a reasonable length of time and changes occur only slowly. A frequent turnover of members is likely to have an adverse effect on morale and on the cohesiveness of the group.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Nature of the task

Where workers are involved in similar work, share a common task or face the same problems, this may assist cohesiveness. The nature of the task may serve to bring people together when it is necessary for them to communicate and interact regularly with each other in the performance of their duties – for example, members of a research and development team. Even if members of a group normally work at different locations they may still experience a feeling of cohesiveness if the nature of the task requires frequent communication and interaction – for example, security guards patrolling separate areas who need to check with each other on a regular basis. However, where the task demands a series of relatively separate operations or discrete activities – for example, on a machine-paced assembly line – it is more difficult to develop cohesiveness. Individuals may have interactions with colleagues on either side of them but little opportunity to develop a common group feeling.

Physical setting

Where members of a group work in the same location or in close physical proximity to each other this will generally help cohesiveness. However, this is not always the case. For example, in large open-plan offices staff often tend to segregate themselves from colleagues and create barriers through the strategic siting of such items as filing cabinets, bookcases or indoor plants. The size of the office and the number of staff in it are, of course, important considerations in this case. Isolation from other groups of workers will also tend to build cohesiveness. This often applies to a smaller number of workers on a night shift.

Communications

The more easily members can communicate freely with each other, the greater the likelihood of group cohesiveness. Communications are affected by the work environment, by the nature of the task and by technology. For example, difficulties in communication can arise with production systems where workers are stationed continuously at a particular point with limited freedom of movement. Even when opportunities exist for interaction with colleagues, physical conditions may limit effective communication. For example, the technological layout and high level of noise with some assembly line work can limit contact between workers. Restrictions on opportunities for social interaction can hamper internal group unity. This can be a major reason why getting a team to work well is such a challenge in large organisations.

Technology

We can see that the nature of technology and the manner in which work is carried out have an important effect on cohesiveness and relate closely to the nature of the task, physical setting and communications. Where the nature of the work process involves a craft or skill-based 'technology' there is a higher likelihood of group cohesiveness. However, with machine-paced assembly line work it is more difficult to develop cohesiveness. Technology also has wider implications for the operation and behaviour of groups and therefore is considered in a separate section later in this chapter.

ORGANISATIONAL

Management and leadership

Teams tend to be a mirror image of their leaders. The form of management and style of leadership adopted will influence the relationship between the group and the organisation and are major determinants of group cohesiveness. In general terms, cohesiveness will be affected by such things as the manner in which the manager gives guidance and encouragement to the group, offers help and support, provides opportunities for participation, attempts to resolve conflicts and gives attention to both employee relations and task problems.

McKenna and Maister draw attention to the importance of the group leader establishing a level of trust among the group by helping them understand the behaviours that build trust. 'The job of the group leader is to encourage people to earn the trust of others in their group and then show them how it can translate into greater commitment, greater creativity, greater professional satisfaction, and better performance.'¹⁵ *Farrell* makes the point that managers are ultimately responsible for creating a balance in the workplace and should take the lead in setting standards of behaviour in teams.¹⁶

HR policies and procedures

Harmony and cohesiveness within the group are more likely to be achieved if HR policies and procedures are well developed and perceived to be equitable, with fair treatment for all members. Attention should be given to the effects that appraisal systems, discipline, promotion and rewards, and opportunities for personal development have on members of the group.

Success

The more successful the group, the more cohesive it is likely to be, and cohesive groups are more likely to be successful. Success is usually a strong motivational influence on the level of work performance. Success or reward as a positive motivator can be perceived by group members in a number of ways, for example the satisfactory completion of a task through co-operative action, praise from management, a feeling of high status, achievement in competition with other groups, or benefits gained, such as high wage payments from a group bonus incentive scheme.

External threat

Cohesiveness may be enhanced by members co-operating with one another when faced with a common external threat, such as changes in their method of work or the appointment of a new manager. Even if the threat is subsequently removed, the group may continue to have a greater degree of cohesiveness than before the threat arose. Conflict between groups will also tend to increase the cohesiveness of each group and the boundaries of the group become drawn more clearly.

GROUP DEVELOPMENT AND MATURITY

The degree of cohesiveness is affected also by the manner in which groups progress through the various stages of development and maturity before getting down to the real tasks in hand. This process can take time and is often traumatic for the members. *Bass and Ryterband* identify four distinct stages in group development:

- mutual acceptance and membership;
- communication and decision-making;
- motivation and productivity; and
- control and organisation.¹⁷

An alternative, and more popular, model by *Tuckman* identifies five main successive stages of group development and relationships: **forming**, **storming**, **norming**, **performing** and **adjourning**.¹⁸

- **Stage 1 – forming.** The initial formation of the group and the bringing together of a number of individuals who identify, tentatively, the purpose of the group, its composition and terms of reference. At this stage consideration is given to the hierarchical structure of the group, pattern of leadership, individual roles and responsibilities, and codes of conduct. There is likely to be considerable anxiety as members attempt to create an impression, to test each other and to establish their personal identity within the group.
- **Stage 2 – storming.** As members of the group get to know each other better they will put forward their views more openly and forcefully. Disagreements will be expressed and challenges offered on the nature of the task and arrangements made in the earlier stage of development. This may lead to conflict and hostility. The storming stage is important because, if successful, there will be discussions on reforming arrangements for the working and operation of the group, and agreement on more meaningful structures and procedures.
- **Stage 3 – norming.** As conflict and hostility start to be controlled, members of the group will establish guidelines and standards and develop their own norms of acceptable behaviour. The norming stage is important in establishing the need for members to co-operate in order to plan, agree standards of performance and fulfil the purpose of the group.
- **Stage 4 – performing.** When the group has progressed successfully through the three earlier stages of development it will have created structure and cohesiveness to work effectively as a team. At this stage the group can concentrate on the attainment of its purpose and performance of the common task is likely to be at its most effective.
- **Stage 5 – adjourning.** This refers to the adjourning or disbanding of the group because of, for example, completion of the task, members leaving the organisation or moving on to other tasks. Some members may feel a compelling sense of loss at the end of a major or lengthy group project and their return to independence is characterised by sadness and anxiety. Managers may need to prepare for future group tasks and engendering team effort.

Another writer suggests that new groups go through the following stages:

- *the polite stage;*
- *the why are we here, what are we doing stage;*
- *the power stage, which dominant will emerge;*
- *the constructive stage when sharing begins; and*
- *the unity stage – this often takes weeks, eating together, talking together.*¹⁹

Creative leadership and group development

In an examination of creative leadership and team effectiveness, *Rickards and Moger* propose a modification to the Tuckman model and suggest a two-barrier model of group development. Creative leadership is suggested as producing new routines or protocols designed as *benign structures* which help teams progress through the first barrier at Tuckman's *storm* stage (a behavioural barrier), and beyond a second barrier at the *norm* stage (a norm-breaking barrier). From empirical studies of small groups and project teams Rickards and Moger put forward two challenges to the prevailing model of team development:

- (i) Weak teams posed the question 'what is happening if a team fails to develop beyond the storm stage?'
- (ii) The exceptional teams posed the question 'what happens if a team breaks out of the performance norms developed?'

The suggestion is that the teams are differentiated by two barriers to performance. The weak barrier is behavioural and defeated a minority of teams; the strong barrier was a block

to creativity or innovation, and defeated the majority of those teams who passed through the weak barrier. The two-barrier model provides a starting point for exploring the impact and influence of a team leader on the performance of teams. Rickards and Moger suggest seven factors through which a leader might influence effective team development:

- building a platform of understanding;
- creating a shared vision;
- a creative climate;
- a commitment to idea ownership;
- resilience to setbacks;
- developing networking skills;
- learning from experience.²⁰

Critical reflection

'The most important factor influencing group cohesiveness and performance is the style of leadership. Leaders are the role models who set the culture and values for the organisation and the group. It is therefore the leaders who make a group become a team.'

What are your views? How do **you** think a group becomes a team?

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

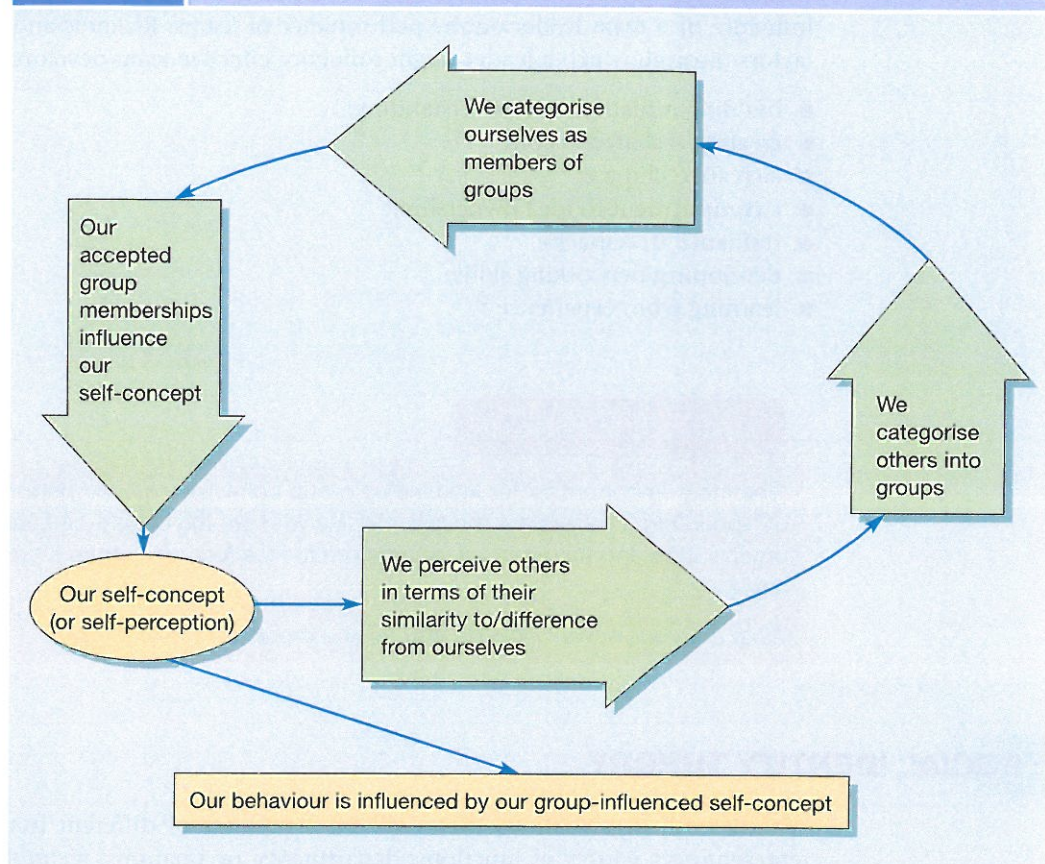
Within work organisations there will be a number of different but overlapping groups representing a variety of functions, departments, occupations, technologies, project teams, locations or hierarchical levels. Organisational effectiveness will be dependent upon the extent to which these groups co-operate together, but often the different groupings are part of a network of complex relationships resulting in competitiveness and conflict. A feature of the importance and significance of group membership is the concept of social identity theory. *Tajfel and Turner* originally developed the idea of **social identity theory** as a means of understanding the psychological basis of inter-group discrimination.²¹ Individuals are perceived as having not just one 'personal self' but a number of 'selves' derived from different social contexts and membership of groups.

Because of the need for a clear sense of personal identity, the groups or social categories with which we associate are an integral part of our self-concept (social identity). A natural process of human interaction is social categorisation by which we classify both ourselves and other people through reference to our own social identity. For example, membership of high-status groups can increase a person's perceived self-esteem. According to *Guirdham* 'self-categorisation is the process that transforms a number of individuals into a group.'²² See Figure 8.5.

Haslam refers to the relationship between individuals and groups in an understanding of organisational behaviour, and argues that:

*in order to understand perception and interaction in organizational contexts we must do more than just study the psychology of individuals as individuals. Instead, we need to understand how social interaction is bound up with individuals' social identities – their definition of themselves in terms of group memberships.*²³

We identify ourselves in terms of membership of certain social groupings and differentiate ourselves from other social groupings. This leads to minimising differences between members of our own groupings (in-groups) and maximising differences from other groupings (out-groups). Over time the sense of shared identity with the in-group increases a feeling of

Figure 8.5 Processes of social and self-categorisation

Source: Guirham, M. *Interactive Behaviour at Work*, third edition, Financial Times Prentice Hall (2002), p. 119. Reproduced with permission of Pearson Education Ltd.

what is right and proper and highlights differences from the out-groups.²⁴ As a result, this reinforces both social identity with our own category and the projection of negative perceptions and stereotypes towards out-groups. Stereotyping can lead to shared attitudes to out-groups and to increased conflict amongst work groups. The examples of group stereotyping discussed in Chapter 6 are associated with social identity theory. Tajfel and Turner suggest that the mere act of individuals categorising themselves as group members leads them to exhibit in-group favouritism. Hewstone *et al.* suggest that even without realising it, we tend usually to favour the groupings we belong to more than denigrate out-groups. Successful inter-group bias enhances self-esteem.²⁵

POTENTIAL DISADVANTAGES OF STRONG, COHESIVE GROUPS

If the manager is to develop effective work groups, attention should be given to those factors that influence the creation of group identity and cohesiveness. This may result in greater interaction between members, mutual help and social satisfaction, lower turnover and absenteeism, and often higher production.²⁶ However, strong and cohesive groups also present potential disadvantages for management. Cohesive groups do not necessarily produce a higher level of output. Performance varies with the extent to which the group accepts or rejects the goals of the organisation. Furthermore, with a very high level of cohesiveness and attention to social activities, there may even be a fall in output. The level of production is likely to conform to a standard acceptable as a norm by the group. It may be remembered that in the bank wiring room experiment of the Hawthorne studies, group norms imposed a restriction on the workers' level of output.

Once a group has become fully developed and created cohesiveness, it is more difficult for the manager successfully to change the attitudes and behaviour of the group. It is important that the manager should attempt to influence the group during the norming stage when members are establishing guidelines and standards and their own norms of acceptable behaviour. When a group has become fully developed and established its own culture it is more difficult to change the attitudes and behaviour of its members.

Inter-group conflict

Strong, cohesive groups may develop a critical or even hostile attitude towards people outside the group or members of other groups. This can be the case, for example, when group cohesiveness is based on common status, qualifications, technical expertise or professional standing. Group cohesiveness may result in lack of co-operation with, or opposition to, non-members. As a result, resentment and inter-group conflict may arise to the detriment of the organisation as a whole. (Recall the discussion on social identity theory, above.) In order to help prevent, or overcome, unconstructive inter-group conflict, the manager should attempt to stimulate a high level of communication and interaction between the groups and to maintain harmony. Rotation of members among different groups should be encouraged.

Yet, inter-group rivalry may be deliberately encouraged as a means of building stronger within-group cohesiveness. The idea is that a competitive element may help to promote unity within a group. However, inter-group rivalry and competition need to be handled carefully. The manager should attempt to avoid the development of 'win-lose' situations. Emphasis should be placed on overall objectives of the organisation and on superordinate goals. These are goals over and above the issues at conflict and which, if they are to be achieved, require the co-operation of the competing groups.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE WORK GROUP

The characteristics of an effective work group are not always easy to isolate clearly. The underlying feature is a spirit of co-operation in which members work well together as a united team and with harmonious and supportive relationships. This may be evidenced when members of a group exhibit:

- a belief in shared aims and objectives;
- a sense of commitment to the group;
- acceptance of group values and norms;
- a feeling of mutual trust and dependency;
- full participation by all members and decision-making by consensus;
- a free flow of information and communications;
- the open expression of feelings and disagreements;
- the resolution of conflict by the members themselves;
- a lower level of staff turnover, absenteeism, accidents, errors and complaints.

However, as *Brooks* points out, as teams operate at the higher order of group dynamics this list is arguably more reflective of 'effective **work teams** rather than work groups and this is how it should be – these are teams not groups'.²⁷

THE EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology is clearly a major influence on the pattern of group operation and behaviour. The work organisation may limit the opportunities for social interaction and the extent to which individuals are able to identify themselves as members of a cohesive work group. This in turn can have possible adverse effects on attitudes to work and the level of job satisfaction.

In many assembly line production systems, for example, relationships between individual workers are determined by the nature of the task, the extent to which individual jobs are specified and the time cycle of operations.

ACAS draws attention to technological advances and how new technology enables production to be tailored quickly to customer requirements, often on an individual basis.

Mass production techniques, where jobs are broken down into simple tasks, are not suitable for the new customer focused manufacturing nor the expectations of an educated workforce. Organisations need workers to be more flexible, to co-operate with other workers, supervisors and managers throughout the organisation, to operate sophisticated technology and to be more adaptable. In addition, the sheer complexity of operations in industry, commerce and the services places them beyond the expertise and control of any one individual. In these circumstances some form of teamwork becomes not just desirable but essential.²⁸

Impact of information technology

The impact of information technology demands new patterns of work organisation and affects the formation and structure of groups. It will influence where and how people interact. Movement away from large-scale centralised organisations to smaller working units can help create an environment in which workers may relate more easily to each other. Improvements in telecommunications mean, on one hand, that support staff need no longer be located within the main production unit. On the other hand, modern methods of communication mean that individuals may work more on their own, from their homes, shared offices or hotels, or work more with machines than with other people.²⁹

VIRTUAL TEAMS

The combination of increasing globalisation and widespread developments in information and communications technology has given greater emphasis to the opportunities for, and need of, **virtual teams**. Instead of involving face-to-face proximity, virtual teams are a collection of people who are geographically separated but still work together closely. The primary interaction among members is by some electronic information and communication process. This enables organisations to function away from traditional working hours and the physical availability of staff. Computer-based information systems and increased wireless connectivity further the opportunities for virtual working. By their very nature, virtual teams are likely to be largely self-managed.

According to Hall, the virtual team is a potential future compromise between fully fledged teams and well-managed groups.

I am watching the rise of this idea with interest but am sceptical that it will actually create a 'third way'. Real teams can only be forged in the crucible of personal interaction: videoconferences and Net communications are still poor substitutes for this. Of course, once a team has formed it can use these media, as members will know each other well, but that's not the important bit. It's the forming, norming and storming that make a team.³⁰

Management and communication skills

However, Parker highlights that remote working may also have an impact on the social aspects of organisational working with an increasing feeling of isolation.

Remote teamworking is not simply a matter of ensuring staff have access to a laptop and telephone line, and assuming that they will be able to continue with their work. The management and communication skills that this new working culture requires are also key to success.³¹

A similar point is made by Norval who maintains that many remote workers can feel isolated and that the organisation is ignoring them, and this can affect their motivation. Without the

visual sense and informal communications within the office, managers need to make a more conscious effort to build rapport and to rethink their management style.³²

Symons considers that one advantage of virtual teamworking using asynchronous media is the clarity and richness of contributions when respondents are removed from the urgency of immediate interaction and that this can be particularly relevant in cross-cultural groups. However, as the leader cannot influence by their physical presence, and as hierarchies fade on-line, managing dispersed teams requires a range of subtly different leadership skills. It is important to develop mutual trust and a democratic approach of shared control and decision-making, and to adopt the role and style of a coach. 'The leader has to establish and maintain "credit" with the group, as "position power" has little or no currency in virtual working.'³³

Garrett maintains that collaborating with other people in different cities or countries is not always a successful arrangement and lists the following suggestions for helping to organise the virtual team:

- **Say hello** – the most successful teams spend time during their formation period face-to-face getting to know each other.
- **Build trust** – to hold the team together so that you can depend on other team members and feel comfortable opening up to them.
- **Recruit with care** – people who can communicate in the right way at the right time are more likely to be successful in virtual teams.
- **Don't rely on email** – the written word is easily misunderstood so supplement its use with other forms of communication.
- **Encourage dissent** – without face-to-face meetings people become reluctant to speak out but a healthy organisation needs people to speak out and challenge leaders and each other.
- **Use technology thoughtfully** – used badly, sophisticated tools can be a disaster, and people need to be trained to use the technology, not simply have it imposed on them.
- **Measure outcomes** – focus on the outcomes rather than time management, find a personal way to appraise performance, rather than email, and hold regular chats with members.
- **Do say** 'By proactively creating virtual teams we can go where talent is, extend our reach and work more efficiently.'
- **Don't say** 'We call them a virtual team because they're not quite the real thing.'³⁴

Cultural diversity

One reason for the growth in virtual teams is because of increasing globalisation and team members working and living in different countries. This gives rise to potential difficulties of cultural diversity. As *Francesco and Gold* point out:

*The more culturally diverse the members, the more difficult it is to manage a virtual team. Cultural diversity, which will be increasingly common, adds to the complexity of managing virtual teams because different values, customs, and traditions require more leadership under conditions that reduce the ability to use direct leadership.*³⁵

And according to *Murray*, although virtual working presents some unexpected benefits, if managing diversity in the workplace is a tough task for business leaders, the challenges of keeping executives from different backgrounds working together in various parts of the world is even more difficult. Virtual working does not eradicate the sort of cultural misunderstandings that can arise in a face-to-face situation.

*Cultural or behavioural differences that can manifest themselves in face-to-face working situations can be exacerbated in virtual teamworking, particularly when the group has members from different backgrounds.*³⁶

Critical reflection

'With the continual increase in globalisation and advances in new technology and communications the days of people spending most of their time working alongside the same colleagues are gone. Global virtual teams are the way forward.'

How far do you agree? What difficulties and problems do you foresee?

Remote teamworking at the Prudential³⁷

Remote teamworking is not simply a matter of ensuring staff have access to a laptop and a telephone line and assuming that they will be able to continue with their work. The management and communications skills that this new working culture requires are also key to success. When one of Britain's leading financial services providers, Prudential, decided to introduce extensive remote working as part of its drive to build stronger customer relationships they called on the experience and expertise of Chameleon Training and Consulting. The Prudential were keen to ensure that their employees not only had the technology but also the skills to maximise the individual and business benefits offered by this new way of working. Chris Parker, Chameleon's Marketing Manager, explains how technology is only the starting point to developing an effective remote team.

Technology has been a constant driver for change in British business over the last decade. The myth has been that the technological changes alone have single-handedly propelled workplace culture from the age of telephone and typewriters into the broadband world of high speed networks, email and mobile communication, mobile phones and laptops. The reality is a need to adapt management techniques, working culture and employee skill levels. Working in the training and HR industry we know that these requirements cannot be ignored. In addition, many companies have attempted to introduce technology for the sake of it, or brought in 'new' gadgets without looking at the impact on the organisation, or individual workers, and have spent even less time looking at the role training can play in integrating the new technology into the processes and working culture of an organisation.

The pace of change

Prudential is one of the largest and most prestigious financial services organisations, with more than 150 years' experience building long and successful relationships with shareholders, customers and policyholders alike. The financial services industry

has changed and continues to change at a faster pace than almost any other, and for this reason, technology, and the delivery of the skills required to integrate new ways of working into employees' daily processes and functions, is more important than in any other area of business.

Practice Head of Prudential's B2B division, and responsible for the development of the team, Martin Boniface says that this changing marketplace was one of the core reasons Prudential decided to change their working culture, embracing technology, and ensuring that their employees have the skills to work effectively in this new environment. 'We realised that technology, and the effective utilisation of it through training, offered us a flexible, customer facing approach to our business, offering benefits for the company, its customers and Prudential employees.'

How to achieve this was going to be another matter entirely, and one which would prove to be far more wide-ranging than originally thought.

A question of image

According to Boniface, 'We wanted to develop a culture where we were able to be proactive, rather than reactive to the needs of our customers. One of the challenges that Prudential faced in this changeable market was to move away from the traditional view of the "man from the Pru" that policyholders know, towards a more modern image in keeping with the changing market's requirements, and this needed to be replicated throughout the business.

Representatives were spending hours travelling to visit corporate customers, while still spending time at a centralised office. We realised that in order to offer a more customer focused approach to our corporate clients, we would have to fundamentally change our working culture.' Remote working was positively encouraged for staff in the B2B division at Prudential, with employees using laptops and mobile phones to allow the team to function effectively, but initially this was the exception rather than the rule.

Focus on the customer

'In the B2B division, we made some fairly radical changes,' says Boniface. 'We realised that remote working was the way forward for us, and reorganised our business to focus on our customers, rather than their geographical location – as had been the way in the past. This meant that remote working now became the rule, with the exception of members of our support team who still had a centrally based office location. The ability of our employees to work remotely allowed us to spend more time concentrating on the individual requirements of our corporate customers, and offered financial and efficiency benefits for both the company and our employees. We weren't asking our staff to travel from their homes to an office, and spend hours travelling out to customers' premises, back to the office, before heading home in the evening. This energised and invigorated the team instantly.'

Managing culture change

Having implemented this new way of working for a couple of months, it became obvious that while much of the culture change was beneficial, there were also areas which could be improved, and some that emerged which had not been expected. 'It was at this point that Prudential looked for expert help in remote team management, in order to refine and improve the new remote teamworking practices, and develop solutions designed to enable staff to manage their new working environment and the change of culture,' says Philippa Muress, Chameleon's Head of Consultancy Services. 'Having trialled remote working, Prudential carried out a number of focus groups to identify areas which needed refining. As a result, we were presented with a number of management challenges and objectives.'

Whilst the remote teamworking had been generally successful, with Prudential ensuring that staff had been supported in terms of hardware, with budgets provided for selecting computer technology, installing high speed communications access, and addressing Health and Safety issues, an overwhelming need for emotional support and remote, or virtual, team building had been identified.

The significant difference between central office-based working and remote working is that it is difficult to develop a team spirit, a sense of camaraderie, working remotely through new electronic and telecommunications methods. Morale and motivation had also been identified as areas with which Prudential's new virtual team required some assistance.

'Communication and trust are key elements of developing strong remote teamworking,' says

Philippa Muress. 'There is a difference between managing a team in a traditional office environment, and managing a remote team of workers which requires new skills and new management techniques. Some of these skills can be adapted from traditional management methodology, but there are also specific techniques and skills, which are critical in the development of an effective remote team. These are exactly the areas which we help organisations to develop through our Managing Remote Teams programmes.'

'You can't control the volume of email,' adds Boniface. 'You have no way of knowing the emotional state of the recipient of an email, or how they perceive the content of the message, which means that trust has to be central to the team, and clarity is essential to avoid misunderstandings.' The ability for open discussion where things are unclear forms a central part of ensuring that the team is both effective and efficient. 'The last thing you want is for conflicts to grow from small misunderstandings because someone has not picked up the phone to say "Do I understand this correctly?".'

The delivery of the course has taken a number of different forms, with Chameleon using a blend of input sessions, assessment tools and role-play techniques during the implementation of the first phase of Prudential's Remote Teams training. Issues of management techniques, motivation and empowerment, and developing a team spirit from remote locations have all been central in the work, ensuring that staff have received a totally bespoke solution tailored to the specific needs of the organisation. Philippa Muress says, 'One of the most important parts of developing a training programme is ensuring that the development and implementation addresses the aims and objectives of both the team and the wider organisation. When developing an effective remote team it is important that you don't isolate the remote members from the rest of the organisation.'

The programme has highlighted the development needs, not only of the managers and remote workers, but also of those who provide support back in the office, and one-day workshops have been arranged for the whole team. 'We recognise the need for a strategic and co-ordinated programme of change in order to develop long-standing effective and successful remote teams,' says Boniface. 'There is a very important coaching element to the remote teams programme which Chameleon has developed for us, which offers vital support and reassurance. Working remotely can be a lonely experience if the necessary skill training is not in place, and we're delighted with the way that Chameleon has been there at every step. Our single point of contact has been one of their



Remote teamworking at the Prudential – continued

Remote Team experts, who understands our business, our aims and our specific business focus.'

Enjoying the benefits of managed change

The benefits of this new virtual team are already being experienced at 'the Pru'. Their vision of creating a more customer-faced commercial approach is generating more business with less cost (which has occurred, in part, as a result of the reduced requirement for desk space), and has raised customer satisfaction levels in the process.

In a market which has experienced considerable change, this has generated substantial competitive advantage for the company, and boosted morale

within the CRM team. Chameleon's Philippa Muress says that the benefits experienced by the Prudential are all classic traits of effective Remote Teams training. 'Technology is only the beginning of developing a remote team environment – without the necessary tools to manage the new working practices, the new approach to managing and being managed, and the new communication and emotional skills, remote teamworking will not bring the efficiencies and financial rewards which can be achieved with a co-ordinated, structured and expertly delivered programme.'

Source: 'Remote Team Working at Prudential', *Manager, The British Journal of Administrative Management*, March/April 2002, pp. 30–1.

ROLE RELATIONSHIPS

In order that the organisation can achieve its goals and objectives, the work of individual members must be linked into coherent patterns of activities and relationships. This is achieved through the 'role structure' of the organisation.

A **'role'** is the expected pattern of behaviours associated with members occupying a particular position within the structure of the organisation. It also describes how a person perceives their own situation. The concept of 'role' is important to the functioning of groups and for an understanding of group processes and behaviour. It is through role differentiation that the structure of the work group and relationships among its members are established. Some form of structure is necessary for teamwork and co-operation. The concept of roles helps to clarify the structure and to define the pattern of complex relationships within the group.

The formal organisational relationships (line, functional, staff or lateral) – discussed in Chapter 14 – can be seen as forms of role relationships. These individual authority relationships determine the pattern of interaction with other roles.

The role, or roles, that the individual plays within the group is influenced by a combination of:

- **situational factors**, such as the requirements of the task, the style of leadership, position in the communication network; and
- **personal factors** such as values, attitudes, motivation, ability and personality.

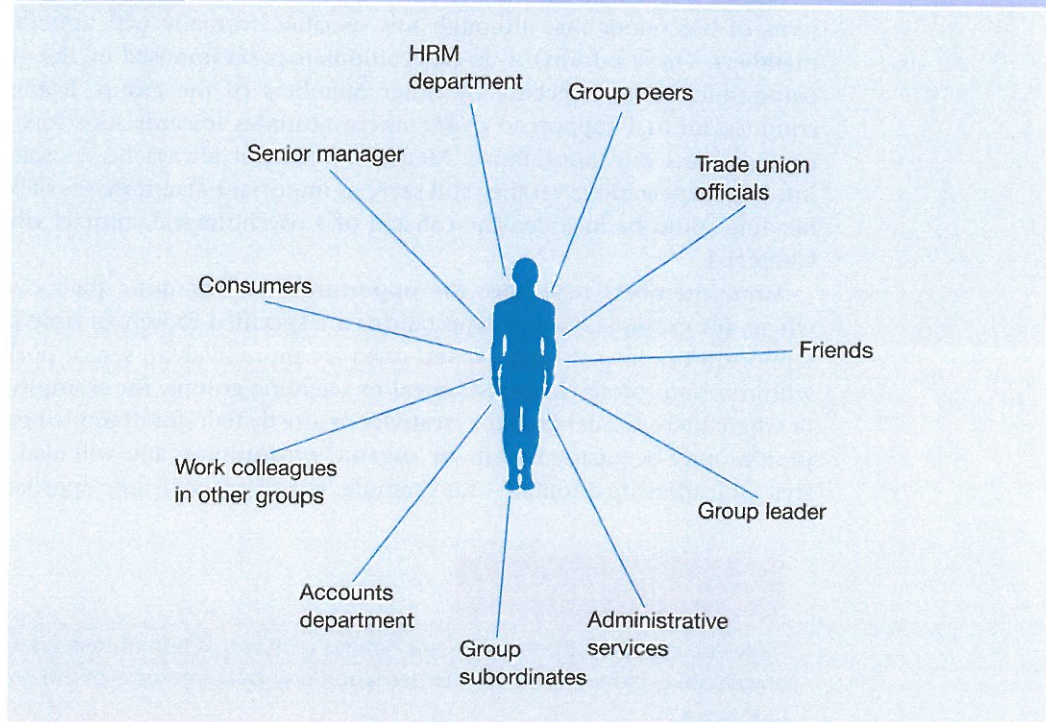
The role that a person plays in one work group may be quite different from the role that person plays in other work groups. However, everyone within a group is expected to behave in a particular manner and to fulfil certain role expectations.

A person's role set

In addition to the role relationships with members of their own group – peers, superiors, subordinates – the individual will have a number of role-related relationships with outsiders – for example, members of other work groups, trade union officials, suppliers, consumers. This is a person's **'role set'**. The role set comprises the range of associations or contacts with

whom the individual has meaningful interactions in connection with the performance of their role (see Figure 8.6).

Figure 8.6 Representation of a possible role set in the work situation



Role incongruence

An important feature of role relationship is the concept of '**role incongruence**'. This arises when a member of staff is perceived as having a high and responsible position in one respect but a low standing in another respect. Difficulties with role incongruence can arise from the nature of groupings and formal relationships within the structure of the organisation. There are a number of work-related relationships such as doctor and nurse, chef and waiter, senior manager and personal assistant which can give rise to a potential imbalance of authority and responsibility.

Difficulties with role incongruence can also arise in line-staff relationships: for instance, a relatively junior member of the HR department informing a senior departmental manager that a certain proposed action is contrary to the policies of the organisation. Another example with staff relationships is where a person establishes themselves in the role of 'gatekeeper' to the boss³⁸ – for instance, where a comparatively junior personal assistant passes on the manager's instructions to one of the manager's more senior subordinates or where the personal assistant attempts to block a more senior member of staff having access to the manager.

Role expectations

Many **role expectations** are prescribed formally and indicate what the person is expected to do and their duties and obligations. Formal role prescriptions provide guidelines for expected behaviours and may be more prevalent in a 'mechanistic' organisation. Examples are written contracts of employment, rules and regulations, standing orders, policy decisions, job

descriptions, or directives from superiors. Formal role expectations may also be derived clearly from the nature of the task. They may, in part at least, be defined legally, for example under the Health and Safety at Work Acts, or as with the obligations of a company secretary under the Companies Acts, or the responsibilities of a district auditor under the Local Government Acts.

Not all role expectations are prescribed formally, however. There will be certain patterns of behaviour that although not specified formally will nonetheless be expected of members. These informal role expectations may be imposed by the group itself or at least communicated to a person by other members of the group. Examples include general conduct, mutual support to co-members, attitudes towards superiors, means of communicating, dress and appearance. Members may not always be consciously aware of these informal expectations yet they still serve as important determinants of behaviour. Under this heading could be included the concept of a psychological contract which was discussed in Chapter 1.

Some members may have the opportunity to determine their own role expectations, where, for example, formal expectations are specified loosely or only in very general terms. Opportunities for **self-established roles** are more likely in senior positions, but also occur within certain professional, technical or scientific groups, for example senior research staff, or where there is a demand for creativity or artistic flair, for example head chefs. Such opportunities may be greater within an 'organic' organisation and will also be influenced by the style of leadership adopted – for example, where a laissez-faire approach is adopted.

Critical reflection

'Self-interest and opportunism are natural features of human behaviour and will always take preference over the demands and best interests of the group or teamwork.'

*How would you present a **counter** point of view? How far are you prepared to put the interests of a work group before your own interests?*

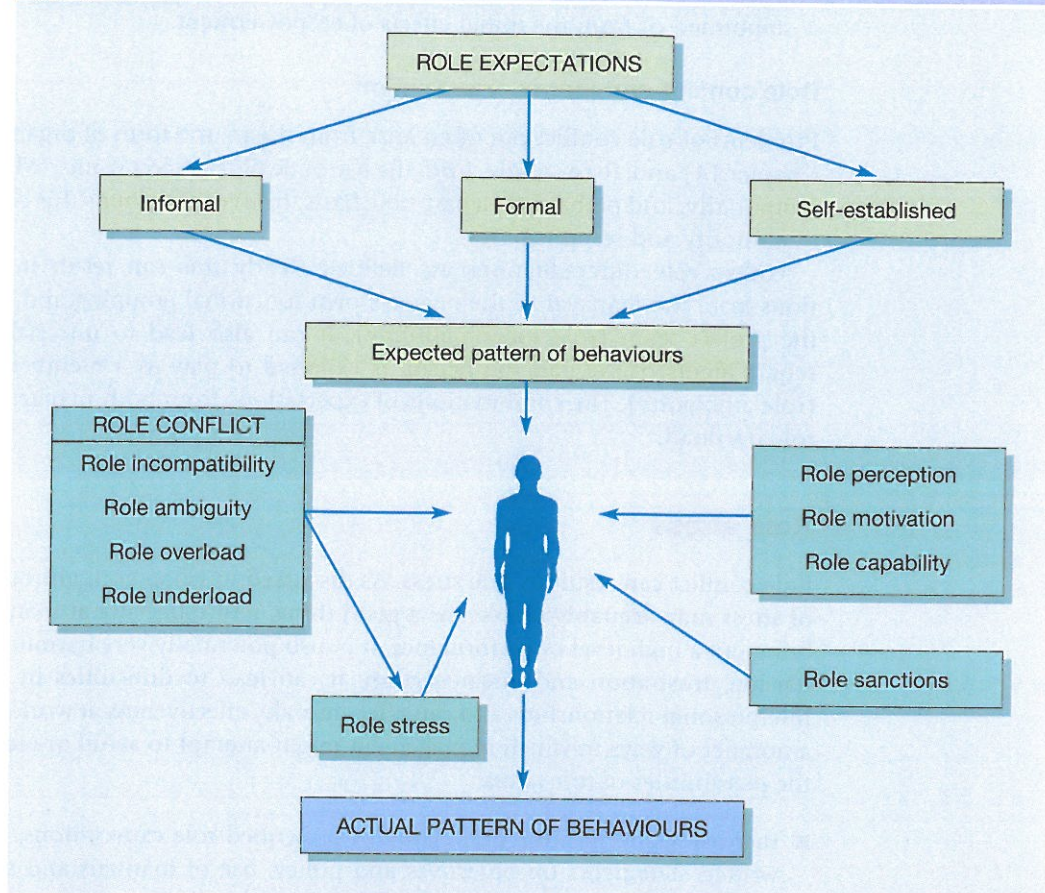
ROLE CONFLICT

Patterns of behaviour result from both the role and the personality. The concept of role focuses attention on aspects of behaviour existing independently of an individual's personality. **Role conflict** arises from inadequate or inappropriate role definition and needs to be distinguished from personality clashes. These arise from incompatibility between two or more people as individuals even though their roles may be defined clearly and understood fully. In practice, the manner in which a person actually behaves may not be consistent with their expected pattern of behaviours. This inconsistency may be a result of role conflict. Role conflict as a generic term can include:

- role incompatibility
- role ambiguity
- role overload
- role underload.

These are all problem areas associated with the creation of role expectations (see Figure 8.7).

- **Role incompatibility** arises when a person faces a situation in which simultaneous different or contradictory expectations create inconsistency. Compliance with one set of expectations makes it difficult or impossible to comply with other expectations. The two role expectations are in conflict. A typical example concerns the person 'in the middle', such

Figure 8.7 Role relationships and conflicts

Source: Adapted from Miner, J. B. *Management Theory*, Macmillan (1971), p. 47.

as the supervisor or section head, who faces opposing expectations from workers and from management. Another example might be the situation of a manager who believes in a relaxed, participative style of behaviour more in keeping with a Theory Y approach, but whose superior believes in a Theory X approach and expects the manager to adopt a more formal and directive style of behaviour.

- **Role ambiguity** occurs when there is lack of clarity as to the precise requirements of the role and the person is unsure what to do. The person's perception of their role may differ from the expectations of others. This implies that insufficient information is available for the adequate performance of the role. Role ambiguity may result from a lack of formally prescribed expectations. It is likely to arise in large, diverse groups or at times of constant change. Uncertainty often relates to such matters as the method of performing tasks, the extent of the person's authority and responsibility, standards of work, and the evaluation and appraisal of performance.
- **Role overload** is when a person faces too many separate roles or too great a variety of expectations. The person is unable to meet satisfactorily all expectations and some must be neglected in order to satisfy others. This leads to a conflict of priority. Some writers distinguish between role overload and work overload. Role overload is seen in terms of the total role set and implies that the person has too many separate roles to handle. Where there are too many expectations of a single role – that is, a problem of quantity – this is work overload.
- **Role underload** can arise when the prescribed role expectations fall short of the person's perception of their role. The person may feel their role is not demanding enough and that

they have the capacity to undertake a larger or more varied role, or an increased number of roles. Role underload may arise, for example, when a new member of staff is first appointed or from the initial effects of empowerment.

Role conflict and matrix organisation

Problems of role conflict can often arise from the matrix form of organisation (discussed in Chapter 14) and, for example, from the use of flexible project teams. Where staff are assigned temporarily, and perhaps on a part-time basis, from other groups this creates a two-way flow of authority and responsibility.

Unless role differentiations are defined clearly this can result in conflicting expectations from the manager of the person's own functional grouping and from the manager of the project team (role incompatibility). It can also lead to uncertainty about the exact requirements of the part the person is expected to play as a member of the project team (role ambiguity). The combinations of expectations from both managers may also result in role overload.

Role stress

Role conflict can result in role stress. As discussed in Chapter 3, although a certain amount of stress may **arguably** be seen as a good thing, and especially at managerial level helps to bring out a high level of performance, it is also potentially very harmful. Stress is a source of tension, frustration and dissatisfaction. It can lead to difficulties in communication and interpersonal relationships and can affect morale, effectiveness at work and health. There are a number of ways in which management might attempt to avoid or reduce role conflict and the possibilities of role stress:

- Increasing specification and clarity of prescribed role expectations, for example through written statements on objectives and policy, use of manuals and set procedures, introduction of appropriate rules, and detailed job descriptions. However, such measures may be resented by staff. They may restrict the opportunity for independent action and personal development, giving rise to even more role conflict.
- Improved recruitment and selection and the careful matching of abilities, motivation, interests and personalities to the demands of a particular role.
- Attention to induction and socialisation programmes, job training and retraining, staff development and career progression plans.
- Medical examinations and health screening to give early indications of potential stress-related problems.
- The creation of new roles or assimilation of existing roles; the reallocation or restructuring of tasks and responsibilities; the clarification of priorities, and the elimination or downgrading of minor roles.
- Giving advance notice and explanation of what is likely to happen, for example of an expected, additional heavy workload which must be completed urgently. Where possible and appropriate provide an opportunity for practice or experience.
- Attention to factors which may help improve group structure and group cohesiveness, and help overcome inter-group conflict.
- Review of organisation structure, information flow and communication networks, for example members of staff being answerable to more than one superior.

Other influences on behaviour

Even if there is an absence of role conflict and role stress, a person's actual behaviour may still be inconsistent with their expected pattern of behaviours. *Miner* gives three reasons that may account for this disparity.³⁹

- The person does not perceive their job in the way the role prescriptions specify. This is a form of role ambiguity but may arise not because the role prescriptions themselves are unclear but because the person misunderstands or distorts them.
- Motivation is lacking and the person does not want to behave in the way prescribed.
- The person does not have the capabilities – knowledge, mental ability or physical skills – required to behave in the way the role prescriptions specify.

Application of sanctions

Organisations apply a number of both positive and negative sanctions as inducements for members to contribute and behave in accordance with their prescribed roles. Typical examples are: an increase in salary or wages; promotion; a sideways or downwards move in the organisation structure; the threat of dismissal.

There are also a number of less direct sanctions that may be adopted. These include the size of office or work area, the allocation of unpopular tasks, giving opportunities for paid overtime work, level of supervision or empowerment, the amount of information given or the extent of consultation, granting or withholding privileges.

Role sanctions may also be applied through the operation of the informal organisation. Members of the group may impose their own sanctions and discipline individuals who contravene the norms of the group or expected standards of behaviour.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK

How people behave and perform as members of a group is as important as their behaviour or performance as individuals. Harmonious working relationships and good teamwork help make for a high level of staff morale and work performance. Effective teamwork is an essential element of modern management practices such as empowerment, quality circles and total quality management, and how groups manage change. Teamwork is important in any organisation but may be especially significant in service industries, such as hospitality organisations where there is a direct effect on customer satisfaction.⁴⁰

According to ACAS, teams have been around for as long as anyone can remember and there can be few organisations that have not used the term in one sense or another. In a general sense, people talk of teamwork when they want to emphasise the virtues of co-operation and the need to make use of the various strengths of employees. Using the term more specifically, teamworking involves a reorganisation of the way work is carried out. Teamwork can increase competitiveness by:

- improving productivity;
- improving quality and encouraging innovation;
- taking advantage of the opportunities provided by technological advances;
- improving employee motivation and commitment.⁴¹

The general movement towards flatter structures of organisation, wider spans of control and reducing layers of middle management, together with increasing empowerment of employees, all involve greater emphasis on the importance of teamworking. 'There's no doubt that effective teamwork is crucial to an organisation's efforts to perform better, faster and more profitably than their competitors.'⁴²

This view on the importance of teamwork is supported by Adams.

*The point is that teamwork is not an option for a successful organisation; it is a necessity. Teamwork can lead to achievement, creativity and energy levels that someone working alone, or perhaps with just one other person, could hardly imagine.*⁴³

Skills of effective teamworking

From a study of Europe's top companies, *Heller* refers to the need for new managers and new methods, and includes as a key strategy for a new breed of managers in a dramatically changed environment: 'making team-working work – the new, indispensable skill'. Heller refers to the happy teams at Heineken. Part of the cultural strength of Heineken is a realisation that 'the best culture for an organisation is a team culture' and that 'any large organisation is a team of teams – and people who have to work together as a team must also think together as a team'.⁴⁴ Heller also lists Heineken's manifesto for 'professional team-thinking' and maintains that 'arguing with any of these eleven points is absurd'.

- 1 The aim is to reach the best decision, not just a hasty conclusion or an easy consensus. The team leader always has the ultimate responsibility for the quality of the decision taken – and, therefore, for the quality of the team-thinking effort that has led up to the decision.
- 2 To produce the best professional team-thinking, the team leader must ensure that ego-trips, petty office politics and not-invented-here rigidity are explicitly avoided. There should be competition between ideas – not between individual members of the team.
- 3 The team-thinking effort must first ensure that the best question to be answered is clearly and completely formulated.
- 4 The team-thinking process is iterative – not linear. Therefore, the question may have to be altered later and the process repeated.
- 5 The team leader is responsible for seeing that sufficient alternatives and their predicted consequences have been developed for evaluation by the team.
- 6 The team leader will thus ask, 'What are our alternatives?' – and not just, 'What is the answer?'
- 7 The team leader also recognises that it is wiser to seek and listen to the ideas of the team before expressing his or her own ideas and preferences.
- 8 In any professional team-thinking effort, more ideas will have to be created than used. But any idea that is rejected will be rejected with courtesy and with a clear explanation as to why it is being rejected. To behave in this way is not naive, it is just decent and smart.
- 9 A risk/reward equation and a probability of success calculation will be made explicitly before any important decision is taken.
- 10 Once a decision is made professionally, the team must implement it professionally.
- 11 When you think, think. When you act, act.

Source: Heller, R. *In Search of European Excellence*, Profile Books (1997), p. 231. Reproduced with permission.

According to *Guirdham*, the growth of teamwork has led to the increased interest in interface skills at work.

*More and more tasks of contemporary organisations, particularly those in high technology and service businesses, require teamwork. Taskforces, project teams and committees are key elements in the modern workplace. Teamwork depends not just on technical competence of the individuals composing the team, but on their ability to 'gel'. To work well together, the team members must have more than just team spirit. They also need collaborative skills – they must be able to support one another and to handle conflict in such a way that it becomes constructive rather than destructive.*⁴⁵

A similar point is made by *Ashmos and Nathan*: 'The use of teams has expanded dramatically in response to competitive challenges. In fact, one of the most common skills required by new work practices is the ability to work as a team.'⁴⁶

De Rond and Holland draw an interesting comparison between an analysis of the team dynamics among Oxford and Cambridge boat race crews and managing high-performance teams in the workplace.⁴⁷ Compared with the boat race crews, not all business teams have such clear and unchangeable objectives, they cannot cherry-pick membership, there is less physical training, and it is more difficult to isolate individual contributions. Nevertheless, *de Rond and Holland* draw a number of parallels between crews and teams, including that both require a superb sense of coordination; both are composed of intelligent individuals impatient of jargon or management talk; cooperation and competition co-exist in a necessary but socially often awkward relationship; and both suffer from the Ringelmann effect (the inverse relationship between team membership and individual effort). The Ringelmann effect is discussed in Chapter 9.

*To build good teams you need a wide pool of staff with different talents to draw upon . . . Good managers should delight in the diversity and excellence of their staff and know that one of their main jobs is to manage the problems that come with any diverse group of talented people. In any group of talented people you will naturally get interpersonal tensions. It is important that you show you respect all the different skills and personalities in your team.*⁴⁸

The nature and importance of teamwork is discussed further in Chapter 9.

Critical reflection

'Teamworking is no more than a fashionable term used by management to give workers an exaggerated feeling of importance and empowerment. In reality an emphasis on teamworking is only likely to lead to more work, less freedom and even closer control from other team members.'

How far do you agree with this comment? What is your personal experience of teamworking?

SYNOPSIS

■ Work is a group-based activity, and groups and teams are a major feature of human behaviour and work organisation. Members must co-operate for work to be carried out. Harmonious working relationships and good teamwork help make for a high level of staff morale and organisational performance. There is a tendency for the terms 'groups' and 'teams' to be used interchangeably. Whereas all teams are groups, it does not necessarily follow that all groups are teams. Groups develop their own pattern of values and norms of behaviour.

■ Groups are formed as a consequence of the pattern of organisation structure and arrangements for the division of work. There are two main types of groups at work, formal and informal. Formal groups are deliberately planned and created by management as part of the organisation structure and to achieve

specific organisational objectives. Informal groups are based on personal relationships and develop irrespective of the formal structure. Informal groups serve to satisfy members' psychological and social needs.

■ Individuals will form into groups or teams, both formal and informal, for a number of reasons relating to both work performance and social processes. The manager's main concern is that members co-operate together. Factors that affect group cohesiveness can be considered under the broad headings of membership, work environment, organisational factors, and group development and maturity. An important and significant feature of group membership is social identity theory.

■ Membership of strong and cohesive groups can be a rewarding experience for the individual and have

beneficial effects for the organisation. There are, however, potential disadvantages of strong, cohesive groups and the manager should attempt to prevent unconstructive inter-group conflict. Inter-group rivalry may be deliberately encouraged as a means of building stronger within-group cohesiveness. Individuals make a contribution to the work of the organisation in different ways. The effective management of work groups requires an understanding of the psychological and social influences on behaviour within organisations.

■ The characteristics of an effective work group are not always easy to isolate. The underlying feature is a spirit of co-operation in which members work well together as a united team, and with harmonious and supportive relationships. The combination of increasing globalisation and widespread developments in

information communications and technology has given greater emphasis to the opportunities for, and need of, virtual teams. Members are geographically separated but still work together closely.

■ The concept of 'role' is important to the functioning of groups and for an understanding of group processes and behaviour. It is through role differentiation that the structure of work groups and relationships among members is established. Role expectations may be established formally, they may be informal or they may be self-established. Inadequate or inappropriate role definition can result in role conflict, including role incompatibility, role ambiguity, role overload and role underload. It is important that the manager makes every effort to minimise role conflict and the causes of role stress.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is a group? Explain the importance and influence of group values and norms and give practical examples from within your own organisation.
- 2 How would you distinguish between a 'group' and a 'team'? To what extent do you believe the distinction has practical significance for managers?
- 3 Distinguish between formal and informal groups and provide your own supporting examples. What functions do informal groups serve in an organisation?
- 4 Identify different stages in group development and maturity. What other factors influence the cohesiveness of work groups? Give examples by reference to a work group to which you belong.
- 5 Discuss critically the advantages and disadvantages of virtual teams and how you believe they are likely to develop in the future.
- 6 What is meant by the role structure of an organisation? Construct a diagram that shows your own role set within a work situation. Give examples of informal role expectations to which you are, or have been, a party.
- 7 Explain different forms of role conflict that can result in role stress. Give an account of a work situation in which you have experienced role conflict/role stress. As a manager, what action would you have taken in an attempt to rectify the situation?
- 8 Detail fully what you believe are the essential characteristics of a successful work group or team. As a manager, explain how you would attempt to develop effective group/team relationships and performance.

MANAGEMENT IN THE NEWS

Dragon boat racing on the Thames

FT

Dominic Bliss

A pain is spreading down my arm. Twenty of us, seated in ten rows, two to a bench, are paddling furiously aboard a 40 ft dragon boat. It is a disconcerting, not to mention exhausting, experience. As we plough down the Thames in London's Royal Albert Dock, we take orders from a helmsman and keep time to a drum. It's almost as if we're slaves in a galley, except we're supposed to be doing this for fun. I'm racing with the Thames Dragon Boat Club, and I'm quickly learning that perfectly synchronised paddling is the key to survival. Without it there's no way to generate speed through the water.

'Watch the strokes at the front of the boat and keep in time with them,' shouts team coach Liam Keane, seated beside me in the boat. 'Ideally, we want everyone's paddles entering and exiting the water at exactly the same time. You could have twenty enormous beefcakes powering a dragon boat, but if they're not paddling in time with each other, they won't be effective.'

'When people first start this sport, they just go for power,' Keane adds. 'But you need to get into a team mentality. Get your timing locked in and feel the rhythm of the boat.' His voice starts to waver as the helmsman suddenly barks out the orders to increase the pace, at which the 10-year-old drummer, Amy, seated at the prow, ups the tempo accordingly. We've reached 65 strokes a minute, which is close to race pace. My arms and shoulders are beginning to protest as the lactic acid builds up, and my heart pumps wildly. Although each paddling action is identical, one has to concentrate hard to get the timing and the angle of entry into and out of the water just right.

On more than a few occasions I catch a crab and splash the right ear of the female paddler in front of me with ice-cold water. In due course I get my own dousing courtesy of the chap sitting behind me, who is also a beginner. There's neither the time nor the spare breath to apologise. I'm told later that we achieved a top speed of about 8 knots. With a full crew of experienced paddlers in a race situation, this might reach 9 knots. The tight teamwork required and the simple technique make dragon boating the perfect corporate team sport. 'Anybody can do this,' Keane stresses. 'You can put a bunch of novices into a boat and within ten minutes they're paddling. You couldn't



Source: Daniel Cardiff/Stockphoto

Is dragon boat racing the truest of all team sports? Tight teamwork and simple technique make dragon boat racing the perfect corporate team sport.

do that with rowing because it's more of a fine art. They might end up capsizing the boat.'

Paul Coster, the club chairman, insists that dragon boating is the truest of all team sports. 'The camaraderie is so important' he says. 'We train together, we race together, we get drunk together. That's why lots of companies do this. It's great for team-building.'

Back on the water, our practice is beginning to pay off. Suddenly we all lock into the same rhythm – 20 paddlers in perfect unison. It almost feels as if we've ceased to be separate athletes and have joined forces into a single entity, like a shoal of fish or a flock of birds. And for a blissful moment, I forget the pain.

Source: Bliss, D. 'Dragon Boat Racing on the Thames', *Financial Times*, 4 April 2009. Copyright © 2009 The Financial Times Limited, reproduced with permission.

Discussion questions

- 1 Using the model in Figure 8.1 to structure your answer, explain why dragon boat racing can be a useful means of turning groups into teams.
- 2 What can we learn from the article about the importance of the 'informal' aspects of organisations? What problems could the informal group or organisation cause for managers in an organisation with a highly diverse workforce?

ASSIGNMENT 1

Recall your experience of a work group or team with which you are familiar and comment critically on:

- 1 the extent to which members were clear about the goals of the group, what they were expected to achieve, and how their performance would be evaluated;
- 2 the diversity of group membership, and significances of diversity for the operations and success of the group; and
- 3 what *exactly* made the group effective or made it fall apart?

ASSIGNMENT 2

Obtain, or prepare, a chart depicting the formal groupings within your organisation or a large department of the organisation.

- 1 Using this chart, identify clearly the informal groups that exist within the formal structure.
- 2 Discuss ways in which these informal groups aid, and/or conflict with, the work of the organisation/department.
- 3 Explain the extent to which management recognises the influence of the informal groups.
- 4 What conclusions do you draw from this assignment?

PERSONAL AWARENESS AND SKILLS EXERCISE

Objectives

Completing this exercise should help you to enhance the following skills:

- Apply your study and understanding of teamwork to a practical situation.
- Analyse key issues relating to a dysfunctional team.
- Work constructively in conjunction with colleagues.

Exercise

You are required to work in a small group as assigned by your tutor and complete a written report agreed by all members of the group.

A managerial colleague has approached you with the following problem.

I have moved to a new organisation and inherited a small 'team' of six people, four of whom only joined the organisation within the last eighteen months. I am disappointed that members miss deadlines, pull in different directions and spend too much time on turf wars rather than with improving business results. I have attempted to discover each member's strengths and weaknesses and to re-allocate certain roles and tasks but this is resisted. They are becoming bad-tempered and dissatisfied. I worry the team is increasingly dysfunctional. What advice can you give me?

Discussion

- To what extent were your own suggestions influenced by previous experience of team working/management?
- How did you go about establishing priorities and a timetable for action?
- How easy was it to reach agreement with your colleagues?

CASE STUDY

Mumbai's dabbawalahs: a world-class quality service

Those studying organisational behaviour often find themselves reading about the issues faced by global businesses, whose managerial excellence is supported by cutting-edge technology and major financial investment. The organisation in this case study has neither cutting-edge technology nor major investment and never has had. However, it has become famous in recent years, as the world's business schools have beaten a path to its door to study the extraordinary organisation of Mumbai's dabbawalahs.

Dabbawalahs (or 'tiffinwalahs') run a service in Mumbai whose purpose is easy enough to describe: each working day, they arrange the collection and delivery from Bombay's suburbs of about 200,000 lunches in the traditional tiffin boxes. These meals are prepared by wives or mothers (or sometimes local restaurants) for individual workers in central Mumbai: obviously, the contents of each box are unique, which is the central appeal of the service. A little later in the day, the dabbawalahs collect the empties and return them to the workers' homes.

In some ways, the design of the system resembles that of a modern international courier service. It is based on local collection of the tiffin boxes, which are then loaded on to local trains for bulk transportation into the centre of Mumbai (special compartments are reserved for the boxes). At each of the central stations, other members of the team unload the boxes for destinations near the station and sort them for hand delivery to the offices and workshops where the individual recipients work. They also load any boxes for delivery further down the line. The train stops for about twenty seconds at these stations, resulting in a turnaround time that would make many of Europe's low-cost airlines look up in surprise. Delivery to the hungry workers is achieved by 12:45 sharp,⁴⁹ following which the process is reversed to return the boxes to the homes. The service costs about Rs250–300 per month (about \$US5–6) and the dabbawalahs earn about Rs4,000 (about \$US80) a month. Customers pay one month's bonus to the organisation for the Diwali festival. This intricate, precisely co-ordinated operation takes place in a city famous for its bustle, traffic delays and occasional chaos: the dabbawalahs negotiate the traffic on foot and by bicycle at a cracking pace, whatever the weather: the tiffin must get through. The error rate is said to be vanishingly small: one box may go astray every two months; about one in 6 million deliveries.



The amazing dabbawalahs deliver 175,000 lunchtime tiffin boxes a day in Bombay in a well co-ordinated and highly effective team operation.

A team to beat the best

There is no IT support for this daily miracle – no track and trace, no computers, no bar codes: just a handwritten code on each box that allows the dabbawalah to recognise which station the box has to be sent to and unloaded, its ultimate destination and its return address. Many of the dabbawalahs have low levels of literacy, but their ability to decode and correctly route the forty or so boxes that they each carry through the crowded streets is key to the whole system. The very high levels of effectiveness and efficiency achieved in this service have attracted the attention of business schools from many countries. As the dabbawalahs proudly proclaim,⁵⁰ the reliability of the system is at Six Sigma levels (one error in one million), a performance that is comparable to that of the world's leading corporations. Business strategy expert C. K. Prahalad was struck by the performance level of this system as well as by its very low levels of capital-intensiveness:

That's a good thing by itself because you can dramatically reduce the capital intensity of a business. A lot of the float there is between points of production and consumption can be reduced dramatically around the world.⁵¹

However, the interest in this case is not so much in the technical details of the logistics, but in the team that makes the service happen. The dabbawalah service is said to have originated in 1890,⁵² and to have been invented by Indian entrepreneur Mahadeo Havaji Bacche.⁵³ At the same time, a then much smaller Mumbai was starting to experience a strong growth of daily commuting into the centre. From the outset, the

design of the service was much the same as today – the local trains were hauled by steam engines, and the traffic jams on the streets were animal rather than automotive, but the challenge was essentially the same. There has always been strong cultural preference for home cooking among workers in India: in Mumbai, which has always drawn its working population from all over India, 'home cooking' means a kaleidoscope of different regional styles and traditions. Clearly, a service that can bring this diverse range of home-prepared meals reliably to the individual in the workplace is going to be in demand. The service grew to its present levels by the 1950s.

There are about 5,000 dabbawalahs in Mumbai today, organised into teams of 20 to 25 under an experienced group leader. Ragunath Medge is President of Nutan Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Charity Trust (and a regular guest speaker these days at business school conferences). As he explains, those who work for the organisation are mostly shareholders, rather than employees:

If you have employees, then you have unions and strikes. We are all shareholders in the Trust and thus we share in the earnings.

He explains that the dabbawalahs mainly come from the same region, the Pune district, and that most are related to each other:

We all come from the region east of the Sahyadri (Western Ghats), and everyone who joins us is known to us. If an outsider does join in, we initially employ him on a fixed salary, and if in a couple of years he wins our trust, we may make him a shareholder.⁵⁴

These sentiments are echoed in the comments of one of the dabbawalahs in an article published in the Guardian in 2002:

'It's a very sociable job,' Sapan Mare, a tiffin-wallah since 1970 explained, as we rattled into central Bombay [Mumbai]. 'I like the fact that I meet so many people every day. Between 100 to 110 members of my family are in the tiffin business. I come from a family where four generations have been tiffin-wallahs,' he added proudly.⁵⁵

Mr Medge explains that the job for Trust shareholders lasts for as long as the member is strong enough to do the work. Notes on a blogspot (weblog)⁵⁶ of a talk given by Mr Medge provide further detail of the discipline that characterises the dabbawalah team: members are mainly vegetarians and most don't drink alcohol. Drinking at work is against the rules: the first and second offence will result in a fine and the third will result in removal from the service. There is also a dress code for team members, presumably to show pride and confidence in the high standards of the service and also perhaps to secure public co-operation

with the smooth daily running of the operation. The organisation sets great store by the integrity and trustworthiness of its members: dabbawalahs just do not have police records.

The future of the service

As any services marketing textbook will confirm, customers often take part in the production of services. In this case, the expertise and hard work of the dabbawalahs will come to nothing if the meals are not ready for collection on time: those who prepare the meals in homes and local restaurants can also be seen as part of the team. Sometimes, it is suggested that customers also use the network as an informal communications medium, sending each other little notes in the tiffin boxes.

The city of Mumbai is at the forefront of the huge economic and social changes that are sweeping through India. The dabbawalah system is still a mainstay of the working day in the city, but is starting to experience and respond to change. The growth of fast food is a global phenomenon that has been relatively slow to penetrate the Indian market but is now starting to make its mark. More serious than the threat of fast food (the Dabbawalah organisation has responded by providing its own restaurant-cooked food for those with no domestic provider) is the risk that terrorist attackers might gain access to Mumbai's business premises disguised as a dabbawalah.⁵⁷ Mr Medge's operation is still resolutely uncomputerised (what good would gigabytes and parallel processors be in the traffic in Mumbai?), but they do have a website and are now able to accept orders via the site or by SMS. Their website⁵⁸ also seeks to reassert the traditional core values of the organisation in the face of the tide of global fast food. Among the 'top ten reasons for using the Dabbawalahs' services' are the following appeals to the good sense of Mumbai workers:

- 1 Home made food is best for health . . . Outside junk foods may take your life and make you sick . . .
- 2 Home made food is cheaper . . . It's simple maths.
- 3 Do you not love your mother or wife and like to eat food made by her?

The dabbawalahs have fed thousands of people for more than a century. Their astonishingly effective logistics continue to deliver reliable, low-priced service every working day. They have admirers all around the world – Prince Charles (who invited the two dabbawalahs quoted in this case to his wedding to Camilla), Richard Branson (of course) and – perhaps paradoxically – the Slow Food movement. For generations, the cohesion, dedication and discipline of this team has been the main guarantee of their legendary service and it seems likely to retain a place in the hearts of Mumbai residents as modernisation proceeds.

Your tasks

- 1 If a team can be defined as a group of people working towards a common goal, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the dabbawallah practice of making team members shareholders, rather than employees. Would the same arguments apply to other logistically similar operations?
- 2 Use the framework in Figure 8.4 to analyse the cohesiveness and performance of the dabbawallah team. To what extent does the dabbawallah service display the characteristics of an effective work group?
- 3 Why has technology played such a small part in the development of the dabbawallah service so far? Is this likely to change in future? Identify ways in which this might affect the team spirit of the organisation.

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