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Steps to effective team building

In the third of a five-part series on managing change, *Becky Hall* takes a look at how to build a productive team after changes kick in

VERY OFTEN, one of the most immediate effects of change is that staff are moved to work in new teams and with new colleagues. This can be complicated – especially if your new team is a mixture of new colleagues, colleagues that you have worked with for a long time and, harder still, missing colleagues who have left. So how can you establish these new working relationships?

One of the most important things to do is to treat the team as if it is new – even if there are several colleagues who have worked together for a long time. The team needs to set time to work out its collective view of the big "who, what, why and where" questions.

Taking time to talk about these things often feels like a luxury – but, in fact, it is essential. Unless a team has away days or team meetings dedicated to looking at team working, it may not be able to establish itself and could fail to become effective as a result.

All teams go through a dynamic process in order to start working. This is a summary of the five-stage process that can be a helpful guide to team building, with some suggestions for discussion topics at team meetings or away days.

Dreaming

This is when teams get together and work out who they are and what they are there for. This stage can also feel like the "honeymoon period" – a new beginning.

Nuts and bolts

This is when group members have to work out how they will work together. This is often the time when teams discuss and argue different points until they reach a consensus.

Settling in

When both consciously and unconsciously the team establishes a "way of being" together. The team



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communications system and aims are clear, and the culture of the team has emerged from the collective behaviour of the team members.

Delivering

Once the team has found its norms, team members have found their way to work well together so that they collectively operate well as a team, focusing on working effectively to agreed team tasks.

Transforming

This is possible for teams that are really able to be "whole" – so that each member creatively connects and contributes to the "bigger picture" – where it fits within the policy context and within the whole organisation. When this happens, I find that teams exceed expectation (theirs and other people's) and not only achieve their objectives but really transform their work.

Teams that reach this transforming stage work on the premise that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, rather than the other way round. And when that happens, teams achieve extraordinary things.

Discussion points

DREAMING

- What is the team vision?
- What are our shared values? (What do we believe in as a team?)
- What is the purpose of the team?
- What are our terms of reference?

NUTS AND BOLTS

- What are the team goals?
- What are our roles and responsibilities?
- How are we going to work together?
- What are our communication systems?

SETTLING IN

This is a good time to undertake a team self-assessment:

- Check that the working culture you have created is the one you are all happy with
- Is the team working to fulfil its objectives?
- Is everyone clear and happy with their roles and responsibilities
- Are we communicating well together?

TRANSFORMING

- Where does the team fit in the bigger picture?
- Do we communicate well with the wider organisation?
- How can we work with other teams to enhance our service delivery?
- How does our team make a difference?

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