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**The Influence of Early History on Team
Development Customer Service Manager
Teams at People Express Airlines**

**CEO Publication
G 88-21 (134)**

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ABSTRACT

This chapter compares the performance of two Customer Service Manager Teams, one highly effective and the other relatively ineffective, at an airline designed and managed to foster high employee commitment. The key factor, contributing to performance differences between these two teams, was their early history at the airline. The more successful team was exposed to early opportunity, providing its members with visible success, recognition, and the belief that future opportunities would be forthcoming. The less successful team had an early negative experience, which reduced members' willingness to commit to their jobs or the airline. A team that believes it will be successful behaves in a way to make it so, by developing a positive task perceptions and productivity norms. A team that believes that opportunity will not be forthcoming no matter what it does will not generate much effort or capitalize upon opportunities that present themselves. This is particularly true for customer service teams that spend most of their time in contact with customers, rather than other members of their organization.

Team #1. Kate and Dave were returning to the Newark hub after their overnight in Pittsburgh. They had checked into the Pittsburgh City Station and the City Manager informed them that their flight was going to be observed by an inflight coordinator. Mindy, the inflight coordinator, joined Kate and Dave and enthusiastically said "I will be joining you for a support ride." Kate smiled and said welcome, but her voice had a tense edge to it. When Mindy turned away, Dave rolled his eyes and Kate laughed.

Mindy had worked for the airline for the same amount of time as Kate and Dave. In fact, they had been in the same training class for new Customer Service Managers (flight attendants) when they first joined the company. Mindy had recently volunteered to be an inflight coordinator and was not really sure what this meant. Kate and Dave resented receiving feedback from another Customer Service Manager. Kate explained that a "support ride" was another word for a "check ride" and that she had resented check rides in her former job as a flight attendant for another airline. Kate stated that an airline that believes in self-management should be different.

The third Customer Service Manager who was assigned to this flight was new to the airline. She had just completed training and this was her second flight. Dave and Kate asked her to serve beverages so that they could concentrate on collecting revenues from the inflight ticketing procedure. There was a discrepancy in their figures, so they spent most of the flight time checking the books. The beverage service was not completed, and some of the passengers complained about the lack of service.

At the end of the flight, Kate and Dave asked Mindy for her feedback. She said she was late for a meeting in Newark and would "get back" to them. When they met two weeks later, Kate and Dave had flown several flights, and could barely remember the specifics of this particular leg. Their conversation took place outside the crew room and several people interrupted to say hello. Mindy said that basically they had done a good job, but they could have been more enthusiastic. She also suggested that they split up the beverage service, beginning one cart in the center of the aisle. They argued that ticketing was their first priority, and that it was more important for them to finish ticketing. The team was defensive and dismissed the suggestions of the coordinator.

Team #2. "These guys are great!" Jim said as we walked briskly down the hallway to meet the members of the team for the first time. Often, these first encounters with the teams we were studying were awkward -- they were uncertain why they were being studied, and not quite sure how to deal with a researcher who wanted to observe the team. Instead, we talked excitedly about the team and the airline for almost an hour before it was time to leave on an "Albany overnight" followed by a "Jacksonville turn" -- airline language for an early evening trip to Albany, a stay overnight before returning to Newark, followed by a round trip to Jacksonville with only 20 minutes on the ground in Florida.

The flight to Albany was crowded, but the team boarded and seated the passengers quickly and comfortably. Judy greeted them at the front door, Charlie helped stow their bags mid-cabin, and Roy stayed in the back to make certain that passengers came all the way back to fill up the seats in the rear. They were friendly and helpful and appeared very professional.

Once everyone was seated, the show began. All of the team members obviously enjoyed the attention they received from the passengers, and saw this as a performance both for the passengers and the researcher. Charlie did the announcements, and quickly set everyone at ease with a combination of humor and professionalism. It felt like we were guests on this flight rather than passengers. ["These guys are great..."]

On route to Albany, the time available to ticket and serve beverages to passengers is only about 40 minutes. This flight had a full load of 118 passengers. To pull it off, Roy started in mid-cabin serving beverages while Judy started ticketing at the front of the plane, and Charlie followed her down the aisle with the second beverage cart. They had "invented" this method of ticketing and serving beverages, so that they could ticket and beverage everyone, even on short flights. ["These guys are great..."] It worked! They flew down the aisle taking money, issuing tickets, and serving drinks, and finished selling the last ticket just as the pilot came on the PA to say "we are now beginning our final descent into Albany."

A day later, on the much longer flight to Jacksonville, they did a much more relaxed version of the same inflight task, but this time they added in a few extras: since the flight was two hours long they had the time for extended conversations with their passengers -- Charlie, Judy, and Roy seldom stopped talking! In addition, since they had more than enough time to finish ticketing, the second beverage cart could be used to serve passengers in the back (the smokers) a second drink. ["These guys are great..."] This method of ticketing and serving drinks was quickly catching on around the airline.

These two teams are both Customer Service Manager teams at an airline designed and managed to foster high employee commitment and participation. Customer Service Managers (CSMs) work in self-managing teams on board the aircraft to provide cabin service and ticketing, and to ensure passenger safety. In addition to this work, usually performed by flight attendants on other airlines, CSMs also work regularly on the ground, checking bags and directing passengers to their flights, and often work in staff jobs, such as marketing or revenue accounting, and reservations. CSMs usually work in teams of three, which are formed as a part of a team-building process that occurs during their in-flight training. These teams stay together, working as a unit in ground operations, staff work, and in-flight for an indefinite period of time. This chapter takes a look at two CSM teams, one highly effective and one relatively ineffective, and attempts to identify the behavioral factors that explain the differences between the two teams.

Both teams were a part of People Express Airlines, a young and rapidly growing airline designed and managed to foster high employee commitment and participation. They use a number of highly innovative management practices such as stock ownership and profit sharing, cross-utilization or job rotation throughout the organization, self-management with limited hierarchical authority, and the team concept (Denison, 1985; Hackman, 1984; Reimer, 1984). People Express uses teams to make decisions and perform work wherever possible, and there is an explicit recognition that productivity is a product of a team effort, rather than of outstanding individual performance. This is in rather stark contrast to a traditional airline in which performance is controlled primarily through standardization of jobs and a rather strict division of labor. This chapter concentrates on the work of cabin teams in flight, where the airline attempts to capitalize upon the teamwork that is inherent in cabin work.

These two CSM teams performed the same work for the same airline, and have been with the organization about the same length of time. What accounts for the differences in their effectiveness? As the opening examples show, the first team failed to complete its inflight task,

regarded the company management with suspicion and mistrust, and resented attempts to improve their performance. The second team, in contrast, completed their in-flight task quickly and gracefully, and provided high quality service to customers. They also enjoyed their work and were highly committed to the airline. This chapter takes an in-depth look at these two CSM teams, one highly effective and one relatively ineffective, and attempts to identify the factors that explain the differences between the two teams.

The Two Teams: "Wunderkind" and "Dyad"

Throughout this chapter, we refer to the two teams by the pseudonyms "Wunderkind" and "Dyad." The Wunderkind team had a reputation throughout the company for both its sociability and its effective performance. It was, in fact, picked for the study as a model team that was exemplary in its performance and attitude. Its in-flight service was exceptional and it always completed on-board ticketing (a People Express innovation), even on short, crowded flights. Its beverage service was quick and efficient, and it often provided a second beverage service on all but the shortest flights. The team members were unbridled in their enthusiasm for their work, the company, and each other. In their own words, "Our group's performance always exceeds the expectation of our passengers and fellow managers. We have an excellent turnaround time [and] good passenger relations."

The Wunderkind team was composed of two Caucasian-American males and one female, all in their late twenties. At the time of the study, they had been together for approximately 14 months, and this was the only team that they had been a part of at People Express. In addition to being effective at work, they also socialized together regularly and even took vacations together. They exemplified the spirit of People Express in their claim that "the group that plays together, stays together"

The Dyad team was unusual in that it only had two permanent members. Teams of three are formed while the CSMs are going through in-flight training, and the teams usually remain together for some time after they begin working. This team had originally been a three-person team, but one of the original members had left the company. The team now functioned as a two-person team and required a rotating third for each trip. The Dyad was composed of a 27-year-old Asian-American female and a 31-year-old Caucasian-American male. They had both worked for People Express for about 12 months and had joined the airline during its first year of operations. Prior to People Express, Kate worked as a flight attendant for another airline and Dave worked in the mental health field. This was their second in-flight team. Kate and Dave chose to work together after they had had some experience flying together and checking in customers. This team was generally much less effective than the Wunderkind team. The Dyad was able to complete ticketing and beverage service on long flights, but it usually did not complete beverage service on short flights with full passenger loads. The Dyad also had occasional difficulty adapting to and including their rotating third member. The in-flight coordinator, who was familiar with the performance and working style of the CSM teams, evaluated this team as lacking enthusiasm in their customer service. Nonetheless, passengers who were asked generally expressed satisfaction with the performance of this team, and the researcher who observed the team saw them respond efficiently and professionally to a medical emergency.

Both teams perform the same work for the same organization and have been with the company about the same length of time. Members are all about the same age and members of both teams freely selected each other as teammates. Still, the teams differed dramatically in their performance. What are the reasons for this? What does this tell us about the interaction and performance of work teams in general?

Group Size and Performance Effectiveness

The most obvious difference between the two teams is the difference in the number of permanent members. The Dyad functioned as a two person team and required a rotating third for each trip. The Wunderkind was the correct size for its inflight work. Did the Wunderkind perform better simply because it was bigger?

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) mandates that three flight attendants must be on board this aircraft in order to meet safety standards. In-flight ticketing increases the work load on cabin crews. The dyad always had the extra burden of coordinating someone relatively new. Thus, its insufficient size may have contributed to performance difficulties, but does not explain the entire difference between the two teams.

Research on work teams suggests that their size should be adequate to do the work, but no larger, and that there are some advantages to groups that are slightly smaller than what the task technically requires (Steiner, 1972; Wicker, Kirmeyer, Hanson, and Alexander, 1976). The members of the Dyad felt that they pulled together to compensate for the lack of a third permanent member. They said that they enjoyed coaching new CSMs and that only on short flights was it difficult to incorporate a new person. On many flights, the dyad coordinated their efforts exceptionally well with a relative newcomer.

In addition, the Wunderkind performed better than most three person teams at the airline. Its company reputation for providing excellent service and modeling exemplary attitudes was not based solely on comparisons with two person teams. Even if size was a contributing factor to the performance and attitude differences between these two teams, it is not the primary factor.

Group Process and Team Effectiveness

Behavioral scientists have traditionally attempted to explain group effectiveness in terms of the characteristics of the interpersonal processes among members. Steiner (1972), for example, in his classic model of group process and effectiveness, contrasted the potential of a work group with its actual performance and attributed the difference to something called "process loss." This tradition persists, despite the relative absence of supporting evidence, and often constitutes an assumption, rather than a hypothesis, in group process research. This assumption is not supported by our comparison of the Wunderkind and Dyad teams. In fact, it may be blatantly wrong -- both teams were characterized by excellent interpersonal processes.

The members of the Wunderkind team knew what to expect from one another on board the aircraft. They had excellent communication skills and their high level of coordination seemed effortless. They would decide how to divide up tasks at the last minute with only a glance, a smile, or a hand signal. While one made an announcement about a delay, the second would comfort a child flying alone for the first time, and the third would help mid-cabin customers to place their luggage in the overhead compartments.

Early in the team's history, the members used to meet together after the day's work was done to discuss how they could coordinate better and work more effectively. They enjoyed figuring out ways in which their work could be done more quickly, more easily, or better. It was clear from their joking and laughing that they enjoyed working with each other. In their own words, "Our communication is the best. There is no jealousy on the team. We are at home with each other."

The members of the Dyad team also coordinated their efforts quite effectively and have excellent communication skills. In their own words, "When one of us is tired or not feeling well, the other fills in. The best thing about our team is our capacity to communicate." During the in-flight medical emergency that one of the researchers observed, one CSM administered oxygen to the potential heart attack victim, the second informed the cockpit, and the third took care of the rest of the cabin. This division of labor took place with a minimum of conversation; yet the eye contact and other non-verbal communication suggested that this approach was jointly determined. The Dyad members were also friends outside the job and they, too, had taken trips together for fun. In individual interviews, both members stressed how much they liked working with each other and how they could resolve problems by just talking them out. For example, they differed in the type of schedule that they preferred. Dave wanted weekends off to spend time with family and friends, while Kate wanted weekdays off so that she could take advantage of the free flying privileges that employees had. They resolved this by being flexible in how they would bid on the schedule each month, taking into account the specific activities that they each had planned. This team also appeared to have excellent interpersonal processes.

The responses of these two teams to the survey items on the Work Teams Questionnaire give further evidence that they are very similar in their interpersonal processes. Both teams have excellent scores on the interpersonal process index, as can be seen from the survey data presented in the Appendix. The only reasonable theoretical conclusion to reach from these data, both quantitative and qualitative, is that an excellent group process is not sufficient to create a high-performing work team. Next, we look to the design of the work itself.

The Work Design: How Motivating Is It?

Comparing these two teams also presents a unique opportunity to look at the impact of work design on performance. Theories of work design and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Turner & Lawrence, 1962) have stressed that jobs that include variety, feedback, autonomy, task identity, and an opportunity for growth will be favored by employees and are likely to lead to a higher level of motivation than jobs that do not have these characteristics. Comparing the Wunderkind and Dyad teams presents an interesting natural field experiment -- both teams perform the same job, in the same organization, at the same time -- but they differ greatly in their performance. Can this difference in task performance be attributed to differences in perceptions of the work itself, given that both teams perform the same task?

It is clear that the two teams differed greatly in how they experienced the in-flight task. The Wunderkind team just enjoyed flying. As one member said, "I guess we're just 'stews' [stewards or stewardesses] at heart." They viewed short flights as an opportunity to beat previous records for speed and efficiency. They were proud of their ability to sell tickets and provide beverage service to 118 passengers on a 38-minute flight from Newark to Boston. They liked interacting with customers and took advantage of any opportunity to talk with them. The team members felt that the task required autonomous decision making and that task feedback was immediate and tangible. As an example, the team mentioned that they knew immediately whether or not ticketing revenues balanced or how their customers were reacting to the service.

In contrast, the Dyad team was not motivated by the in-flight task. They perceived cabin work as trivial, routine, and demeaning. As they stated during the interviews, "The work aboard the aircraft is not intellectually challenging. We feel like we are \$25,000 garbage collectors." The Dyad viewed most of their work as predetermined either by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements or company policies and, as a result, felt that the decisions which they made as a team were either "cut and dried" or were of little consequence. The team enjoyed receiving feedback from customers but felt that this did not occur frequently enough. Consequently, it seldom took advantage of the spare time that was available to talk to customers. The Dyad was

bored with the everyday routine. Even though both teams were performing the same basic task, one perceived the work to be challenging and exciting while the other perceived it to be routine and trivial. This basic discrepancy between Dyad's and Wunderkind's perceptions of the task is also borne out in their responses to the Work Team Questionnaire's task design indexes in the Appendix.

The researchers also independently evaluated the CSMs in-flight task. We saw the collection of tasks that make up the CSMs in-flight job--providing cabin services, ensuring passenger safety, and collecting revenues--as being moderate in motivating potential. The in-flight task is a mixture of the routine and the unexpected. Interacting with passengers is unpredictable, adds variety, and helps to break up the monotony of repetitive in-flight subtasks. The potential for emergencies creates uncertainty, but emergencies rarely occur. The number of passengers to be handled within short flights makes the task demanding, although the specific activities themselves are relatively simple for experienced crews. This variety of routine and varied tasks seems to present a wide range of task definitions, redefinitions, and team perceptions that can lead to widely differing experiences of the job on board the aircraft.

We think that the perceptions of the task, and the set of internalized norms that supported those perceptions, acted as self-fulfilling prophecies in both the Dyad and the Wunderkind teams. The Wunderkind defined flying as exciting, and the team members worked to make it exciting. They viewed short flights as a contest and worked to improve their efficiency. The Dyad team, in contrast, accepted their inability to complete beverage services and complained that company policy should require four CSMs on short flights. The Wunderkind team maximized the opportunities for customer feedback, while the Dyad felt that this was out of their control. Although the duties were essentially the same, it was as though these two teams performed entirely different jobs. We conclude that the discrepancies between the two teams' perceptions of the in-flight task contributed directly to their gap in performance. The question then becomes, What created this fundamental difference in the two teams' perceptions of their (essentially

identical) task?

The Teams' Early Histories: Getting on a Good or a Bad Track

Saying that the difference in performance can be explained by differing perceptions of the task only begins to unravel the mystery of the performance gap between these two teams. We know that the members of Wunderkind were more enthusiastic about flying than the members of Dyad, and we believe that this enthusiasm motivated their effective performance. But what made the members of Wunderkind more enthusiastic and more motivated? Was it personality? Were the Wunderkind simply more enthusiastic and positive people? Was it their situation? Their position in the organization? We think that the early history of these two teams at People Express helps to explain their tendency to have greatly differing perceptions of the same basic task. People Express quickly fulfilled its promise of opportunity to the Wunderkind, and the members internalized the excitement of contributing to this new airline. The Dyad's early experience demonstrated that teamwork and inflight performance would not be rewarded, so the team became unwilling to exert the extra effort required for company success. A negative spiral was created. Here's how it happened.

One in a hundred. At the time of this study, the airline interviewed 100 candidates (and scanned many more applications) in order to select one Customer Service Manager. The "one in a hundred" knew that he or she was special. Customer Service Managers were hired for their enthusiasm, managerial talents, service excellence, and the desire to learn and grow. The members of both Dyad and Wunderkind were told during recruiting and training that opportunity was available for those who pursued it. The sky was the limit. The members of both teams believed in self-management, teamwork, and an organization where the number one precept is "service, [and] commitment to the growth of people." They all wanted to contribute to the growth

of this exciting new airline. The personality differences and early training and recruitment experiences of the two teams do not explain the Dyad's later lack of job motivation. Something happened.

The Wunderkind team. The promise of opportunity was quickly fulfilled for the Wunderkind team. After flying together for about five months, the airline, growing and expanding rapidly at this point, selected the Wunderkind team to move to West Palm Beach, Florida, and open up their new city station there. It was up to the team members to do whatever was necessary to open a new station and begin air service between West Palm Beach and Newark. They negotiated with government officials and personnel from other airlines. They selected contractors and bought supplies. They talked to CSMs and Managing Officers who had opened up other city stations, but it was up to them to tailor the operational systems to the particular requirements of the situation in West Palm. They frequently communicated with top-level managers about their progress.

Beginning a new city station was a unique, exciting, and challenging opportunity for a CSM team, and for the Wunderkind it was a great success. The entire company was aware of its achievement and top-level managers, when asked for an example of an excellent team, would mention the Wunderkind. The members felt recognized and rewarded for doing excellent work, and this carried over to their in-flight duties and their perception of the in-flight job. They also expected that their good performance would lead to other challenging opportunities. The future fulfilled these expectations, but it also led to the break-up of the team: one year later, one of the members was the training representative on the task force that planned the airline's first international route to London; the second member was a part of the first group of 747-qualified CSMs that made the first trip to London; and the third was chosen to work in a new city station that was being opened. The team members had succeeded at what Tracy Kidder, author of the Pulitzer Prize winner *The Soul of a New Machine*, called "pinball" -- winning one game had allowed the team to play more (Kidder, 1981). Their success in West Palm Beach provided them

with recognition and future opportunities. The People Express promise of ongoing personal and professional growth was a reality for the Wunderkind.

The Dyad team. A key event in the history of the Dyad team also seems to have had a strong influence on the members' perceptions of their work and the company. This event was the firing of Steve, their third teammate. The Dyad members described it to one of the researchers in the following way.

Kate, Dave, and Steve reported to the crew room at the usual check-in time. They were scheduled for a double overnight and would not be home for four days. There was a note in Steve's mailbox asking him to see the Managing Officer in charge of Human Resources. A standby CSM was assigned by scheduling to replace Steve on this trip.

Kate and Dave were concerned because there had previously been some problems with Steve. He would sometimes come on too strong with passengers and had on occasion lost his temper with other CSMs. Recognizing that these problems had affected the team, Kate and Dave worked with Steve so that he would handle difficult situations more appropriately. In their minds, his performance had clearly improved, and the three of them felt proud to be a team. Kate and Dave viewed Steve as being very dedicated to the company.

When Kate and Dave returned from their trip, they heard via the rumor mill that Steve had been fired. Steve was bitter and felt that he had been unfairly treated. No one had obtained input about Steve's performance from either Kate or Dave, nor involved them in any way in Steve's counseling or firing. Kate and Dave initiated a meeting with the Managing Officer to discuss what had occurred. The Managing Officer

told them that the firing had nothing to do with the team -- that it was an individual matter.

When the study began, it was eight months since the firing. Kate and Dave were still flying as a team of two with a rotating third. They wondered if they had been included in the study because of Steve's firing but, nonetheless, decided to participate in the research.

This experience had a powerful impact on the work attitudes of the members of the Dyad team. First, it suggested to them that teamwork was not important to the company. Steve's firing had nothing to do with their performance as a team; in fact, no one was even interested in

their evaluation of Steve's work, even though they were the only managers in the company who had worked with Steve on a daily basis! It particularly upset them that Steve's performance, and the performance of the whole team, had improved recently, and yet those in charge of counseling and firing acted as if this did not matter.

Second, Kate and Dave felt that no recognition had been given for Steve's dedication to the company and his willingness to work at a staff job during his free time. Kate and Dave both wanted to have staff opportunities because they were tired of just flying. Working staff was one of the few ways that you could advance or do more interesting work. Still, they were not willing to give up all of their free time just to work in a staff job. Steve's experience reinforced their unwillingness to sacrifice their time off so that they could pursue staff opportunities.

Dave also commented that he once had the chance to be in a staff position after three months of flying, but that he turned it down because he felt that he needed more in-flight experience. He now regretted that decision because of the lack of current opportunities. Dave and Kate both felt as though they had suffered because of their early dedication to flying the line. This, combined with Steve's treatment after he had volunteered to work staff in his free time, made the Dyad members hesitate to become more involved in and committed to the organization.

Dave and Kate also felt that good performance in flight was not recognized or rewarded by those in positions of authority. At the time of the study, there were 115 teams of Customer Service Managers. It was hard to stand out and be noticed by those in authority. They felt lost on the line. They noticed that most of the CSMs who were chosen to be Team Coordinators had worked full-time in a staff area prior to their selection. Kate and Dave felt that the criteria for opportunity depended upon who you knew rather than how you performed. Visibility, friendships, and workaholism seemed to be the main criteria for advancement.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper has contrasted the work attitudes and perceptions of two CSM teams at People Express Airlines. We have tried to explain their widely differing perceptions and attitudes on the basis of their early history and development. The Dyad's early experience taught them that teamwork and good inflight performance would not be recognized or rewarded by the airline. The Wunderkind's experience, in contrast, taught them that good performance would not only be rewarded but would lead to a whole string of opportunities and successes. This difference led the two teams to have widely differing perceptions of the job itself and of the reward structure of the airline. It did not, however, make much difference in their perceptions of their group process. Both groups had very good interaction processes and communication.

The Wunderkind team was more effective aboard the aircraft because it was able to sustain the level of effort necessary to provide excellent customer service. The members inferred from their history that new opportunities would be forthcoming and did not feel trapped by in-flight work. We believe that their level of effort came from their belief that new opportunities would be forthcoming.

The Dyad team was not motivated to sustain the level of effort necessary to provide excellent customer service. The members felt demeaned by flight attendant work and inferred from their history that new opportunities would not be forthcoming. They were disappointed not only in their work but also in the company, because People Express had not fulfilled its promise of ongoing personal and professional growth. Their lack of effort and low performance seemed to reflect their disappointment and belief that new opportunities would not be forthcoming.

What can these two teams tell us about the effectiveness of work groups in general? One lesson seems to be not to look exclusively at the internal interaction processes of groups in order to understand their effectiveness. This chapter began by noting that two teams, with very different levels of performance, both had very good internal communication. We argued that this meant that "group process" was not a very good explanation for group effectiveness. We then concluded, at the end of the chapter, that the set of performance norms that operated in these two groups differed tremendously and that the socially constructed definition of the importance of the group's task also varied greatly. Both of these seemed to have a direct impact on performance and effectiveness. This poses an interesting conundrum: performance norms and the socially constructed definition of the group task seem to have an impact on effectiveness. Both performance norms and task definitions are typically supported by the internal process of the group, but the internal process of the group is itself (at least in this study) relatively unrelated to group effectiveness. Furthermore, the performance norms and socially constructed definition of the group task seem to arise, in part, from the interaction of the group members over time.

A second lesson seems to be not to look exclusively at the design of the actual task when trying to understand the effectiveness of a work team. The group's perceptions of the task are often as important as the design of the actual work itself; and the perceived instrumentality of the task for other goals, beyond the scope of the task itself, also appears to be a key motivator. An expectancy framework (Lawler, 1973; Vroom, 1964) probably provides the best explanation of the importance of this instrumentality to the motivation of these two teams. Expectancy theory, despite the fact that it was designed to explain the motivation of individuals rather than groups, helps to turn our attention in the same direction that these two teams seemed to look each day when they decided how hard to work: to the future.

The most important lesson, however, has to do with how early organizational experiences can generate self-fulfilling and self-reinforcing prophecies of work team success or failure. A team that believes it will be successful in an organization behaves in a way to make it so. It develops

the positive task perceptions and productivity norms to make it successful. A team that believes that opportunity will not be forthcoming no matter what it does will not generate much effort or capitalize on the opportunities that present themselves. A downward spiral will set in. Such cycles are hard to change, particularly in customer service teams that spend most of their time in contact with customers rather than other members of their organization.

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