

# IMPORTANCE OF TEAM WORK FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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Team work is becoming increasingly important both in profit-oriented and non-profit organizations. Organizations with established team work operate with higher quality, speed and more economically. Our research was based on the case of the Centre for Blind and Poor-sighted (CSS) and the staff of the centre are aware of that. They think that the quality of their team work should be improved. To reach this goal, a survey has been performed to establish the status quo in the centre. We have focused on the work of the health care team in the centre and the level of satisfaction of the centre residents.

The survey was performed using two types of questionnaires. Questionnaires of the first type were distributed to entire staff of the health care team, while the questionnaires of the other type were given to the centre residents that were able to cooperate.

To summarize the results, we have established that one of the main problems of the employees is speech communication. All members of the health care staff think that speech communication related problems and unclear situations arise inside the team. This can be also detected in problem situations related to unplanned conversations. This is partially linked to an individual's self-confidence. Individuals with more self-confidence have less communication difficulties. Also, the mentioned factors influence the frequency of conflict situations that arise due to lack of information the staff possess.

We should be aware that conflict situations don't have only negative qualities, but positive qualities are also present. Nonetheless, the opinions of centre residents are also very important for this research. The attained results show, that the residents are very satisfied with the health care staffs' performance and have no complaints regarding their work.

From the theoretical findings and the attained results we have also constructed the action model of health care team for Blind and Poor-sighted in Škofja Loka in Slovenia.

Key words: Non-profit organizations, team, human resources, teamwork, communication, conflicts

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Teamwork is becoming more and more an important factor in the development of individual sectors. As we already know man has been operating in teams or groups from the beginning and this has been always helpful for survival and personal development. Man alone without any help of his fellow man was never and will never be capable of surviving. Teamwork in organisations is just as important, as we live most of our time in mutual interaction in formal and informal groups.

Managers often talk about teamwork when fellow co-workers are friendly, polite and respectful, as stated by author Dennis A. Romig, Ph.D. in his work "Breakthrough teamwork". A secure and friendly work environment is not a condition within itself for forming progressive teamwork. Politeness and respect are the first conditions for successful advancement of the team, however they do not characterise teamwork. (Romig, 1996)

The research that was done deals with the basics of teamwork in organisations, with an emphasis on mutual co-operation, communication and conflicts. The operations and communication of the healthcare team at the Centre for the blind and weak-sighted in Škofja Loka were presented.

The social work at the centre is performed directly with the elderly and their relatives by using the social work method of the individual and group. The social work with the individual starts with the first contact of applicant and their relatives, where gathering the necessary documentation, solving personal problems and problems in asserting social and other rights begins with an emphasis on organising mutual relations. The social work done by a group is a method which gives an important heartbeat in living at the centre. This method of work encourages communication, co-operation and gives a feeling of belonging, which motivates people for participating in various activities, that are held at the centre. The workers at the centre must also

communicate and co-operate amongst themselves in order to achieve success in their work.

## 2 THE BASICS OF TEAMWORK

A team is a group of people who carry out work collectively. The greatest success is achieved when we choose a good team. Direction towards the same goal is very important for success. The path to the goal can be changed but the goal cannot be. It is necessary to choose capable, intelligent, communicative individuals, who know the problem and want to co-operate for work in a team. It is necessary to synchronise and direct people toward the same goal. The entire group achieves the goal in this type of synchronisation and not only the individual or the team leader. This is the right path to success just as in sports, the economy, politics and elsewhere.

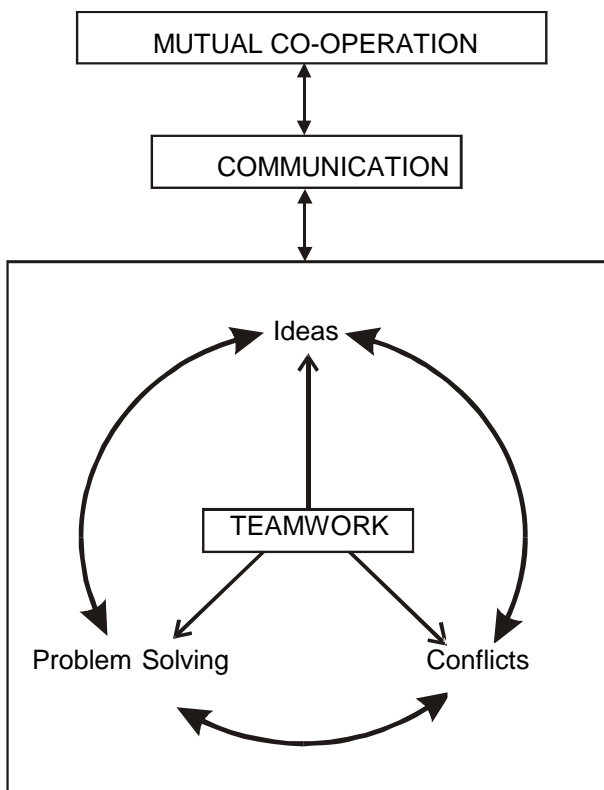


Figure 1: Factors that are unavoidably connected to teamwork

From the above figure we can see that teamwork is connected to looking for ideas, such as conflicts and solving problems, and these factors are reciprocally connected and dependent on each other. Communication and mutual co-operation are present everywhere.

1.

- Teamwork – ideas

Teamwork in the forefront represents the collection of ideas amongst team participants for achieving a

certain goal. Brainstorming is one of the most well-known techniques for gathering ideas, whereby participants state their ideas, and the leader writes them down. The participants are timed and thus there are no commentaries and valuing the ideas.

- Teamwork – conflicts

Whenever we work in a team, the views of the participants towards the problems differentiate. Conflicts can arise about the decision how to achieve the desired goal, or the participants can disagree about the goal itself. It is difficult to rank the problems according to importance.

- Teamwork – solving problems

The team is not necessary if it does not mean solving a problem that a group of individuals must perform. The synchronisation of individuals, mutual adaptation and co-operation are necessary for solving problems.

2.

- Ideas – conflicts / conflicts – ideas

The goal of teamwork is to solve problems. Individual ideas come about which can be very different, regardless of leading towards a collective goal. This is why conflicts occur in groups, which must be simultaneously solved. On the basis of conflicts we more than often come to an optimal solution to the problem.

- Conflicts – solving problems / solving problems – conflicts

Conflicts help to make a better solution to a problem. This means the solution, which is, supported by the majority of individuals. When we are solving problems new conflicts arise. A never-ending circle appears and is there until both sides let go and with this they try to find an optimal solution.

- Solving problems – ideas / ideas – solving problems

The problem, that arises is most efficiently solved on gathered ideas of more participants of team. This is how every team member can express their opinions, desires and ideas. When everyone expresses their views, we try to harmonise and choose a collective solution.

3.

- Teamwork – communication – mutual co-operation / mutual co-operation – communication – teamwork

Communication and mutual co-operation are needed for the entire teamwork. Adapting and adjusting fall under this category. Without this teamwork is unsuccessful. Communication can be verbal

(expressed by talking) and non-verbal (expressed by written form). In most cases we try to establish what are goals are and what the paths are with their help. If we do not want to communicate and express our opinions, if we are not prepared and are afraid of conflicts and if we are not interested in a collective solution to the problem it is better that we avoid teamwork as much as possible. The participants must be motivated for teamwork. With the mutual co-operation of the entire team there is better quality of work and with this better operations and greater success at all levels.

## 2.1 Teamwork Development

Today, teamwork is much more present and has more worth. Numerous authors around the world write about teams and teamwork. Its presence is in profit as well as non-profit organisations. The main problem in implementing teamwork is fear and mistrust of employees in implementing new methods of work. It is important to first develop a team in the organisation when implementing teamwork. The development of teamwork or groups occurs in certain phases, which we must follow.

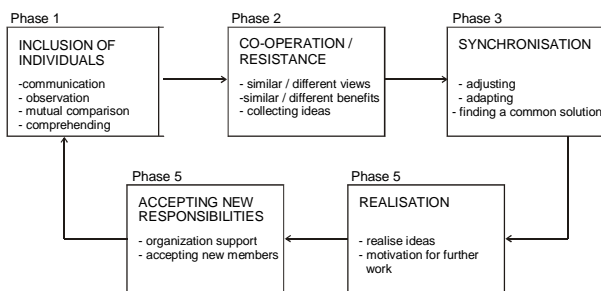


Figure 2: Team development phases

On the basis of communication and observation the team participants get to know each other and mutually compare each other in the first phase. When they undertake the problem for which they came together, similar or different views arise and the benefits of the individuals in co-operating or resistance occurs. Many ideas are put forth in this phase, in which on the basis of adapting in the following phase must be adjusted. Here we must achieve a consensus and support of the majority. When we come to a common solution it is necessary to realise the idea. This is the most important and the most demanding phase of successful teamwork. We must be cautious that we do not lose the support of our co-workers of the team during realisation, because the next phase involves accepting new responsibilities. In many cases at this moment some members are exchanged, also the manager and thus we are back at phase one. It is important that the working group is maintained as a team. Thus, team

development means a continual process by which it can only be interrupted by the destruction of the team.

## 3 THE BASICS OF COMMUNICATION IN AN ORGANISATION

Whenever we meet someone or we are in their vicinity, regardless if we know the person or not, we are engaging in some type of communication. It does not have to be verbal; communication can be in other forms. It is impossible not to communicate in society. Author S. Možina of the book Management states communication in an organisation is similar to a person's blood flow. When communication in an organisation is cut off the consequences are catastrophic – productivity decreases, employee satisfaction falls – and thus it is necessary to reconstruct the communication system in these cases.

Communication is a process of transporting information with the aim being mutual understanding.(Florjančič, 1996) Communication includes all the occurrences in which information is sent and exchanged. Communications – the exchange of information – are of essential importance for the social system – the organisation. Information can be identified as energy, which flows from input to output.

### 3.1 The Communication Process

The communication process in the wider sense is composed if the sender, message and the recipient.



Figure 3: The Communication Process (Florjančič, 1996)

#### - Sender

This is a person who sends the message. It is important that they prepare the message in advance – importance, the person we are sending to, in which form and when it will be sent. They must respect the four fundamental rules of communication: being organised, the message should be understood, establish the possible realisation of the message and understand the people we are sending the message to.

#### - The Message

The message must be comprehensible, so the recipient will know exactly what the sender wants. The message should not have unnecessary words and phrases, thus it should be methodological, logical and not too excessive.

- The Code

The code, the rules or symbols are ways of communication or comprehension. Without them the message does not achieve its purpose. Both side should recognise the method used.

- Path – channel

The channel is the means for transferring the message. This can be a word, a note, the telephone etc. in transferring the message especially if we have more channels the message does not end up at the recipient intact because of losses (filtration) and gossip (distorted). The recipient gets the wrong information because of this and the consequences could be poor work quality or the incorrect realisation of work etc.

- The Recipient (Možina, Damjan, 1994)

The recipient is a person who receives and decodes the sender's the message. The most important demands of the receiver is the ability to listen. Listening means hearing and devoting attention to the message.

### 3.2 Feedback Control (Florjančič, 1996)

Feedback control is receiving and checking the information that was sent.

One-way communication happens if the sent message goes in one-way without any feedback control. This is when the information is simple and above all understood. Some information is very hard to understand, this is why it is necessary that the sender knows if the recipient received the message correctly. This can be established only if there exists two-way communication, so that feedback is received that the recipient got the message. Two-way communication is much more important if the sender and recipient have many middlemen.

Therefore, information feedback is important for completing the circle of communication. Only this enables true comprehension, which produces the essence of communication.

## 4 TEAM CONFLICTS

Many times conflicts and arguments, which need to be solved, arise within teamwork. In most cases tensions arise between leaders and workers and amongst workers themselves. The entire team sometimes resists the leaders. Such conflicts are unavoidable amongst the relations. If we think that teams that have no conflicts are more successful than teams that do have conflicts, we are mistaken. A conflict is something normal, different opinions and

ideas can allow us to reach an optimal solution. We must confront conflicts with individuals at the right time, as on the contrary the problem can become part of the whole team.

A conflict (Pagon, 1997) is an interaction of interdependent people or groups, who are experiencing incompatibility of their goals or some barriers in achieving them. If two people are independent of one another, a conflict cannot arise between the two. There is also no conflict if their is complete dependency. A conflict arises where there is interdependence: because the results of one are dependent of the actions of the other (if one person doesn't finish there work on time, the entire group cannot finish the work). Conflicts can arise, when we think that someone's goals are obstructing ours or if they are against our goals.

A conflict can be positive or negative. It must consist studying the causes and finding suitable solutions. A conflict is damaging when instead of co-operating the employees resist and create more costs.

### 4.1 Solving Conflicts

When we notice a conflict, we must successfully solve it on the basis of the causes. The causes are important so that we can start solving the origin of the conflict. For example if two team members argue because of personal problems, in which is later seen as resistance within the teamwork, it is beneficial if we recognise the cause of the argument and thus try to solve it. We try to solve the only the conflict which is tied to the team and do not get involved in any personal matters.

Relations amongst co-workers always vary, they are rarely harmonious without any kind of resistance. It is important to recognise and solve conflicts when they arise. If conflicts exist then there must be a path to a solution. There must be a path so conflicts can be decreased, moderated and also solved. We can even make the conflict bigger, if we choose the wrong path for their solution.

## 5 PRESENTING THE INSTITUTION

The Centre for the blind and weak-sighted in Škofja Loka opened in 1935. Firstly the home was built only for the blind and weak-sighted. A new building was built in 1979: retirement home and the high school and in the year 2000 all the activities from the institution were transferred to a newly established disability institution CSS-IP. These changes came about after long-term negotiations, in which it was

impossible to find a suitable legal solution, in which the activities in the institution could be still running and the preservation tax benefits which are present.

### 5.1 A Retirement Home

The idea that a general social institution for old-age security could be built within the realm of the Centre for the blind and weak-sighted in Škofja Loka, was seen as being economically, socially and space-wise grounded. The new home, which was built in 1979, has 214 beds, in which 80 were reserved for the blind and weak-sighted and the rest of the 134 beds for the citizens of former municipality of Škofja Loka.

There are 212 beds today; including 118 in the apartment for old-age people, 24 are reserved for partial healthcare and 70 for the healthcare department. There are 48 single-beds, 61 double beds, and 14 triple-beds. There are also dining rooms, tearooms, living rooms and a library etc.

## 6 FIELD STUDY

The research is done on the basis of fieldwork. A lot of data was collected about different variables and then the statistical relations amongst them were determined.

The purpose of the research is to obtain data, which is related to the satisfaction of the healthcare team (at CSS) concerning communication, conflicts arising, and their suggestions for improvement. A questionnaire was developed on the basis of our hypothesis, with which we received the desired information. The entire healthcare team was involved, in which 48 people are employed, and from them two are external employees.

They are composed of

- head nurse	1
- registered nurses	3
- healthcare technicians	15
- medical orderly	22
- physiotherapist	2
- therapists	2
- sitters	1
- chambermaids	2

All of the employees have a 40-hour workweek.

External co-workers:

- family doctor (doctor from Škofja Loka) (works 3x6.30 hours a week)
- psychiatrist (works 3 hours a week)
- internal specialist

(works 3 hours a week)

- physiotherapist (works 6 hours a month)

### 6.1 The questionnaire

A survey with 18 questions was formulated. It was intended for the healthcare team at the Centre for the blind and weak-sighted in Škofja Loka. It included a general section and an opinion section. The general section included basic information such as sex, age, level of education, work experience etc about the participant. The opinion section included questions about mutual co-operation and communication in the team.

### 6.2 The results

The results indicate the people who are employed at the centre are mostly females older than 30 years. 16.1 % have primary school education, 61.3% secondary school education, 16.1% college education and 6.5% have university education, which is also the highest level of education.

Members are satisfied with their mutual relations. The frequency of mutual communication is high, which is shown by the percentages of the answers. 45.2 % answered that communication within the team occurs very often, 51.6% said that they communicate often (everyday) and only 3.2% said that they communicate moderately. Nobody stated that they have a feeling that communication occurs rarely or very rarely. With regard to communication skills most think that listening and mediation of answers is weaker than verbal and written skills and of non-verbal communication skills. They also think that obscurity occurs mostly with verbal rather than written form. 100% of the participants think that obscurities in verbal understanding are present, while 6.9% feel that obscurities in written form are never present, 37.9% almost never, and 55.2% feel that obscurities are also present in written form. For the question "How often is there a deficiency in the below stated conversations?" most participants answered that come across deficiencies at planned discussions just as at unplanned discussions, team meetings and non-verbal communication. Most people expect help and understanding of problems during mutual co-operation for co-workers just as they expect from the managers and general manager.

The main reasons for conflicts are the nature of being uninformed, differences in how to achieve the goals and mutual dependency. Conflicts are successfully solved and thus in the following ways: by discussion – by conversation ((96.8%), making a

compromise – agreeably – partially denouncing their own goals (96.7%), by adapting – it is done by suiting others (80%), by avoidance – move out of the way (56,7%), by predominating – they would like to achieve their goals by any possible means, also by force (23,3%).

The results show that the percentage of people who lack confidence is similar to the percentage of people who are confident. Besides this, the majority thinks that they have a problem with communication, where being nervous is also present. Notices are formed a way that others understand them, the biggest problem is the lack of knowledge behind the problems.

We can state from the results that the members of the team behave ethically, that they protect confidentiality of data, do not gossip, they respect the elderly, they communicate courteously and behave responsibly.

The following conclusions were made on the basis of the obtained data:

1. The members of the team are satisfied with the working atmosphere.
2. The communication skills of the majority of team members are good.
3. Help in solving problems by communicating would be necessary for team members.
4. Women to a great extent expect help and understanding.
5. Conflicts often occur in the team.
6. Team members successfully solve conflicts.
7. The majority of team members express their suggestions and opinions to their superiors.
8. The healthcare team operates in accordance with ethical principles.

## 7. ACTION MODEL OF HEALTH CARE TEAM FOR BLIND AND POOR-SIGHTED IN ŠKOFJA LOKA IN SLOVENIA

First-order cybernetics states that a regulator for mechanical systems operates automatically and linearly, which is also demonstrated in the scheme below:

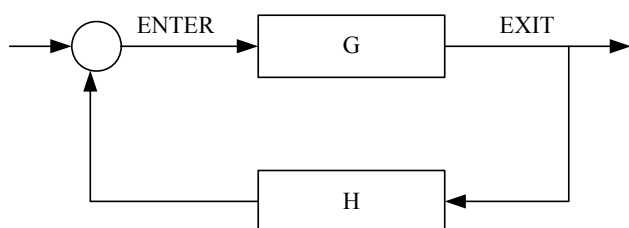


Figure 4: Basic cybernetics model (Kljajić, 1994)  
G = function within the system

H = receiving the feedback information which enables the system to function

Second-order cybernetics, however, deals with a different type of interaction – interaction between agents. A regulator is recognised as an agent, e.g. an observer. An agent reacts to its environment unexpectedly, with sensibility, pain, and in many different ways. An agent is also creative which helps organise the system. The scheme below demonstrates the circular causality during the process of making a decision, which is the basis of the second-order cybernetics:

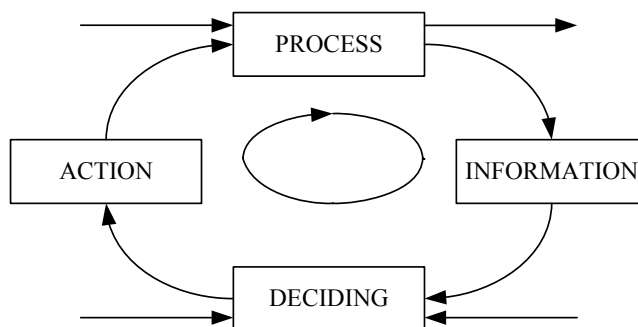


Figure 5: Circular causality during the process of making a decision (Kljajić, 1994)

In our model, the team members are creative and so are the patients at the Institution for the blind and weak-sighted in Škofja Loka. This is also reflected in the next model which is based on the principles of the second-order cybernetics. This model demonstrates how the team members affect their patients with their knowledge, experience, communication skills and other contributing factors. The patients also affect the team members.

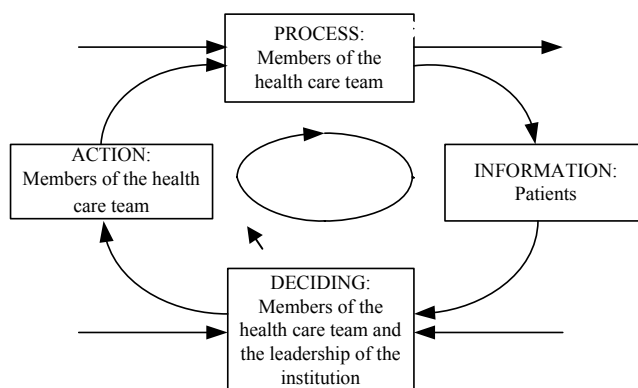


Figure 6: Action model of health care team for blind and poor-sighted in Škofja Loka in Slovenija

As demonstrated in the model, there is a lot of interaction which is reflected in their relations. This clearly emphasises the immense importance of evaluation and research which would enable the systematic improvement of the current situation and

the possibility to affect it. The patients give information based on which the members of the health care team as well as the leadership of the institution make a decision followed by action which is performed by the members of the health care team during the processes already established. This type of interaction is circular. This innovation is a result of many theoretical as well as empirical findings which were examined during the research.

## 8 CONCLUSION

The research which relates to teamwork was done at the Centre for the blind and weak-sighted in Škofja Loka, with intention to gather data about the satisfaction of the healthcare team regarding communication, conflicts and give suggestions for improvement.

Hypotheses were given before the creation of the questionnaire. Our aim was to establish if the hypotheses suit the actual situation or not. On the basis of the completed questionnaires, we accepted or rejected the hypotheses.

If we briefly look at the results we can see that one of the main problems that the healthcare team comes across is verbal understanding. All the participants feel that problems and obscurities tied with verbal understanding arise in the team. We can also see this in problems that arise unplanned discussions. This is partially related to the individual's confidence. The more the individual is confident, less problems they have in communicating. Lastly the mentioned factors also influence on the frequency of conflicts, which originates from being uninformed.

However, we must be aware that conflicts do not only have negative characteristics, thus positive ones are also present (Ovsenik, 2000)

- Conflicts show problems, because of the presence of people's desires. These desires are a source of energy, which must be relaxed, and thus a change encouraged.
- Conflicts always demand solutions. Conflicts can be suppressed, but cannot be avoided because they occur daily in one form or another. This is why we always have to re-think how we are going to solve them, and not how we are going to avoid them.
- Conflicts arise because of different interests, and thus this gives us the opportunity to choose the best interest for the goal and we try to achieve it.
- The arising of conflicts enables us to gain new comprehension.

In solving such problems we try to:

1. Give directions and information in a way that we are sure that the person correctly understood.
2. Avoid unplanned discussion or we try to slowly lead into the communication with the employees (with the help of gaining confidence).
3. Encourage all-around communication and team meetings.
4. We try to solve conflicts individually on the basis of discussions.
5. Have meetings and discussions with individuals more frequently.
6. We give the employees a chance to express their own opinions (we must also respect everyone's opinions and in any case never disregard them).

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