

Teams: From Wagon Train to High Technology

Collaboration, cooperation; deceptively benign words. In both work settings and classrooms, their use offers access to high levels of performance and satisfaction. In fact, they portray a contemporary way of working that is especially applicable to the management of technology. And as if that isn't enough, they can also contribute to a fertile learning environment.

Both the breathtaking speed of technological change and the need for rapid commercialization create a new set of pressures for change in the human dimension

The old work and educational models of lone rangers or competitors dependent on each other are being eclipsed by the dynamic possibilities of interdependent groups. These groups are often made up of people trained in different fields, for an especially enriching mix.

In the design phase of the MTM (Masters in Technology Management) program, SATM members were asked what they wanted their employees to learn. From the start, they stressed their need for a program that teaches the best practices in the area of people management. Teaming is just such a practice.

According to Dr. Patricia Holahan, a professor in the MTM program, team management is a paradigm whose time has come. The strategy of the MTM curriculum, she explains, is to mirror the ideas of teamwork in the educational setting, engaging students in practical applications. Not just conceptual work, but full integration of the practices. The MTM program incorporates experiences requiring interdependence and team learning throughout the curriculum.

Dr. Holahan, who teaches "Managing Multifunctional Teams", is in the process of evaluating the training and use of teams in the MTM curriculum. She has already arrived at some preliminary observations. Based on questionnaires completed by students, they want more feedback in order to gauge their progress in learning these skills. One method of providing this would be to augment the pre-course assessment and feedback by a new process of objectives setting with subsequent assessments and feedback.

It is a noble experiment, first incorporating and then monitoring best practices in an educational program. But perhaps this is where change should begin.

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