



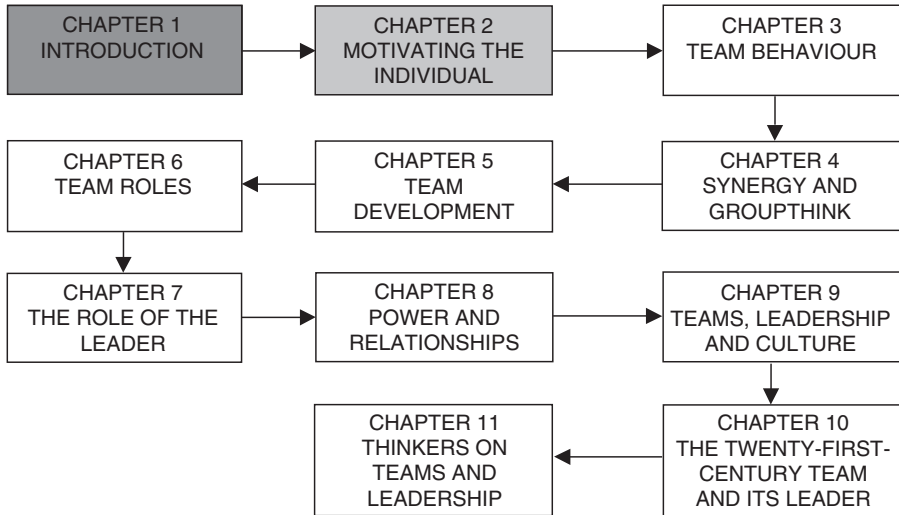
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Introduction



Learning outcomes – Teams – The importance of leadership – The organisation of work – Organisations – Why study teams and leaders? – The Institute of Management Certificate in Team Leading – SMART and C-SMART criteria – Summary – Questions – Recommended further reading

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter you should understand:

- The *aims* of this book
- How to define *groups* and *teams*
- The importance of *leadership*
- How *human characteristics* are similar to those of other primates
- Different ideas about *work*
- What *organisations* are
- Why it is important to study *teams* and *leaders*
- The need to put *customers* at the centre of all team activities.

Teams

‘... must be a team player.’ It seems as though nearly every time one looks at a job advertisement, team work appears as part of the job requirements.

This book is about teams and leaders. The ability to work as an effective member of a team is very important in the modern world of work. However organisations also require people who know their own mind and are able to act on personal initiative. As will become apparent through the pages of this text, it is the balance between the *team* and the *individual* that is the important consideration.

Teams comprise individuals and possess a *structure*. The structure may be clearly defined as in a soccer or netball team, with individuals having clear positions and roles within the team and a clearly defined captain/leader, or may be loosely formed with a less clearly defined structure. Whatever the structure, at any moment in time there is likely to be somebody exercising a *leadership role*.

Organisations and teams

There is nothing new about the concept of team working. What is a recent development is the way in which the behaviour of people in teams has become a fruitful area of study. Organisations seem to be setting up more and more teams. As Robbins and Finley (2000) have pointed out, while traditional teams tended to be formed on a homogeneous functional basis – e.g. accounts teams and personnel teams – contemporary organisations have adopted multi-functional teams drawing membership from across the organisation. As will be shown in Chapter 10, recent developments have included the formation of extra-organisational teams that include members from suppliers and customers in addition to staff from the organisation.

Definition

This book centres on a concept known as *group dynamics*. Chapter 3 considers the derivation of definitions for groups and teams. The definitions that are used in this book and that are expanded in Chapter 3 are:

- Group

‘A group, in the context of occupation or profession, is a collection of individuals operating within the constraints of mutually accepted norms (rules) and values who perceive that, as regards their occupation or profession they are clearly distinct from other collections of individuals even if they belong to the same organisation.’ (Cartwright *et al.*, 1993)

- Team

‘A team is a small group engaged upon a specific task for which group members have a clearly defined role and in which each member has a vested interest in success.’

Group and team behaviour has its origins in our early history. Human beings have always formed discrete groups and from those groups teams have been formed for *specific tasks* – the hunting band being a well-known example.

During the 1980s and 1990s team work was being hailed as the panacea for all organisational ills. There is no doubt that properly constructed teams can add considerable value to organisational activities. The concept of *synergy* that will be introduced in Chapter 3 allows a well-constructed team of six, to perform as though there were seven members. Unfortunately in life there is always an opposite, and a badly constructed team of six can perform as if it had only five members. Organisations like the positive aspects of synergy – pay six people and ‘get one free’. Organisations are less happy about paying for six and receiving the output of only five.

Teams are composed of *people*. People have egos and needs. They need to be nurtured, protected and developed. It is not possible to just set up a team and then fail to look after it. There is a responsibility on those in strategic control of organisations to ensure that their teams are able to grow and means giving them space and allowing them to make mistakes.

The importance of leadership

Human beings belong to an animal group known as primates. Primates, a group that contains many of the most advanced land mammals, have certain key characteristics, many of which are related to eating brightly coloured fruits and an arboreal life swinging through trees – the environment in which primates first evolved. These characteristics include:

- Rotating the two bones of the lower arm, the radius and the ulna over each other and also touching (opposing) the thumb with all the other fingers on the hand. This makes for a very complex joint ideal for grasping branches and twisting rather than pulling fruit off trees. In the case of human beings (and to a lesser extent chimpanzees, gorillas and other great apes and monkeys) the complex movement allows for the use of increasing complex *tools* – many of which require such a high degree of dexterity (just look at the wrist and arm movements made when using a screwdriver)
- *Stereoscopic and colour vision* – important for gauging distance and distinguishing colour – useful if you eat brightly coloured fruits and for using tools as this requires hand-eye coordination and accuracy
- Living in fairly large social groups and thus possessing effective means of *communication* between group members is necessary for co-operation and maintaining group bonds
- High *intelligence*
- Highly structured and hierarchical *social groupings*. Leadership is a fundamental survival requirement for such groups.

Humans have over 90 per cent of their genetic material in common with other higher primates. It is no surprise that the behaviour of chimpanzees and gorillas

intrigues so much, as we can often see reflections of our own actions in it. Desmond Morris, the anthropologist, broadcaster, writer and ex-curator of the London Zoo, has shown how the leadership qualities and communication techniques of humans are mirrored by other primate societies. In his book *The Human Zoo* (1969), he compared the 10 most important rules of leadership and dominance in primate societies and argued that they applied equally to all leaders from baboons to modern presidents and prime ministers – work that is covered in detail in Chapter 7.

Whether we like it or not, it would appear that much of our behaviour has its roots in our shared primate ancestry, a point made by Nigel Nicholson in *Managing the Human Animal* (2000), where he points out that despite our technological evolution, behaviourally we have not changed very much in the last few thousand years. One of the reasons we are so intrigued by the way other primates behave is that when watching them we have, perhaps, a greater understanding of what they feel than with any other type of animal, as their expressions and gestures are so like our own.

Leadership is a key function in any social grouping. It does not have to be the same leader all the time, leadership can switch between individuals according to circumstances, as will be explored later in this book. However, direction is important for work activities and leaders are very much concerned with providing direction.

It is not possible to study teams without a consideration of the individuals who make them up and the role of the leader. This book begins with a consideration of the individual and his or her motivations and why it is advantageous for people to give up part of their individuality to be part of a team (Chapter 2).

Chapters 3 to 6 look at teams in respect of their formation, behaviour and development. This is followed by a consideration of leadership, especially leadership in the contemporary, global business environment (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 looks at power, what it is and how it is used.

Finally the book explores the relationship between teams, leaders and national/organisational culture and the skills that leaders in the twenty-first century are likely to need (Chapters 9–10).

Chapter 11 looks at the key thinkers on leadership, and what they have contributed to the debate.

The organisation of work

To comprehend how teams and leadership relate to the world of work, it is necessary to consider how work is *organised*.

The earliest ideas of management were rooted in small, often family-run, businesses. They had to be small as the infrastructure for people to live more than walking distance from their places of work was not in place. Once railways and tramways began to be developed for public use from the 1830s onwards, people were able to live further from work and organisations were able to expand: there

is a finite limit to expansion if everybody needs to live near the workplace. In the nineteenth century, industries were labour-intensive and so the bigger the enterprise, the more workers were required, generating a need for accessible and affordable housing.

Prior to the industrial revolution, few people had travelled much beyond their birthplace. Organisations were small and the workforce tended to be homogeneous, with similar backgrounds and a similar culture. The railroads and steamships allowed for large-scale population movements, making labour plentiful but more diverse. F. W. Taylor, the originator of the concept of 'scientific management', was appointed as a management consultant at the Bethlehem Steel Corporation in the USA in 1898. He proceeded to conduct a series of management experiments on a workforce that was very diverse and contained not only those born in the USA but those who had arrived from nearly every western and eastern European country, each with their own culture and their own language. The results of these experiments led to the ideas of scientific management, piecework and a very structured work pattern based solely on pay as a motivator. Taylor, sometimes called the 'Father of Work Study', believed that jobs should be broken down into small tasks and that a time and performance standard could be calculated for an average worker for each job. The harder people worked, the more they were paid. This type of 'piece-work' (workers were paid for each *piece* manufactured) is still seen today in many low-skill manufacturing and assembly tasks.

The idea that money was the prime motivator and thus the prime management factor held sway well into the twentieth century. Classical management ideas stated that the role of managers was to recruit suitable workers and then calculate work patterns so that the rate for the job equated to the scientifically calculated amount of work that should be achieved. Those who failed to meet their targets received less pay and eventually faced dismissal. Those who overachieved would receive more. If everybody overachieved then the targets were too low, and would be raised. All workers received the same treatment. This 'Scientific Management', as it came to be called, suited simple manufacturing tasks requiring more brawn than brains.

As the twentieth century progressed, jobs became more technologically complicated and the workforce better educated, as universal education for all became the norm throughout much of the industrialised world. The research by Elton Mayo at the Hawthorne Plant of the General Electric Company in Chicago, Illinois, between 1927 and 1932 began to cast doubts on the universal applicability of Scientific Management. Mayo found that work conditions, social factors and group dynamics were important factors in worker behaviour – a movement towards a more 'Theory Y' approach (see chapter 2). The Hawthorne studies showed the complexity of *motivation and management*, a subject that is also considered in depth in Chapter 2.

In terms of an overall management concept, the *contingency approach*, in which the methods and tools of management are not fixed but are contingent upon the situation, provides a firm foundation. What works well in one company may fail in another. What is applicable to one group of workers may cause

resentments in a different group. The modern manager needs to realise that not all employees will react the same way to similar situations. Modern management theories are based on the idea of a *bank of skills* that the manager can draw upon according to the circumstances.

Think/discussion point

- How have different organisations or people dealt with similar problems?
 - Is there just one way of approaching a management problem, or should the solution be contingent upon a variety of factors?
-

Organisations

People work for organisations, either large or small. ‘Organisation’ is a word that will be encountered frequently in this book. Organisation as a term is one that is freely used in general conversation and yet one that is not easy to define in clear terms.

Argyris (1960) defined organisations as:

‘intricate human strategies designed to achieve certain objectives.’

A later writer, Pugh (1971), considered that:

‘Organisations are systems of inter-dependent human beings.’

Being all-embracing, Pugh’s definition covers everything from the UK government, Virgin Group (Sir Richard Branson has been involved with record sales, an airline, financial services and even soft drinks), Tesco (the UK supermarket organisation), a corner shop, large and small manufacturers and even a family, all of which depend for their success on people working with and depending on each other. Details of the web sites for companies and organisations mentioned in this text can be found on the web site associated with this material.

With a little imagination, even Argyris’ definition could encompass the family as an organisation, as the family has developed biologically and socially as an excellent method of ensuring the survival of children to maturity – the covert biological objective. It should be noted that this is not a way of saying that the Western concept of the nuclear family is the only acceptable form, as there are many variations of family structure in the world, each suited to a particular culture and way of life and each of equal importance.

Business can be described as the *exchange relationship between organisations*. All business relationships involve some form of trade or exchange – goods for money, services for money, goods for services. Money, that apparently all-important factor in our lives, is nothing more than a convenient common denominator that allows a trade to take place.

Why study teams and leaders?

One of the points that will be made when considering the phenomenon of groupthink in Chapter 4 is that people in a group or team can behave very differently than they do as individuals. Some of the most disturbing acts of the past 75 years have been carried out by groups. A massacre carried out by an individual can be put down to a single aberrant personality but when carried out by a group must raise the question of how a number of people could behave in that way: Did they all agree? Were they all psychopaths or were they ordinary people caught up in mass hysteria? If the latter, then could it happen to you and me?

It is the fact that group behaviour can be so different to that of the individual that requires it to be studied. It will also be shown that the nature and style of leadership is an important determinate of group behaviour, even more so than the behaviour of an individual. Given that we live in groups, work and teams and are subject to a number of leader's wishes, a study of the subject is useful for anybody. For those wishing to be supervisors and managers however, an understanding of teams and leadership is crucial.

Despite what we might desire, humans are still very much tribal animals. We may call the tribes by new terms such as 'countries', 'regions' or even 'companies', but we still behave very much as our ancestors did. We can be recognised from members of other tribes by such things as language, dress (even corporate uniforms are a form of tribal behaviour), entertainment preferences and the foods we eat. If anybody doubts that tribalism is present even in the most sophisticated of the world's societies they have only to look at the dress and behaviour of sports' supporters. The tribal behaviour of soccer fans has become a problem in many areas of the world.

The Institute of Management Certificate in Team Leading

At the start of the twenty-first century, the Institute of Management (the professional association for managers) in the UK introduced a Certificate in Team Leading as part of their Professional Development Programmes and Qualifications for Managers. The key topics considered by the Institute as important for team leaders are:

- Organising and developing yourself
- Organising and communicating information
- Organising and improving your team's work
- Organising your team's performance
- Maintaining and developing effective working relationships
- Helping your team members to develop their performance
- Resolving customer service issues.

The Institute's topics are indicative of how management, supervision and team leading have changed. Gone are words such as 'controlling' and 'direction,' to be

replaced with ‘organising’, ‘developing’ and ‘helping’ – facilitory rather than police-type roles.

Smart and C-smart criteria

Of especial importance is the last of the Institute’s topics – customer service. For many years organisational behaviour studies were inward-looking and paid too little regard to that most important person to any organisation, the one who ultimately pays the wages – the customer. That approach is now changing, as organisations become much more customer-centred and focused. Traditionally, teaching of decision-making and objective-setting techniques stressed the importance of setting SMART criteria for objectives, the acronym standing for:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Agreed
- Realistic
- Timely (i.e. with deadlines and timescales attached).

In *Mastering Customer Relations* (2000), a companion volume to this text, the author suggested that SMART should be amended to C-SMART with the all-important CUSTOMER DRIVEN being the most important element in contemporary business. Unless the customer is put at the centre of an organisation’s activities success can only be at best partial. Hence it is gratifying to see the Institute of Management including customer service as part of a qualification in team leading, as all work-based teams exist to satisfy the needs of an internal or external customer.

Chapter 2 will examine the individual and his or her motivation. This is an important topic as the basic unit of any team is the individual members.

SUMMARY

- *Leadership and team/group behaviour* are important parts of most primate societies
- *Many human characteristics* are similar to those of other primates
- There have been different ideas about the *relationship between people and work*
- Earlier ideas about people and work centred on *money* being the prime motivator
- Modern ideas about people and work suggest that there are *social aspects* to work that are important motivators
- Modern managers, supervisors and team leaders need a *bank of skills* so that they can deal with individuals contingent upon the situation
- Modern management is less about control and more about *facilitation*
- *Organisations* are the structures humans have devised to carry out tasks involving a number of individuals

- It is important to study teams and leaders because people may behave very differently when they are *members of a team* than they do as individuals
- Despite increasing technological sophistication, much human behaviour is *tribal* in character
- There is a need to put *customers* at the centre of all team activities.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why is it important for those involved in managing or supervising people to have a knowledge and understanding of teams and leadership?
- 2 What examples can you find in daily life over the past few weeks of tribal behaviour, either in those around you or those you have read about?
- 3 Why should customer service be important in a study of teams?

Recommended further reading

Nigel Nicolson, *Managing the Human Animal* (2000), provides useful further information on the topics covered in this chapter.



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