



THE TIMES 100

BUSINESS CASE STUDIES

Working in teams – CMI

In the business environment nearly all individuals within an organisation will belong to one or more groups or **teams**. A team is a set of people with a range of different skills that will ideally have **objectives** that contribute to the overall **corporate strategy** of the business. The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) is a chartered professional body. Its purpose is the promotion of management and leadership excellence. Based in the UK it has 90,000 individual members and 450 business members. CMI, by training managers and leaders, supports the work of effective team-working within the workplace.



Teams provide an opportunity to share ideas and strengths and use a variety of viewpoints and experiences. A team provides individuals with a common purpose. They also have a common identity as they strive together towards a common goal. Most people belong to a number of different teams. Some of these teams will be formal teams while others will be informal teams:

- A formal team is a structured team, created for a specific purpose. It will have a leader and everybody within the team will have a distinct role e.g. a football team.
- An informal team has no structure and everybody within the team has equal status. They often come together by chance. An informal team provides an opportunity for everybody to work together. For example, a group of friends might arrange a holiday together.

Informal groups are particularly good at providing support for formal groups. For example, if a number of people at work are friends, this may support the work of their formal team. Informal groups help as they provide opportunities for sharing ideas across departments.

Individual members of the team may influence a group's behaviour. For example, highly motivated individuals may push the team to work harder and achieve higher standards. However, a team member who produces shoddy work may negatively affect a team's performance. A team identity is an important benefit of team-working. This provides individuals with a feeling of belonging. It helps make the group work more closely together. This should improve motivation and performance as everyone seeks to contribute to achieving the best for all. Within any team each member may have a range of different skills. These skills may be complementary. For example, if one person is particularly good with ICT applications such as spreadsheets, this may help to improve the performance of other members of the team. The effectiveness of team decision making may depend upon a number of factors:

- *The skills and abilities of the group members.* Teams are often more effective when they have a mix of people who take on a preferred role. Such as, an effective team could include a person who came up with ideas, somebody who could analyse those ideas, one who shows good judgement and somebody who simply makes sure that the work gets done and that the deadlines are met.
- *The size of the group.* Sometimes the larger the team the more complex the communication channels become. This can slow down decision making. Larger groups also require more formal structures to co-ordinate responsibilities.
- *The task to be undertaken.* Small groups may better undertake urgent tasks. This may require their undivided attention. Teams are particularly good for dealing with complex and challenging tasks. This is because teamwork provides an opportunity for combining the skills and knowledge of each of the members.

Questions

1. What is a formal team?

2. Describe what is meant by complementary skills. Give an example.

3. Analyse the factors that influence the effectiveness of teams in the workplace.

Task

In a small group, carry out some research of Meredith Belbin's work on team roles. Create a presentation or information leaflet of your findings, which should include the roles and their characteristics and allowable weaknesses. When you have completed this task, discuss in your group whether you agree with these roles. Can you associate any of Belbin's roles with members of the group you have been working in?

What have you learned?

Q&A . write three or four questions about working in teams for another member of your class to answer.