

The Ten Reasons Why Teams Fail

1. Lack of alignment with company vision and mission.

Leadership must understand that if employees do not understand how they personally fit into the vision, this statement is not worth the paper on which it was printed.

2. Team charter is unclear.

A charter is a document prepared by leadership that answers:

- * What is the reason this team exists?
- * What are the steps to be followed by this team?
- * What quantitative results are expected for this team to be successful?
- * Who are the team members, team leaders and team liaison?
- * Who will support the team if needed?
- * How much time should be spent in meetings and outside of meetings?
- * What authority does the team have? What things cannot be changed?
- * What items are outside the scope of the team?
- * What budget does the team have?
- * What are the outputs from the team? When are they expected to be complete? To whom should they be given?

3. A cookbook approach was used instead of a custom-tailored approach.

Although my company has advocated a specific process in implementing teams, the simple truth is that the process has never been followed. The process is an excellent baseline, but each organization has a unique culture; a unique history; a unique group of leaders, managers and people and a unique team-based background that must be taken into consideration when designing and refining a specific organization's team-based process.

4. Middle management/supervisors' roles are not changed.

Middle managers and supervisors typically have all the responsibility for performance, but little authority to achieve performance. When asked to describe their job, middle managers and supervisors use words like fire fighter, policeman, power broker, paper pusher, stock chaser, baby sitter, disciplinarian, problem fixer and priority settler.

In the future, there will be fewer middle managers and no supervisors. This does not mean these people will be fired. On the contrary, these are some of the best people in our companies and they will be moved into much more satisfying, relevant, value-added work in which their talents may be more fully utilized.

5. Team are improperly staffed.

A key to the success of a team is the staffing of the team with the correct people. People should only be placed on a team in which they have personal knowledge about the topic the team is pursuing. Team members should have a stake in the outputs of the team.
6. Team leader and /or team liaison not doing job.

Team recommendations should be handled in a timely fashion and, for most part, should be accepted. Team leaders should support a team to help get results.
7. The steering team is not actively steering.

The steering team must actively, visibly and consistently exhibit a support of the leadership team and clearly communicate to the entire organization that the team-based process is not a fad or "another program."
8. Team not allowed to work.

The three points that will prevent a team from being successful are:

 - * Members of early teams are subjected to peer pressure and the leadership team does not properly handle this pressure.
 - * Teams are prevented from obtaining the information they need to address their task.
 - * Adequate time is not allocated for team members to participate in the teams.
9. Leadership team is not working.

The leadership team does not provide for the proper management of the team evolution (suggestion team, improvement team, semiautonomous team and self-management team) or development (forming, storming, norming, performing and maturation). Or, on the contrary, the leadership team attempts to micro-manage the teams and does not allow the teams to evolve.
10. Communication team is not working.

It is the responsibility of the communication team to assure that everyone in the organization has a clear understanding of the Model of Success, the status of teams and the organization status.