Life involves working together with others in groups or teams. Associations create many opportunities for team work from the executive board to standing committees to task forces to networking or special interest groups. Since association work involves working together with others to accomplish tasks and goals, it is to our advantage to learn how to work together successfully with others as a team. Whether we are joining an existing team or creating a new one, knowing the essentials of team development and team work is important.

Section 1
This chapter is divided into two sections - both are equally important to the development of a new board member. The first section focuses on generic team concepts. This information is important for a new board member since team work is critical to the success of an executive team and an association. In addition, while serving as an executive leader, most board members serve as liaisons or line officers to committees and are sometimes asked to form and lead a task force or special interest group. This section is written generically and can be applied to any setting where team work is appropriate. New board members are challenged to apply this information to their roles in their associations.

Whether the board member is coaching an existing team or forming and developing a new team, team building skills are essential. Teams that get off to a good start by quickly determining their purpose, setting their direction and goals, and focusing on building relationships with team members will produce results that are more timely and effective than groups that are not skilled in team development. In our world today, timeliness is critical. We cannot spend years or sometimes even months solving a problem or working on a project. Needs that are identified by association members today need to be addressed quickly, otherwise members will find other avenues to have their needs met. What then happens to the credibility and value of the association?

Section 2
The second section of this chapter will discuss the roles of the leadership team, both board members and staff, and the partnership that must develop to ensure a successfully led association. An effective board member is skilled in working as a team member
and in coaching and developing other new or existing teams. While it is important for a board member to develop a team-focused relationship with fellow board members and other committees or groups within the association, it is equally, if not more important, to develop a strong partnership between the board and staff. Perhaps the most critical relationship within an association is the board and staff partnership.

**Section 1: Team Concepts**

**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this chapter, several team-related terms will be defined. A *team* is defined as a unit consisting of two or more individuals who have a common purpose or goal. Some may argue this definition refers to a group, not necessarily a team. In many respects this may be true; however, for consistency and ease of reading, the term *team* will be used throughout the chapter.

*Teamwork* is defined as the actual activities and responsibilities assumed by the team. *Team development* or *team building* consists of all the processes and activities in which the team is involved that help in building the relationships among team members and help the team do its work most effectively.

Too often we think of “team building” as structured activities that must be facilitated by an outside consultant. While these activities may be very helpful, there is a lot more to team building. Many teams do not have the time or resources for outside facilitators. Working together effectively and using the expertise of each team member will help build a team. Successes experienced with effective team communication and problem solving processes can be very powerful team building activities. As teams work together, experience successes, learn from their mistakes, and celebrate their accomplishments, they build their teams.

Relationships that are built among team members are vital to the team’s success and to the ability to accomplish work in an effective and harmonious way. Teams can plan simple activities that will help the members get to know each other better as individuals. The relationships they build are often as important as the work itself.
Advantages of Working Together in a Team

A team exists to meet a purpose or goal. Working together as a team helps to accomplish much more than any of us could do alone. A team provides opportunities to express ourselves and to get feedback and ideas from others. Team members influence each other and learn together. The opportunities a team offers are endless.

Every team is unique and develops its own personality or culture that is unlike any other team. Team members each bring different thoughts, experiences, and expertise that help to achieve team goals. One essential element in an effective team is the interdependency of team members on one another. What this means is that all members must do their part in making the team work. Each member relies on the other and together everyone helps to meet the goals. In an effective team, everyone takes responsibility for the team’s work and its results. This is especially true with executive boards.

Teams cannot work in isolation, they need to be aware of the external environment so that their work is relevant (Ancona and Bresman, 2007). For example, teams within an association must know what the members are saying and what they need, and the team’s focus is to enhance the value received by members. Teams that are externally focused create ways to make the association successful. They know what other teams, such as committees, are doing in the association so that there is coordination and collaboration, not duplication of effort. All team members must fulfill the responsibilities of their specific role on the team, while at the same time work interdependently with others to lead the efforts of the association.

Since this first section of the Team Work chapter will help new board members with team work skills for their roles as board members, coaches of existing committees or teams, and developers of new task forces or teams, it is written generically. The new board member is encouraged to use and apply this information when functioning in one of the roles or situations mentioned above or while leading or participating in team work outside of the association.
Basic Elements of a Team

To function well and to be successful, a team must have the following basic elements:

- Meaningful purpose
- Commitment to a common approach to the team’s work
- Complementary and overlapping skills
- Role competence
- Shared values
- Clear expectations of team members
- Specific performance goals
- Mutual accountability
- Open and honest communication

The basic elements of a team do not just happen. It takes thought and a commitment to work together. Working together involves acceptance and respect for individual differences. In many instances, the strength of the team actually comes from these differences. Team members will bond together through their similarities, but it is through their differences that they will learn from each other.

Five Stages of Team Development

Teams will go through several stages of development. Newly formed teams will have communication patterns that are different from a more mature team. It takes time and energy to make a team work. Five stages of team development will be presented in this section. It is important to understand the characteristics of each stage so teams will be able to identify their stage of development and recognize progression or regression to other stages. The stages include:

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Ending

Forming

Communication during the forming stage is uncertain, polite, and guarded. Trust is the major issue facing the team at this stage. Team members are just learning about each other and testing the waters. They need to have confidence that they will not be embar-
Once initial trust is established, there is some conflict in the storming stage as members attempt to find a place for themselves in the group and begin to function within the established norms.

**Storming**

Once initial trust is established, there is some conflict as members attempt to find a place for themselves in the group and begin to function within the established norms. This stage is uncomfortable compared with the previous stage. There is conflict about the goals and the best way to reach them. As the team struggles with issues related to who will do what and how, some heated debate may occur. While this stage is uncomfortable, it is essential to the development of how the team will work to accomplish the task.

In the storming stage, members are testing whether the ground rules or expectations really work. They want to know whether it is acceptable to express their opinions and have their ideas acknowledged. This is not an easy stage for anyone, especially the leader. The leader tries to keep the team together and focused by maintaining open lines of communication. Helping members look beyond their personal concerns toward working collaboratively with the team members is essential in moving to the next stage.

**Norming**

In this stage, conflicts are resolved and group cohesion starts to develop. Members are accepting of each other. Becoming a valued member of the team is very important to all team members. The team is able to concentrate on issues as they relate to the accomplishment of its goals. Members understand the rules of the game and how to interact with each other. Trust continues to

rassed in front of the team when presenting their thoughts and ideas. It takes time and favorable experiences within the team to develop trust. Members look for common threads among each other. These commonalities help to begin establishing a bond.

A priority during the forming stage is to get everyone involved and interested in achieving the team’s goals. Greater involvement can be achieved if team members are clear about the team’s purpose and goals, and they can see some personal gain in being involved in the team. During this stage, the leader takes a more active role in facilitating the team’s work. The leader serves as a role model by setting an atmosphere for trust to build. Leadership begins to be shared by all team members as a basic level of trust builds among the team.
develop during this stage. Members begin to confide in each other and appear more genuinely friendly.

Performing

During the performing stage, team members agree on the roles each person plays on the team. Personal needs and the needs of the association are brought together. This makes the team’s tasks much more interesting and members feel energized. Communication reflects cooperation rather than competition. Members feel more open in discussing their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. They ask for and give feedback freely. Group cohesion and morale are at their highest peak.

Leadership within the team is shared. The team is no longer solely dependent on the identified leader, although the leader maintains an active role in providing the structure for the work to get done. The team completes its goals during this stage.

Ending

This is the final stage of team life in which the team focuses on summarizing its accomplishments and completing any unfinished business. This stage is characterized by feelings of excitement and sadness. Members are excited about their accomplishments, but sad about leaving the team. It is important at this phase for the leader to remind team members that the cohesion and sense of accomplishment felt by the group are the direct result of active steps the team took to make things happen.

During this phase, the team looks at the significant things that happened, both positive and negative. Thanking each other for the significant contributions each person made is important. Any plans for follow-up are identified. Working through any unfinished business or less than positive feelings among members at this stage can make the difference in whether a person is willing to become involved in future team work. Effective team endings are just as important as effective team beginnings.

All teams will experience each of these stages. It is a development process similar to growing up. We cannot just skip from being an infant to being a school-age child. The toddler stage serves as a bridge from one stage to the next. The same is true with team development. When an existing team experiences a loss or change in its members, the team may revert back to a pre-
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previous stage because even the addition of one new person will change the composition of the team. however, since the team has had experience at a more advanced stage of development, once the new member is acclimated, the team will be able to move fairly quickly through the stages and once again resume the level that it once achieved. this movement, though, is dependent on the number of new members joining the team, how they are oriented and enculturated into the team, how well their expertise blends into the team, and the quality of the relationships that are established.

most boards experience transition every year as new board members are elected and join the leadership team. it is important that new board members are not only assisted in learning their new role, but are also welcomed and oriented to the board’s culture. while “new blood” is good because it brings new ideas and opportunities, some existing board members may feel saddened or frustrated because a new culture means change and the board may have become very comfortable with the way it was. new board members should be aware of this transition period and realize that it is temporary until the board is once again able to achieve a sense of stability.

roles of team leader and team members

in any given team, there are essentially two types of roles – team leader and team member. in an association, the team leader would be the board or committee/task force chairperson and the team members would be the board or committee/task force members. this section will briefly discuss the responsibilities of each role.

team leader

the leader of the team performs most of the functions that other team members do, but has additional responsibilities as well. the leader provides direction and guidance to the team so it can accomplish its goals. the leader is concerned with both the relationships among team members and getting the tasks accomplished. as the team matures, several members within the team share the leadership role at various times depending on the situation and the expertise of the team members. shared leadership is
welcomed within the team as long as it is collaborative and not competitive. Competition with the identified team leader can actually sabotage team work.

The team leader is the formal communicator within and outside of the team, often serving as the team’s spokesperson. The leader helps the team know what is going on and keeps it on track. The leader also drives the work of the team by facilitating group decision making, preparing agendas for team meetings, conducting team meetings, keeping the ball rolling in the right direction, and assisting the team in the assessment of its progress.

The team leader role can be compared to the role of an orchestra conductor. The conductor and the orchestra are responsible for a good performance. The conductor’s role is to make sure that all of the musicians are on the right sheet of music, and the right note, at the right time. Together the orchestra plays in harmony. The conductor doesn’t play the instruments for the musicians, but coordinates group effort and expects every musician to be accountable for their part of the performance.

**Team Members**

Team members are responsible for their behavior and they share the responsibility for accomplishing team goals. They accept responsibility for the success or failure of the team’s work. To function effectively, all team members need to cooperate with each other and assist the leader in conducting efficient and productive meetings.

Team members are brought together because they have expertise to share. The purpose of grouping these individuals together is to generate new ideas or perform work that would not be possible from one individual alone. Therefore, team members are expected to contribute their thoughts, ideas, and expertise to the team. Differences of opinion should be welcomed, respected, and encouraged. There will be times when team members are given an assignment and expected to report back to the team. Careful preparation of this report for presentation to the team is expected of the team member.

Effective teams focus on balancing the team’s task with maintaining healthy working relationships among its members. Accomplishing the task and maintaining the relationship cannot happen without effective team communication. In an effective
team, there is trust, open and honest communication, respect for
differences, and a sense of cohesion. All members of the team are
responsible for communicating effectively. When new members
join the team, the best way to gain trust is to demonstrate compe-
tence by accepting responsibility, delivering results, and keeping
commitments. Test your team member skills by answering the ques-
tions in Tool 1 in the Tool Kit at the end of this chapter.

Potential Problems With Teams

Teams are not perfect, nor are they the answer to everything.
While there are many more advantages to working in teams than
disadvantages, at times problems occur in team work. While com-
munication problems may lead the list in problems with teams,
those issues will be covered in the Effective Meetings chapter. This
section will focus on two other potential problems - groupthink
and subgroups.

Groupthink

While cohesiveness is necessary for effective group functioning,
teams can become too cohesive. Cohesiveness can be carried to an
extreme in which team members feel pressured to conform to
ideas and decisions with which they may not agree. Members may
feel that loyalty to the team and approval of other team members
are more important than expressing an opinion that is different
from the team, or they may think they are off target and are unwill-
ing to express their thoughts. This is called “groupthink.”

Following is an example of a typical groupthink situation that
occurs at board meetings. A board member presents a proposal
from the Education Committee to develop an independent learn-
ing module on a particular topic. The proposal is well written and
the board member is very articulate in presenting it. Most board
members are not very interested in the topic of this module and do
not think the members would be very interested either. However,
only one person speaks against the proposal. The other board
members do not think it is acceptable to speak against it since the
member who proposed it did a lot of work in helping the commit-
tee prepare it and was very enthusiastic about the project. The pro-
posal is approved. Afterwards, the board member who spoke
against the proposal asked a few of her colleagues for their ration-
ale for approving the proposal. Her colleagues stated that they real-
ly did not understand the purpose or value of the proposal, but
since everyone else seemed to go along with it, they did also.
The above situation continues...The module is completed and promoted to the membership. At the end of one year, only five members out of 2000 were interested in purchasing the module. As the board members talk about the project, they realize that no one, except the person who proposed it, was really in favor of it. The board was not surprised that the module did not meet the members’ needs. No one thought it was a good idea right from the beginning! But the board thought that everyone was in favor of it and no one wanted to rock the boat. Time, energy, and money can be wasted on faulty decisions that are made through the process of groupthink.

With groupthink, the team tries to maintain harmony above all else. This form of decision making discourages critical evaluation of ideas and alternative solutions to problems. Everyone goes along with a decision because they are afraid of the possible consequences of speaking up. Preventing groupthink begins with an awareness that it can happen and be destructive to the team.

A culture of inquiry within a team should include a healthy debate where diverse views and perspectives are encouraged. The team learns that nobody is as smart as everybody, and the collective wisdom of all members of the team is more powerful than the voice of one (Hockman, 2008). The team should agree to always work through problems by critically analyzing them. A team member taking on the role of devil’s advocate may also prevent the team from getting stuck in groupthink. Keep in mind, the devil’s advocate should be a different person for each situation.

Subgroups
If the team does not meet the needs of some members, these members may feel anxious, frustrated, or rejected. They may split off from the team and form a small subgroup. Most teams will experience this to some degree. The split may become helpful or harmful to the team. If the subgroup becomes secretive, its members bond tightly to the subgroup and connections with the team loosen. These bonds have a powerful negative effect on the productivity of the team as a whole.

When a subgroup begins to disrupt the team, the situation needs to be placed quickly on the agenda and discussed. Feelings and thoughts need to be aired. If the team engages in open and honest confrontation, it can resolve the problem. Trust can be
enhanced and team members can gain new skills in dealing effectively with confrontation. The opposite can happen also. The situation could be ignored, swept under the carpet, and alienation from the team brews. This sabotages the team’s efforts and leads to its destruction.

Boards are prone to subgroups just like any other team. Sometimes subgroups form among a few board members because these individuals find they have a lot in common and think along the same lines. While this is positive, they may carry it a bit too far. They may constantly be together at the association’s functions, sit next to each other in board meetings, plan activities and not invite others, talk on the phone often between board meetings, and seem to get on each other’s bandwagons when their issues are raised at board meetings. These board members lose out on the value of what working as a team means – all members working and “playing” together. The board as a whole also loses out on the valuable contributions the subgroup could be making with the board.

Since time is a precious commodity today, there is not enough time for splintering among board members. It wastes time and energy that could be used more productively. The membership expects board members to work together as a unified team to accomplish the goals of the association. As trustees, board members need to evaluate their behaviors and act in the best interests of the members.

One important point to remember is that teams are composed of people and people behave in different ways. Some teams may have members who simply do not want to be team players or perhaps they do not know how. Others have members who do not get along with each other. With the team concept, team members have the opportunity to learn how to get along better with people by focusing on what is really important – accomplishing the team’s purpose. Working together to accomplish the team’s purpose is the common goal of all members. Team members may not like each other, but they can learn to at least get along because the association’s members are depending on them.

**Steps for Building a Team**

A team may get started in a variety of ways. This section will discuss how to build a team from beginning to end. Some of the
actions may not be appropriate for all teams. This section will be especially valuable for a board member who is forming a new group or task force, or who is coaching a new committee or task force. It is also valuable for a chairperson who is forming a new committee or task force.

**Preparation**

Someone, usually the leader of a group, begins to prepare for the development of a team. The overall purpose of the team is used as a guide for the type of team members to select, the group size, where, when, and how to meet initially, recruiting members, and preparing members for the team experience. If members of the team can be selected, it is best to select individuals who have the capability to help the team meet its goals. Members should have enough in common to feel comfortable with each other, and also be different enough from each other so there is a variety of ideas and viewpoints. The key to member selection is getting the right people on the bus who can accomplish the team’s purpose.

To be effective, a team should include enough members to carry out its tasks and to support the personal relationships needed to achieve the team purpose. A group size of five or six is ideal, but may increase to nine and still maintain a workable size. Larger-sized groups may compromise productivity.

**First Meeting**

An agenda is prepared, if appropriate for the first meeting. The leader contacts team members and tells them about the group, its purpose, why they were selected for the team, and what their role will be. It also gives the person a chance to decline the invitation if unable or not interested in the team. It is helpful to find out a good meeting day and time for each person. The length of meetings should be scheduled to meet the needs of the team and to accomplish its purpose. Once team members are selected, the meeting date, time, and place are selected. The leader informs the members of the meeting and tells them how to prepare for it. A final agenda is developed and given to each team member.

The first team meeting usually focuses on getting acquainted with team members and the purpose and goals of the team. Team members introduce themselves to each other and talk about their positions and their specific reasons for joining the team. The
leader may identify the various roles individual members may play within the team.

Since the team shares a common purpose as its reason for existing, it is important that all team members discuss and are clear about the purpose. The purpose will guide the remainder of the team’s work. From the purpose, the team can begin developing its goals and specific action steps to meet the goals. Together, the team plans its work.

**Developing Team Expectations**

With a purpose and some direction of where it is going, the team then focuses on how it will maintain an effective relationship among its members. Ground rules, or expectations, for group behavior are determined. Developing expectation statements can be a powerful way to build strong work relationships among team members. It also provides a framework for acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Unclear expectations can break down communication and trust.

It takes time, thought, and effort for the team to collectively develop expectations. Expectations may avoid misunderstandings and problems down the road. Once expectations are developed, the group needs to look them over carefully and agree to behave accordingly. The team should discuss what it will do if a member or a few members do not adhere to these expectations. Most teams decide on a way to confront individuals who do not “follow the rules.”

Your association may have board member expectations, guiding principles, or work agreements for successful board work and relationships.

Examples of expectation statements for team members and the team leader are found in Table 5-1.
Subsequent Team Meetings

The team will continue to conduct its business until its goals are accomplished. It needs to stay focused on two things – the task at hand and the relationships among its members. Both are necessary to be productive and accomplish the goals. The team also needs to keep in mind that it will go through the stages of team development. It is a good idea at various times to put “progress check” on the agenda for a meeting. During this progress check, members can discuss how well they are progressing with the task, whether they are on track, if goals are being met or if they need to be revised, and how relationships among team members are going. Tool 2 in the Tool Kit at the end of this chapter contains questions that will assist in conducting a progress check.

Table 5-1
Expectations of Team Members and Team Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations of Team Members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We expect team members to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Be honest in interactions; say what they mean and mean what they say.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Be on time for meetings, come prepared, pay attention, and participate in discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Voice concerns if they disagree with a decision or approach and be willing to participate in finding an alternative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Be committed and share in the responsibilities of the work of the team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Be willing to try new ideas, make mistakes, and learn from the experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Be visible, approachable, and member-concerned.</td>
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<td>7. Be willing to give and receive constructive feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Acknowledge and honor individual differences.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations of Team Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We expect the team leader to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Keep informed and knowledgeable of issues and activities within and outside the team to provide team cohesiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Respect confidences of team members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Meet the expectations of a team member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Treat all team members in a fair, objective, and unbiased manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Organize team meetings and provide direction to assure that goals are accomplished.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>