

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: EVALUATING TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Over the last few months, Team Management Systems (TMS) have hosted a series of forums around the country to discuss the topic of Evaluating Team Development. Nearly 300 professionals in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane shared their thoughts and ideas about the main challenges they face as they evaluate their development programmes. They were also able to discuss the ideas they had for solutions to these issues. After collecting the notes that participants made of their discussions, TMS categorised all the separate comments and compiled an outline of the key themes that emerged.

Issues

In terms of the challenges faced by practitioners as they try to evaluate their programmes, the top 5 issues in order of priority were:

Difficulty Measuring: The problem of defining, measuring and tracking meaningful and operationally valid metrics of team effectiveness.

Generating Buy-in: The difficulty of gaining stakeholder support for investing resource in programme evaluation.

Perception of 'One-off' event: A barrier of unrealistic expectations that a single training session is considered to be sufficient to develop teams.

Lack of Resources: Practitioners mentioned they have difficulties sourcing resources or materials to produce valid and reliable metrics to evaluate their programmes.

Company Culture: Practitioners mentioned that some organisations have a culture that either tolerates underperformance or is not interested in evaluation.

The first two issues encompass the difficulties with both buy-in and metrics and accounted for just over 50% of all of the contributions made by practitioners with 31.4% and 21.9% respectively.

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Solutions

After spending time considering the issues they faced, participants were then asked to consider ideas to address these problems. The top 5 solutions they identified were:

Developing a Structured Process: In response to the perception that team development is considered a 'one-off' by some clients, many practitioners suggested that it is important to plan programmes that are structured and ongoing.

Establishing Clear Criteria: Many participants suggested that facilitators and teams need to work together to develop meaningful and motivating metrics that can be used to baseline and evaluate on an ongoing basis.

Links to Strategy: The solutions in this category aimed to provide a motivation to learners by linking team development outcomes to other operational and strategic objectives.

Better Marketing and Promotions: Solutions in this area drew together strategies from some of the other topics (i.e. a structured programme linked to strategy) in order to increase buy-in from key stakeholders and learners.

Using Psychometrics: This included ideas that made specific reference to using valid and reliable measures to establish and monitor progress.

A similar situation arose with the top two Solutions as with Issues in that Developing a Structured Process and Establishing Clear Criteria accounted for just over half of all solutions generated with 32.4% and 21.2% respectively.

Summary

An interpretation of the most popular perspectives might be that, when it comes to evaluating team development, two of the greatest challenges are firstly defining and generating evaluation metrics and secondly garnering support from stakeholders and learners. In response, practitioners firstly, might choose to ensure they develop a structured, ongoing approach to their programmes and secondly, ensure that their learning objectives are based, as much as possible on clear and valid criteria. The full summary of the series of forums is available to those who attended the events and includes a breakdown of all the groupings for both Issues and Solutions as well as more detailed examples of the types of responses that were categorised in each group.

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