The Changing Role of Teams in Organizations: Strategies for Survival

by

Deborah G. Ancona

Associate Professor of Organization Studies

The U.S. appears to be following the lead of other industrialized nations such as Japan and Sweden in embracing teams. Although teams within organizations are hardly new, they have recently gained importance as a fundamental unit of organization structure (Drucker, 1988). As organizations have become more decentralized, less bureaucratic, and flatter, teams have been created to carry out new initiatives and to span traditional boundaries both within the firm and with external constituents such as customers and suppliers (Kanter, 1983; von Hippel, 1988; Walton & Hackman, 1986).

The increased use of teams is a two-edged sword. The rhetoric in the popular press often stresses the positive side. Teams are seen as the key to success in Japan and as a means of restoring American competitiveness: a mechanism to increase commitment, improve productivity and quality, and provide flexibility in a changing environment. On the negative side, both common lore and current research show that teams often face process losses; the whole is less than the sum of its parts. Nietzsche tells us that "Madness is the exception in in individuals but the rule in groups." Researchers have found that new product and process development teams intended to improve time to market are often far less effective than expectations or foreign comparison would have predicted (Ancona & Caldwell, 1989; Tyre & Hauptman, 1990).

I will argue that part of the problem is that both managers and researchers are locked into an outdated model of group behavior. Over the past half century, social psychologists have devoted substantial attention to the study of groups. As a consequence, scholars now have a dominant paradigm for the analysis of group behavior. Although this paradigm provides a fine-grained analysis of internal group dynamics, it casts groups primarily as closed systems. But the new teams being created in today's organizations are open systems entailing complex interactions with people beyond their borders.

There is a consequent need, then, for a research approach that examines not only internal group dynamics but also the relationship between the team and the rest of the organization. I call this approach the "external perspective" (Ancona, 1987): work in this area is relatively new and thus is not as well developed as the more dominant approach.
After presenting an overview of the external perspective, I summarize the results of an in-depth, longitudinal study of five consulting teams. They represent "new" teams in that members were part-time; teams were dependent on outsiders such as top management, clients, and other parts of the organization; and they were also more than usually autonomous. My focus is on the teams' approaches to environmental demands, the ways in which the environment influenced the teams, and the outcomes associated with divergent approaches. "Environment" includes both the organization that the teams were part of and the clients outside the organization.

Results show three strategies toward the environment: informing, parading, and probing. Informing teams use existing member knowledge to make decisions and remain relatively isolated from the environment. They are called "informing" because members intend to inform other parts of the organization of their plans once members have developed them. Unfortunately, the intention to inform does not translate into practice. Parading teams observe the environment passively, they have high levels of interaction with the environment but as observers, not pushing an agenda of their own. They are called "parading" in that members walk around the organization to see and be seen, but not to interact with others. Probing teams actively engage outsiders and revise their knowledge of the environment through external contact, initiate programs with outsiders and promote their team's achievements within their organization. In this study they were rated the highest performers, although member satisfaction and cohesiveness suffered in the short run.

Teams are not solely responsible for their performance, however. The environment interacts with the teams, escalating the success of some while almost assuring the demise of others. The final section of the paper discusses the implications for defining effective team processes, understanding team building, and establishing the role of management in team success.

A New Model of Teams

Traditional models of group process tend to treat groups as closed systems that shape individual attitudes and decisions (Stephan, 1984). In other words the emphasis is on the
interactions among group members. The research lens sits on the group boundary and points inward, focusing on internal behaviors such as cohesiveness, trust, or member roles. However, since organizational groups have high external demands, it is important to extend the theoretical lens from the team boundary outward.

From an external perspective, (Ancona, 1987), the focus shifts to a group in its environment. Here the group is seen as part of an interconnected web of individuals, groups, and departments that depend on one another to get particular organization tasks done (see figure 1).

This external perspective raises a whole new set of issues and research questions that complement those raised in traditional models. Added to the question, "How does the group satisfy member needs?" is the question "How does the group meet organizational needs?" Not only do we ask, "How does the team organize itself so that members can work together?" but also "How does the team organize itself so that it can work with other parts of the organization?"

Finally, in addition to wanting to understand group dynamics, we want to understand the interaction between teams and their environment. The external perspective does not solely emphasize team initiatives or environmental influence; it also looks at the interplay between team and environment. Environments can clearly constrain action, but teams can mold their environments, too (Giddens, 1984).

Part of the motivation behind this expanded perspective is to understand better how groups actually behave in real organizations rather than in training sessions or laboratories, where most research on the traditional model is tested and where context is sharply attenuated. Early research that takes this external focus indicates that external initiatives, rather than internal dynamics are a better predictor of team performance for real groups operating in organizational settings (see Allen, 1984; Ancona & Caldwell, 1989).

Unfortunately, the external perspective remains relatively unexplored. Although many research questions exist, this study addresses three questions, applying them to five consulting teams within one organization. The questions are: (1) What strategies, if any, did these teams use to meet environmental demands? (2) What impact did these external strategies have on internal
processes and team performance? (3) What role did their environment play in team context interaction?

METHODS

Teams and Organization

This study examines five teams within a government agency. The agency provides educational consulting services to school districts within a state. The teams were created during a reorganization of the agency designed to improve coordination across divisions, provide more uniform service across geographic areas, and improve the reputation of the agency in the field. To accomplish these goals, consultants--a reading specialist, for example--would report to both a functional boss (e.g., in adult education) and a regional team leader. Regional teams were composed of six to ten consultants. Most of the consultants, who came from a variety of units, knew each other by sight but had never worked together. The teams were to act as generalists, diagnosing and serving the needs of their regions and improving interunit coordination. Thus, team members might go into a school district and interview teachers about their curriculum needs and then utilize agency resources to design a new course to meet those needs.

From a research point of view, these regional teams were exemplars of an increasingly popular form of group: they had a general task, the autonomy to complete that task as they liked, part-time members, and external demands. Because the teams were new, they had to define a role and learn to relate to existing parts of the organization. Members had to work interdependently to produce a service of importance to the organization. The teams had formal leadership and well-defined boundaries. Upper levels of management evaluated the teams, which served the needs of an external client. Hence, the field was open for teams to define both internal and external behavior. This chapter traces the mechanisms teams used to manage those tasks.
Data Collection

I followed teams for their first five months and returned after a year to collect performance data. Data collection focused on three sets of variables. First, I interviewed team leaders right after the teams were formed. Questions concerned initial team goals and anticipated early leadership and team activities. These interviews provided information on initial team strategies.

Second, I monitored team interactions with outsiders using questionnaires, logs, interviews, and observation, attempting to document the mutual influence of team and context (for more detailed documentation of data collection instruments and methods see Ancona, 1990). Key actors in the teams’ environment were the top managers who created and evaluated them (the commissioner and vice commissioner), and clients outside the organization (superintendents of school districts).

Third, I assessed internal group processes and outcomes to gauge the interaction of internal process, external activities, and effectiveness. I collected data on team satisfaction and cohesiveness after teams had been together for two months and performance ratings made by outsiders a year after team formation. I collected both team and management ratings because these often do not match one another (Gladstein, 1984). A research assistant and I analyzed the data.

RESULTS

The results indicate that teams had three different strategies toward their environment: informing, parading, and probing. The environment was not a passive recipient of team initiatives, however; it reacted to the teams and took action on its own. The result was an evolving dynamic between teams and their evaluators and clients. This dynamic culminated in performance evaluations that suggest that the external perspective is necessary to predict both performance and its antecedents.
Team Strategies

**Informing.** One striking difference among team leaders' strategies was their view of when and how to interact with their regions. The informing team leader had a primary goal of creating an enthusiastic team with open communication among members and clear group goals. Initially, the level of outside contact was to be low; only "somewhere along the line" did he anticipate a lot of interaction with the field. Even when this leader discussed learning about his team's districts, he spoke of "sharing our experiences"--the data team members already had--and the need to "sift through...information," or to reference data that were written and stored, rather than newly collected. Furthermore, judgments about what was important in the field were to be made by the group "deciding if it is important or not" and only later communicated to the districts. In short, this team would inform outsiders when it decided what its approach would be.

Indeed, this team did have the lowest number of visits to the school districts, and it did concentrate on internal team building. Unfortunately, the team experienced a high level of internal conflict and never got around to communicating a coherent approach to its clients. Instead, the team got mired in controversy both within its borders and with top management. Members began to seek direction from top management and became angry when it was not forthcoming.

**Parading.** The strategy of parading ("to march or walk through or around," according to the American Heritage Dictionary) adds the need for visibility in the field to the emphasis on internal team building. Like the informing team, these teams wanted to create a "smooth operating group" and to map the environment or "figure out what the region looks like" by using data team members already had. In contrast to the informing team, however, these teams planned a higher level of interaction with people in the field. One team leader said she would "try and visit all the superintendents, and visit all the schools...find out about their unique styles...take a different member of the team out each time." She continued, "I want to circulate, to be familiar, to go to superintendents' meetings and be introduced to improve my reputation." Thus, the goal of work in
the field was obtaining visibility, a goal that differentiated the parading from the informing strategy.

The parading teams did follow their initially stated strategy, with some minor variations. They had much higher levels of interaction with the environment than the informing team, but each was responsive to only one part of the environment. One team had minimal contact with its region and relied on member knowledge to plan interventions, but maintained high levels of visibility within the organization. Another team was very visible in the field (showing the highest number of school district visits), but was isolated from top management. Both teams had relatively smooth relations among team members.

Probing. The probing strategy called for high levels of two-way communication with the external environment intended to broaden the perspective of team members, to diagnose the region’s needs, to obtain feedback on team ideas, and to "sell" the services of the team to the "customer." In contrast to the other teams, these teams saw external activity as the team's first and primary goal. In addition, their leaders did not believe that the team had all the data needed to put together a plan. Team members might have information about the districts, but it was considered limited because it came from "one point of view," meaning from a specialist rather than a generalist, regional consultant. One team leader planned a very interactive approach with the environment, consisting of hearing the needs of the region ("get them to express their need for services"), then testing whether the team's plans met those needs.

Another probing team leader planned to talk to different people in the regions, asking, "Are things different now? Are things better? Are you being serviced better over the total educational picture?" He wanted to discover the needs of the region and "develop strategies to meet those needs." To obtain a broader perspective, he wanted people to work outside their existing area of expertise: "If a consultant is in special education, I’m going to have him investigate the science labs."

Team leaders who planned to follow a probing strategy did so both within the organization and within the regions. They did not use existing member knowledge alone to map their external
environment; members were encouraged to take on new perspectives and bring in new data. These teams had the highest level of external contact, were aggressive not only in testing potential interventions but also in actually implementing new programs, and convinced people in both the field and top management that they were doing a good job. In other words, members of these teams promoted the accomplishments of the teams throughout the organization and the regions.

However, these teams suffered somewhat in the short term. Several months after the reorganization, team members reported that internal communications were a problem; members were missing meetings and often felt confused about what other members were doing and about the goals of the team. Gradually these teams improved. Initially, however, the teams were not cohesive and were held together through directive leadership. For example, one team leader's style was described like this: "He gets requests from the field or generates ideas and asks a particular individual to do a piece of the work."

Summary. From the outset, team leaders envisioned diverse strategies toward the environment. These strategies differed on several dimensions. First was the appropriate amount of interaction with the external environment; the range was from very little to a lot. The second was the method of information gathering. Teams chose to use existing member information, or to shed specialist perspectives, go into the field, and seek new information as generalists. The third dimension was the type of interaction to have—whether to inform the field of the team's intentions, to be visible and observe the environment, or to probe actively and test plans with outsiders. Finally, teams differed to the extent that they "marketed" their team and its accomplishments throughout the organization.

In short, informing involves plans for low levels of external interaction early on, but more later, when outsiders will be told of the team's decisions. Unfortunately, "later" does not always occur. Parading includes plans for a lot of external interaction for the sake of visibility. Teams following these two strategies did planning based on information team members already had or that was obtained within the agency. Probing, by contrast, consists of high levels of interaction with
the environment to revise teams' knowledge of their regions, to meet customer demands, and to promote a positive team image.

These three strategies reflect different assumptions about learning. Informing is similar to learning about the outside world through contemplation; if you leave us alone to think and discuss, we will tell you what you need when we have figured it out. Parading is similar to learning through observation. The message here is that we want to watch you, to understand you, and to let you know that we are around to respond to your needs. Finally, probing is similar to a learning style captured by one of Piaget's followers: "Penser, c'est operer", to think is to operate. Here learning occurs through experimentation, trying out a new idea and seeing the reaction, making an intervention and evaluating the result. This style appears to have some short-term costs, but it improves members' understanding of means-ends relationships and allows the team to accommodate to an extensive, changing world.

Team-Context Interaction

Thus far I have described a group as a free actor following a strategy toward the external environment. In reality, this picture is much too simple. An environment reacts to a team, and then both team and context influence each other. Just as a team develops patterns of interaction between members and the group itself, so too does it develop a pattern of interaction with the environment. In this organization, we saw three patterns of team-environment interaction. These patterns were setting limits on team activity, choosing best practices, and spreading performance news.

**Setting Limits.** When the new organization structure was put in place, there was some uncertainty as to how much autonomy the teams would have. Team members knew in general that they had to diagnose the needs of the region and meet those needs, and they were told that they had autonomy to do so, but since this task was new to the organization many questions were left
unanswered. Could teams do anything they wanted to do? How much coordination had to take place among teams? How would this be accomplished? How often did teams have to "check in" with top management? For top management, issues existed as well. While providing autonomy sounded like the right thing to do, when teams started to take off in new directions, old patterns of wanting control reasserted themselves. As teams and context negotiated the limits of autonomy, emotions ran high and many teams expended energy fighting power battles rather than working on the task at hand.

Several situations exemplify the struggle over autonomy. When the teams were first formed and the leaders chosen, but before teams had officially met, one team leader scheduled informal meetings of the leaders so that they could act as a sounding board for one another. When the vice commissioner found out these meetings were taking place without him, he forbade them. The head of human resources reported that the team leaders, particularly the leader who had started the meetings, were all very angry about this occurrence.

In the ensuing months, the teams began to generate plans for serving their regions. The commissioner decided he did not want teams doing different things, so he told the leaders to plan a unified approach. When a few weeks went by and he saw no results, he told the teams to create regional profiles and to develop a workshop that would communicate "promising practices" observed in particular schools to the rest of the region. The commissioner expressed frustration with the lack of visible team activity and explained that he wanted something done to justify the reorganization. One team resisted this interference, tried to fight the direction, and got caught up in a power struggle. Other teams tried to shape management directives, while still others became dependent and wanted to be told exactly what to do.

What this situation makes clear is that the balance of autonomy and control evolved over time and was more of an issue for some teams than for others. As teams began to act, top management realized that it wanted to maintain some control, so it set limits and provided direction. Yet both teams and management seemed ambivalent about control. Teams both resisted it and
asked for it, while management preached the advantages of autonomy even as it set limits on power and action.

This process of defining autonomy parallels what goes on inside the group. As Schein (1988) illustrates, during a team's early formation process, members define what their role within the group will be, what the balance between individual and team goals will be, and how much they will succumb to the will of others. This process is necessary if teams are to progress, yet it may stall work in early stages. As one takes an external perspective, it becomes evident that similar issues between the team and its environment must be resolved.

Choosing Best Practices. As teams begin work on a new task, both the precise task and how performance will be measured are often unclear. Yet teams begin to act; by watching their actions, top management comes to a clearer idea of what it wants the teams to do. In order to communicate that notion, management holds up particular practices as models of good team behavior. Thus, an environment influences a team by setting limits on activity and by picking particular teams as models defining task and performance. A team can influence its environment by promoting its activities as the ones that should shape the definition of task and performance. Teams are not equally skilled in this influence process.

For example, four months after the teams were formed, an official team leader meeting was held at which leaders reported on their activities. One leader reported on problems within the team, including poor attendance at meetings and internal conflict, while another reported on the creation of a communication network, whereby one team member was assigned to each district. Obviously, the latter became the team most often used as the exemplar of effective interventions with the clients. The promotion of team accomplishments occurred not only in formal team meetings, but also one-on-one, as the team leader and members met with the commissioner and vice commissioner.

On the one hand, this communication of best practices allowed the organization to gain from the trial-and-error learning each team experienced. When one team found an innovative
solution to a problem, it was diffused to other teams. On the other hand, choosing best practices led to labeling, and teams having difficulty were punished for communicating bad news.

**Labeling.** The external environment plays yet another role: it becomes an echo chamber. Early on, not much concrete information was available, so the teams were not labeled. Yet after the formal review described above, information about team performance and top management preferences were channeled to the rest of the organization and amplified. The team that reported trouble reported it to the other team leaders and top management, but soon the whole organization knew. This team was surely in trouble then, because it developed a reputation as a problem team. On the positive side, the team that set up a communication network was praised and the news reinforced a positive image, making it easier for this team to continue on the right track. Thus, the first time there was comparative, evaluative information—even though it was based on limited data—it became big news.

Since many environments change whispers into roars, teams must manage the information and images they broadcast. These images appear to become permanent even though they may be biased and premature. Here, the initial reputations were intact a year later despite efforts to change them, and indeed new data were interpreted to support the images; for example, superintendent ratings, which differed from top management ratings, were discounted. In short, early evaluations became self-fulfilling prophecies.

**Predicting Performance**

Perhaps the most intriguing research finding is that the way in which a team interacts with its environment seems to be a better predictor of team performance than is the way that team members interact with one another. If I had predicted performance using the traditional internal model, the informing and parading teams would have been prime candidates for top ratings. Their leaders planned to be participative and to engage members in debate and decision making. They considered goal clarity and member satisfaction as important. Yet, the informing team failed, and
although the parading teams rated their satisfaction as high early in the observation period, they became only mediocre performers. It was the probing teams who became the highest performers.

Thus, the study's key proposition is this: for the new kinds of teams being created in today's organizations probing activities will lead to the highest performance ratings. These teams face new, unstructured tasks and a set of external constituencies that allocate tasks, have their own set of demands, and evaluate performance. Probing teams understand outsiders' demands and initiate field interventions. They do not presume to understand their constituents, but rather venture out to revise assumptions in light of a new charter. Those who probe promote their team and its activities to customers and to those who judge performance.

Those teams that probe for new ideas and reactions to possible interventions do pay a price, however. The cost of probing in this study was low cohesion and satisfaction in the short run. High levels of interaction with outsiders take up a lot of time and bring divergent views into a group, which can lead to conflict and inhibit team building. Groups with an external emphasis run the risk of becoming "underbounded" (Alderfer, 1976)--having external knowledge but not enough cohesion to motivate members to pull different perspectives together. Group members in this study also expressed a lot of early confusion about team goals. Team leaders partially overcame this problem through directive leadership.

Despite these problems externally oriented teams in this study did better than the informing team. That team did have to contend with a negative reputation and poor facilitator skills in addition to isolation, but it is possible that no leader can help a group that is isolated from those upon whom it depends. One of the greatest levers team success may be choosing the right approach to the environment from the start.

Bounding the Study

This study's findings document strategies toward teams' environments and raise speculations on new relationships among team activity, the environment, and performance.
However, the distinct characteristics of the teams studied may limit generalizations. For example, a different set of strategies might have developed and been effective in different environments. Support for some of the study findings has been found in other settings, though, and it is possible to articulate some limits on how far the findings can be taken.

A study of forty-five new product teams in five high-technology companies (Ancona & Caldwell, 1990) provides support for the existence of multiple strategies similar to the ones identified in this study. Thus, in private sector companies, using a large data set, similar phenomena were observed. New product teams that sought feedback on their product designs, coordinated and negotiated with other groups, promoted their products to top management, and found out who supported and opposed their teams were higher performers than those who merely tried to map the environment or remained isolated. Again, the probing strategy led to higher managerial rankings of performance.

Yet clearly these findings do not apply to all groups. The dominant, internal model of group performance arose to predict performance in some teams. One supposition is that teams with high internal demands and low external demands can reach high levels of performance by focusing exclusively on traditional internal processes such as decision making, conflict resolution, task allocation, trust, and cohesiveness. Examples of such teams might be basic research groups and training groups, which are isolated and not dependent on outsiders.

Teams facing high external demands, however, need to develop the skills that a probing strategy requires. High external demands might result because of unclear managerial vision (the team must then expend energy to figure out what management "really" wants), external evaluation, a heterogeneous or unpredictable set of clients, changing markets and technologies, or high levels of required coordination and dependence. Task forces, new product teams, and top management teams are examples; they must respond actively to numerous external demands, coordinate across traditional organizational boundaries, and adapt to a changing environment. Given that this type of team is increasingly common, the question is how to manage it effectively.
Learning to Use the External Perspective

The findings from this and other studies suggest that teams in today's organizations must learn to use this new external model. Doing so involves using a new way of thinking about group process, team building, and the role of the environment in understanding group behavior. Perhaps with these changes in the way we think about and manage teams, actual team performance can begin to catch up with promises made in the popular press.

Rethinking Group Process

This study suggests that teams with high external demands will be better performers to the extent that they follow a probing strategy. In order to carry out such a strategy, team members need an expanded view of their activities, they need to have the skills and training to carry them out, and team composition has to reflect the importance of these activities.

If you ask a set of team members and leaders to describe a high-performing team, they will usually recite the traditional group process variables, e.g., trust, commitment, allocation of work according to skill level, open communication, and clear goals and priorities. Yet to carry out a probing strategy a whole new set of activities is needed. Included would be testing ideas in the field, promoting the team to top management and to the client, and updating the team model of the environment as new information is collected. While some team leaders and members intuitively carry out such activities, to many others the internal model dominates. Unless this external perspective is grasped by those managing teams, it will be hard to get any changes in activity.

Understanding alone, however, is not enough. Often team members lack the necessary skills. Members' job skills often do not include negotiation skills, and the ability to probe for client needs. Thus, training in these areas is necessary. If training is not possible, then teams need access to resources. For example, if one person in an organization was particularly good at
probing activities, this person could be shared by several teams until such skills became more distributed.

Often management selects team members, and this selection may well be made on technical grounds rather than on the basis of group process skills. Management needs to understand that the best set of consultants may be doomed to failure if their product is not accepted by the organization and client. Thus, team composition needs to encompass the skills necessary for meeting external demands.

Team Building

Traditional team building often emphasizes the need to let team members work through issues of power and affiliation (Schein, 1988) and to develop clear goals and priorities (Dyer, 1977). This study suggests that team members also need time to work through issues of power and affiliation with the environment, that goals and priorities cannot be established until external demands are understood, and that team building may involve more than just the team.

Just as it is difficult for team members to concentrate on the task at hand when they have questions about who is in charge and how to combine individual and group goals, so too do difficulties arise as the team works through these issues with different parts of the environment. As top management and team leaders negotiate limits to autonomy, task work will suffer. Team members and management need to understand that this is a normal part of the development process. Recognition that this is taking place may help people to understand the conflict and discomfort that accompanies the process.

The team must be careful not to set goals and priorities prematurely. Obviously, goals based on old information may not reflect the current environment. Thus, rather than have team members start by brainstorming for possible approaches to their stated task, team leaders might better start with external activities: having each member interview five clients about their current needs, for example, or having everyone ask a senior manager for perceptions of team goals and
how to achieve them. Then, the team can brainstorm using this new information. This plan may leave the team dissatisfied, since it expands the time with no clear agenda. Team leaders can acknowledge the discomfort with this unusual start, but explain that gathering external information is the agenda at the beginning.

As team members interview outsiders and test ideas, internal processes seem to become smoother. Cohesiveness often follows successful interventions in the field rather than the other way around. And by this time, the team has built more than just a team. It has built up a temporary system of contacts, supporters, sources of feedback, and information nodes that can be used throughout its life cycle. So team building needs to be seen in this broader sense: building a web of outside connections that helps the group to accomplish its task.

The Role of the Environment

Thus far my language has implied that the responsibility for team performance is on the team. Yet this study clearer outlines the direct role that the environment plays in team development and success. Since top management is a key part of the environment, it should be aware of its ambivalence about autonomy, the potential damaging effect of labeling, and the danger of rewarding those who promote their teams.

In this study, top management was ambivalent about autonomy. While teams were told they could serve their regions in any way they chose, when they actually started to act their actions were sometimes curbed, and directives from the top followed. This double message led to power struggles and resentment. These struggles might have been less difficult if top management had realized its own impact. The commissioner might not have promised so much autonomy in the first place, or he might have explained why the teams' different directions made him so uncomfortable, or he might have tried to work with the teams to set goals and priorities. The problem, is that management often has great difficulty giving up control.
When management labels teams early in their life cycle, those labels become difficult to shed. While labeling helps some teams it is quite damaging to others. Management might want to curb this labeling process to lower the risk of shutting some teams down at an early stage. Teams that have initial problems and are open about them may never get a chance to make a useful contribution, while other teams that get a fast start may be rewarded, only to lose momentum later on.

The labeling process can be related to teams' self-promotion. That was not a problem in this study since teams did seem to make significant interventions in the field. However, there is the possibility that management will reward the teams that have the best internal marketing skills and not the ones doing the best work. In fact, one of the parading team leaders complained that she had done a good job but that she had not "played politics," so her team's contribution was not noticed. The key issue here is that a probing strategy involves promoting the team's achievements, as well as testing ideas, approaching the task with a new mindset, and trying out solutions. Management needs to ascertain that the promotional activities are backed up by substance.

The external perspective offers lessons for teams and management alike. It directs attention to the ways teams approach their environment, to team-environment dynamics, and to improving team performance. This perspective can help organizations to garner the benefits and avoid the pitfalls of the new teams within their borders.
References


FIGURE 1

A. GROUPS IN ISOLATION

B. GROUPS IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT