



Alachua Excels

Team-based Management

What is a team?

A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

Why team-based management?

Teams are the basic functional unit of transforming organizations. Teams bring complementary skills and experiences together that are always greater than any single individual. Teams establish real time communications that solve problems and aid decision-making. Teams have a social dimension that enhances the economic and administrative aspects of work. Teams are fun, build trust and understanding among people and create bridges to other organizational operations and agencies. Teams allow more rapid and greater personal growth and change behaviors more quickly than one on one interactions.

Six Team Basics

Plus Openness and Clear Communications

1. Small number of participants. Less than 12 is best. For a larger group use sub-teams.
2. Complementary skills. Diversity in skills to successfully deal with the issue (technical, problem solving, interpersonal).
3. Common purpose. Share a same mission and work goal.
4. Common approach. An action plan that divides equivalent workload.
5. Common performance goals. State work plan and time frames.
6. Mutually accountable for their performance. Provide quarterly updates and evaluations of progress.

Team-based Environment

TIME: Team processes initially take more time than single leader efforts. But later, as team capacity is developed, teams are equal in time frame and result in higher quality decision making and organizational depth.

CAPACITY: Typically an individual can only meaningfully contribute to 3 to 4 teams at one time. Leaders spend more time than participants. Team meetings should last less than two hours.

LOCATION: Although virtual teams exist in decentralized and computerized global organizations some face to face interaction in the early stages greatly affects team success. Meeting environment, seating layout, refreshments and lack of disturbances are important and impact performance.

Changes Underway

Current Focus

- Developing a shared vision for the County
- Establishing our organizational values
- Linking the Commission's Strategic Plan and Goals to team-based action plans

Desired Results

- Organizational direction based on Commission goals
- Guiding principles governing our behavior, policies and decisions
- Coordinating and aligning organizational efforts
- Implementing team-based management
- Empowering and engaging employees through team involvement

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Real Teams

Many organizations call groups of employees teams but these often are only working groups with no sense of commitment or performance challenge. We have potential teams that are in the early stages of development but have not bonded or lack the necessary cohesion or basic team qualifications. Real teams are committed to their purpose, are functioning and productive and collaborate well among individual components. A few teams become high performance teams that collectively inspire and transcend their individual members ability. The sum becomes greater than the parts.

We seek high performance teams that produce a high impact on our operations. High performance teams have a greater impact on team members because they become deeply committed to one another personal growth and success. High performance teams require a cultural change in most organizations.

Groups and teams are different. Experience shows that groups of people do not become teams because a manager tells them meet. Launching 60 teams will not make them all be successful or be in the

Advantages of Teams

- Highly motivated environment and work climate
- Shared ownership
- Faster response to technology change
- Cross training
- Delegation of work
- Increased communication
- Better decisions
- Improved self worth
- Buy-in to solutions and policies people understand and have created

right places or make us suddenly a team based organization. Teams at the top of the management structure are hardest to establish so a group of Department Directors are not a Leadership Team until the majority decides to be.

The primary objective of our teams must be performance resulting in the accomplishment of assigned strategic objectives, not just “becoming a team”. Football teams are formed to win ball games not as social groups. Teams are performance oriented.

Drawbacks to Teams

- Can be time consuming and conflict with routine work.
- Appear confused, disorderly, less control oriented
- Require people to change
- Can cause role confusion; particularly with mid management
- Requires initially longer time frame for results

We are forming teams to accomplish our Commission’s strategic objectives and in a responsive timeframe. This challenge requires teamwork and teams operating independently in a coordinated

manner. Our teams do not threaten Departments but integrate

hierarchical structures. Teams will naturally integrate performance and learning as we tackle complex problems (e.g. air quality, sprawl, poverty).

The language of “I” becomes “we”. Teams speak a different language. The Greeks called this “metanoia” meaning a shift of mind. Some teams come to recognize they function better than single efforts and there is a meaningfulness of the experience.

They are civil to each other and allow people to challenge their assumptions and plans.

Types of Teams in Alachua County

- Organizational Policy Teams
- Cross-Functional Teams
- Process Improvement Teams
- Self-Directed Work Teams (future)
- Self-Managed Work Teams (future)

High performance teams focus on a systems approach. They recognize stake holders, speak of unintended consequences and “what if” discussions. After they create alternative solutions they examine them and their impacts on other areas. They seek to break “cause and affect cycles” that generate reoccurring problems because all components of a solution are present.

Resistance to Teams

If you are skeptical about teams it is because of the value our society places on individualism or your own “ego” that causes doubts. Sources of doubt arise from a lack of conviction that teams perform better than individuals, fears that teams are risky and make for uncomfortable interactions, and that there will be a weak organizational performance ethic to allow it to flourish. A reluctance to take a risk and submit one’s fate to the performance of a team is a common fear. We fear loss of control and are typically not rewarded for team work. So, it appears only to be a risk. Alachua County intends to develop methods of rewarding teams that perform. Teams work well where there is a strong performance ethic and clear challenges.

Source: Kazenback and Smith. Wisdom of Teams.