

# Is Your Team REALLY a Team?

## Part One of Six

James L. C. Taggart

This is the first in a series of articles on teams. Teamwork is talked about widely in organizations, but often with little understanding of what it means. Organizations want instant results, teams that are formed and ready to go overnight – something like an instant pudding.

This article looks at the six basic elements of teams. But first, here's one definition of a team (from Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith):

*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.*

There are two key prerequisites to becoming a team. One is that the group of people involved has a **common purpose** and the other is **interdependence** among the members. Without both of these present the group will never become a team.

It's essential that the members of a team be committed fully to their common purpose and performance goals. A common purpose takes time to develop, but it gives the team an identity. Remember this: **team purpose = team performance**. They're inseparable.

To determine if your group is a team, or has the potential, answer the following questions.

### 1) How large is your group?

- Is communication frequent?
- Do you meet often, and are discussions constructive?
- Do people understand their roles?

### 2) Are their sufficient, or potential, skills to achieve your goals?

- Are the three types of skills present: interpersonal, technical, and problem-solving?
- What skills are missing?
- Are people willing to learn new skills and to help one another?

### 3) Is there a clear and meaningful purpose to which people will strive to reach?

- Is it a team or organizational purpose?
- Does everyone understand it the same way?
- Do people think it's important and inspiring?

4) Are there specific performance goals that everyone agrees on?

- Are they organizational, team, or the leader's goals?
- Can they be measured easily?
- Do they allow for small wins along the way?

5) Is there a commonly accepted approach to work?

- Does it maximize the contributions of people?
- Does it allow open interaction among people to solve problems?
- Are new ideas encouraged?

6) Is there mutual accountability among people?

- Is there individual and mutual accountability for the group's performance and results?
- Are people clear on what they're accountable for, individually and mutually?
- Is there the view that only the team can fail?