Buffalo National Insurance: Team Work Through Problem-Solving.

Renard L. Beaty
St. John Fisher College

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Buffalo National Insurance: Team Work Through Problem-Solving

Abstract
This paper examines a group of insurance professionals that developed into a self-directed Team at Buffalo National Insurance. The Team was not showing Team unity, thus, the Team did not meet performance goals. Led by an internal consult that collaborated with management, the Team and the Team Leader created an environment that allowed for Team unity and the effective use of a new problem-solving tool known as Continuous Improvement Model (CIM). The intervention strategy was successful in enhancing human performance because the intervention was implemented in (a) real time (b) during actual business conditions and (c) using actual business problems. This approach did not remove the developing Team from the workplace thus minimizing lost productivity and performance. The Human Resource Development (HRD) professional who wants to engender credibility and trust with business customers will want to understand the reasons why this intervention method was effective.

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Marilynn Butler

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An Essay
Renard L. Beaty, SPHR
GHRD 590:
Master of Science In Human Resource Development Program
St. John Fisher College
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We approve this paper of Renard L. Beaty.

Seth Silver, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Human
Resource Development
St. John Fisher College

May 5, 2002
Date

Marilynn N. Butler, Ph. D.
Assistant Professor of Human
Resource Development
Director / Chair MSHRD
St. John Fisher College

May 5, 2002
Date
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To my friends, Greg and Colleen, who encouraged and supported my belief in a better me. I learned that human performance begins with the belief that it is possible and that I will make it happen. I thank you both.

To my spouse Wilma and daughters, Lee and Drew for showing me that creativity begins with silly play, a fertile imagination, curiosity, and celebration of achievement and risk-taking. All learning environments should include these elements.
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Part One

Introduction

Purpose of Essay

The purpose of this essay is to present a preliminary study and examine, through reflection, how a workgroup with performance problems sought assistance from a consultant. The consultant implemented an intervention that resolved the performance problem. Specifically, the workgroup examined in this study did not collaborate on common performance issues, demonstrated low performance in goal achievement, and distrusted other group members and management. The intervention included team building techniques and the use of a new problem-solving tool, called the Continuous Improvement Model (CIM). The intervention resulted in improved human performance and effective teaming. CIM and team building were introduced during a series of planned on-the-job meetings. These meetings took place over the course of one a year and were designed to teach, in the midst of real-time actual working conditions, using actual performance challenges, without sacrificing productivity.

Professionals interested in Human Resource Development (HRD) will find this paper suitable for learning another method through which to create value as a business partner. HRD professionals strive to engender value and trust with the customer by demonstrating their understanding of the business issues, knowledge of human performance, partnership skills, and consulting skills (Robinson, & Robinson, 1996). Today, business conditions prefer intervention methods that are performed in real-time with minimal disruption to productivity, which is a paradigm shift from the traditional intervention of classroom or workshop training. These traditional methods took the employee off the work floor, which immediately resulted
in a loss of productivity that negatively impacted performance, which resulted in an untimely response to the performance problem. The untimely response was due to the process for designing training: (a) need to identify the problem; (b) design instruction; (c) present to the employee, which took time to implement. Rothwell & Sredl (2000) refers to the next generation of HRD professionals as Workplace Learning and Performance (WLP) professionals. Rothwell & Sredl (2000) explains the WLP’s value as being able to achieve human performance in the actual workplace environment. This intervention method was effective at enhancing human performance in the actual workplace, thereby significantly increasing the consultant’s value to the customer.

Ensuring Confidentiality

The host organization is in the insurance industry. For the purpose of this study, and to maintain confidentiality, the organization’s name is changed to Buffalo National Insurance (BNI) and the participants are referred to in the following manner: The workgroup of claims professionals and claims support will be the Team, Manager will be Team Leader, Office Manager will be MCM, and The WLP professional will be the Consultant.

The Paper

The paper will examine the interplay of relevant variables in order to provide a complete understanding of how the Team succeeded. This paper describes relevant variables such as in-depth description of the Team, Team Leader, the MCM, and consultant, the circumstances under which team building and CIM is being used, and the nature of the workplace in which the Team and Team Leader is located. The paper will review the performance issues plaguing the Team and how the intervention methods supported the Team in identifying appropriate solutions to those performance issues. The paper will present the
theoretical framework through a literature review that supports the implemented intervention method.

Data collection involved focus group and one-on-one interviews; direct observations of group interaction; and reviewing the Team’s performance goals versus actual goal achievement.

This essay will examine real events of a post intervention with the intent of understanding how the intervention brought meaning to the workplace and value to the consultant as a performance enhancer. Adults may learn from many methods such as classroom training, workshops, executive training programs, and reflection. This being a reflective paper, we should understand the value of reflection as a natural method for learning.

Value of Reflection

The value of reflection is summed up in the research conducted by Daudelin (1996) which suggests that one hour of time spent reflecting can significantly increase learning from a challenging situation. Reflection is defined by Daudelin (1996) as “the process of stepping back from an experience to ponder, carefully and persistently, its meaning to the self through the development of inferences; learning is the creation of meaning from past or current events that serves as a guide for future behavior” (p.4). The Latin word for experiences is “experiential”, meaning trial, proof, or experiment. Thus, our experiences may be derived from trial and error. Our everyday experience could be a major source for learning, which may be discovered through reflection.

Reflection is a natural process. In business, we analyze our experiences and summarize them in a report, performance review, or debrief. In school, we may review a case
study and discuss its relevance in order to discover new applicability. In our private lives, we may have a breakthrough to a nagging problem while cutting the lawn or taking a shower.

In Business, reflection causes a pause in a fast paced environment, to allow for the employee to reflect on the key areas such as customer requirements, root cause of a problem, and nonproductive workflow patterns. Reflection is embedded in many of the total quality practices taught in business today; 360 Degree Feedback tool and customer satisfaction surveys are examples of total quality tools, which uses reflection of past performance to improve future results.

Reflection is more adaptable and responsive in assisting people’s learning in a fast-paced business climate than the more traditional methods of workshops, degree programs, or executive education programs. This is because these traditional methods require the employee to be away from the workplace in order to learn, and often the time required to learn may not match the time required for a response to the changing environment. For example, if an employee needs to understand how to handle customer complaints, the employee may either go to a workshop or learn in the workplace with assistance from a consultant. The workplace learning will allow for the consultant to observe the employee and ask reflective questions in order for the employee to learn something that can be applied to the next customer contact.

Organization of Paper

This paper is segmented into four parts. Part One reviews the purpose of the essay, the importance of this intervention to the HRD professional, the value of reflective learning, and the organization of the paper. Part Two presents why the consultant was called in to help, the Buffalo National Insurance’s: (a) background and personal characteristics; (b) skills; and
(c) knowledge level. This section also includes the background of the consultant involved in the intervention. Part Three presents a review the theoretical framework of related literature that supports team building and CIM. Furthermore, the literature review will define the terms “workgroup” and “work team”, review value of teams today, and the foundation for each phase of CIM. Part Four discusses the alignment of the HRD theoretical framework to the intervention methods and how the study findings contribute to the field of HRD.

In order to understand the intervention method chosen, there must be an understanding of how and why the consultant was requested. Chapter Two will place into context BNI’s workplace situation and the consultant’s actions in providing interventions that were appropriate for BNI’s performance problems.

Part Two

Evolution of Study: Buffalo National Insurance

Background

While conducting a new Team Leader orientation workshop the consultant met the new Team Leader of BNI Buffalo Claims Office location. The Team Leader informed the consultant that she was assigned to a Team that was not performing at the level that the organization expected. The Team Leader invited the consultant to do an assessment of her Team and provide feedback based on the consultant’s observations. The consultant conducted an informal assessment by observing the Team and Team Leader interactions, in a group and one-to-one; in scheduled meetings and on the actual work floor. The consultant observed that the Team was not collaborating on common performance issues, demonstrated low performance in goal achievement, demonstrated low self-esteem, and distrusted other group members as well as members of management.
The consultant concluded that the BNI Team would benefit from some sort of intervention. He further concluded that this Team would benefit from team development. Specifically, the consultant proposed team development because of a report he recently completed regarding team development in organizations. The consultant sought a second opinion, and contacted an external consultant (Expert) in the area of team development. The consultant discussed the observations with the Expert and arranged for the Team Leader to be interviewed by the Expert. Based on the interview and the consultant’s observations, the Expert agreed with the consultant’s conclusion. However, the consultant knew that it would be difficult convincing the Team, Team Leader, and MCM to implement the proposal because the BNI never implemented nor endorsed teambuilding.

Before an examination of the intervention method, this review will present the key stakeholders in the study with background information to assist in understanding the people and their work environment.

*The company.* Buffalo Nation Insurance Company is considered a major carrier of homeowners, life, and automobile insurance in New York State. To better serve their customers, it has claims offices in various locations in New York State, one location being Buffalo, New York. The claims office is known as the Market Claims Office (MCO). The Market Claims Manager (MCM), along with a seven managers (Team Leaders), manages the Market Claims Office. The non-management employees (Team) consist of the claims professionals, who investigate and settle insurance claims; and claims support personnel, who assist in the settlement of the claims. The Team Leader is responsible for the performance of a specific Team. The Team addresses one specific
type of insurance claim. For example, the team may address homeowner’s insurance, personal lines (auto), or personal injury. It is a constant challenge to settle claims in a timely manner, meeting the customer service levels and maintaining employee morale in a highly competitive, changing industry.

**MCM.** The MCM is a Black male between the 40-45 years of age. The MCM is responsible for certain goals that the office must meet. The MCM has more than 20 years with the company, and 5 years in his present position.

The MCM was concerned with supporting his new Team Leader without giving the Team Leader impression that he did not have confidence in her ability to manage a Team. Admittedly, the Team had a reputation of complaining, being low performers, and felt that low performers were transferred to their particular Team. The prior Team Leader was ineffective and requested to be removed from management. He wanted to support the Team Leader and was looking for opportunities to do so without disruption to a team that struggles with productivity.

**The team.** The team consisted of eleven people, eight females and three males. Three were representatives from claims support; seven were claims professionals, and the Team Leader. Claims support had graduated high school. Claims professionals and manager graduated from college. The Team had company-supported knowledge of the insurance industry and the company’s business objectives. Claims support had 5-10 years of experience. The claims professionals had 3-20 years of experience. Four people persons are between 20-30 years of age; four people persons are between 31-40 years of age, three people persons between 41-50 years of age, and one person over 51 years of age. There are five exempt and three non-exempt employees. No former management
experience was discovered among the non-management employees. There are three Caucasian males, one Hispanic female, one Black female, and five Caucasian females.

The Team was working as individuals because they were rewarded based on individual performance. The consultant witnessed frustration, complaining, and very little communication among the members of the Team. The Team expected the Team Leader to have answers for their performance problems. Each member of the Team was trying to resolve the same issues. However, individual performance impacted the overall Team’s results. The Team’s weekly meeting consisted of the Team Leader doing the majority of talking regarding the results and addressing the many concerns presented by the Team. In summary, the Team had a passive approach to their job because they did not feel empowered to make an impact in their performance.

*Team leader.* The Team Leader was a Caucasian female between 35 and 40 years of age; had 11 years of experience in the claims department, one as Team Leader with company-related leadership training.

The Team Leader was supportive by assisting the Team with the settling of claims and dispensing solutions. The Team Leader found it difficult to address her other responsibilities, such as administrative functions and employee development strategies, and expressed frustration because the team was not performing at the expected performance level, despite her efforts to direct them in their day-to-day activities.

The consultant. At the time of the actual events, the consultant was an employee of BNI as a Human Resource consultant for the Rochester and Buffalo, New York market. Prior to his role in human resources (HR), he was a manager of the claims department. Being a former claim manager engendered credibility and trust with the
claims employees; because, as a former claims employee, he understood the claims business and the claims employees.

As a consultant, he was responsible for training and development, employee relations issues, and identifying opportunities to enhance the performance of the client’s organization. Enhancing the performance of the client’s organization may involve addressing individual employees concerns, for example benefit delays that may distract the worker from his/her duties; to organizational issues, such as training managers how to coach employees. Exhibit 1. lists the duties of the BNI internal consultant.

Exhibit 1. BNI Internal Consultant Duties

- Regional Communication
- Assisting in establishing supportive workplace
- New management orientation
- New employee orientation
- Recruiting
- Training and Development
  - coaching
  - diversity workshop
  - participative management
- Corporate investigation
- Benefits
- Implementation of Employee Attitude Surveys

The key stakeholder of this study has been reviewed. This paper will now illustrate how the intervention was proposed and how it was implemented.

Gathering Intervention Support

The consultant approached the MCM and Team Leader and proposed that the Team Leader start to guide and encourage the Team to find solutions using the Teams' collective knowledge and experience, to only seek the Team Leader's help if they needed
something that was not within their sphere of influence or control. Additional team building skills would be introduced throughout the intervention process. The consultant gave a brief overview of why team building would be appropriate for this particular Team. The consultant addressed the MCM’s concerns for not allowing productivity to be disrupted and training (off the work floor) to be kept to a minimum. The consultant clarified that all learning will take place during the natural course of business, minimizing disruption to the flow of business. Furthermore, the consultant pledged that performance and productivity would start to improve within four months, provided that the MCM actively participate in the intervention. The MCM and Team Leader agreed to the proposal. The Team Leader presented the proposal to the Team, allowing the consultant to be present to answer any questions.

The Team was concerned that the intervention would be another task added to the many tasks already delegated to the Team. The consultant reassured the Team that the intervention method would complement and support the Team’s day-to-day activities. The consultant also informed the Team that the intervention would only be successful because the Team has the power and management support to assure success. The consultant also informed the Team that its success could create a new method for achieving performance goals at BNI. The Team accepted the proposal and team building initiated with the MCM, Team, and Team Leader in February 1999.

initiating the intervention

The consultant needed a tool to assess the Team and Team Leader on their teamwork skills. The consultant contacted the company’s training coordinator and explained the purpose of the call; the consultant wanted to leverage any tools or training
that the company already had versus trying to "reinvent the wheel." The training coordinator confirmed that the company did not have an established training program for team building. However, the training coordinator had an assessment tool (survey) that assessed team effectiveness skills (see Appendix A). The survey was comprised of both qualitative and quantitative design.

The survey would establish a qualitative and quantitative baseline from which to compare the progress of the team in 9 specific categories, the categories for team effectiveness were: (a) goals and objectives; (b) utilization of resources; (c) trust and conflict resolution; (d) leadership; (e) control and procedures; (f) interpersonal communication; (g) problem-solving/decision making; (h) experimentation/creativity; and (i) evaluation. The consultant was the only person to see the individual survey results. The consultant followed up with each survey participants, conducting face-to-face interviews, to seek further clarification about their individual responses.

Survey Results

The survey results were compiled and shared with the Team and Team Leader (see Appendix B). The percent of responses associated with the two highest values, five and six, were added summed together to create a base line measurement. This base line baseline score would be compared to the baseline base line score of the follow-up survey, which would be to be administered in June of 2000. The Team discussed the importance of the results and prioritized which areas to address. Discussion allowed for the creation of strategic goals that supported the fostering of a self-directed work team. The Team chose to focus on one area, in particular, problem solving. At the request of the Team, the consultant developed a problem-solving tool for identifying and addressing the problems.
that impacted the Team's ability to meet goals. The problem-solving tool is entitled the Continuous Improvement Model (CIM).

_CIM_

The consultant developed, with feedback from the Team, a problem-solving tool specifically to address the Teams’ performance needs. CIM was designed to assist with identifying solutions to daily business problems, Exhibit 2 illustrates CIM.

Exhibit 2. Continuous Improvement Model

![Diagram of CIM model]

The Continuous Improvement Model focuses on solving open-ended problems in a team-based environment. The consultant facilitated a session designed to educate the Team on how to apply each phase of CIM. The word “phase” may imply a linear process but the consultant emphasized to the Team that the phases do not always follow a linear path. For example, by measuring the initial method, the Team may discover a need to adjust the method that may take the Team back to brainstorming phase for discovery.

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CIM phases were adjusted to provide clarity to the Team and the Consultant provided examples on how to achieve maximum benefit. Each phase of CIM has probing questions to assist in guiding the Team through that particular phase. The probing questions are the starting point and the Team may add more questions to each phase, which will happen from the new knowledge gained from using CIM. There are seven steps to CIM, they are: challenge, objective, brainstorming barriers and methods, method, measurement instrument, results, and discussion.

_Challenge_. The challenge phase is designed to assist the user in understanding if a problem really exists. If a problem does exist, the user will need to clearly define the problem statement. This is the most critical step in the process because if the symptom of the problem is identified and the root cause is not, the user may find a solution that will not resolve the performance dilemma. The Team appoints a facilitator to guide the Team in understanding the goal that is not being met in order to understand why the goal is important to the Team and the organization. Linking Team performance to organization performance allows for the Team to engage in systemic thinking, understanding how the part impacts the whole. Once the challenge is clear, the next step is to determine the objective.

_Ojective_. The objective phase establishes interim and final goals. This phase also establishes conditions, identifies the issue, performance, what action will be taken, and quality standards for completion, as well as how well the task will be performed. For example, the toaster is missing a handle (condition). The task is to purchase a black handle and glue it on the toaster (quality of performance). The toaster will be operating with the black handle by the next morning (standard of completion). The objective will
be evaluated during the result phase, how well the criterion was achieved will determine the success of the problem-solver. After the objective is established, the Team needs to understand the barriers to achieving the objective.

**Brainstorming Barriers & Methods.** This phase reminds us that performance is not always a training issue. Performance could be impacted by management’s attitude, technical difficulties, poor communication, and lack of support, to name a few.

This phase clarifies the root cause that is impacting performance. Identifying the barrier(s) to performance will lead to brainstorming methods that will be more effective in eliminating the barrier. Following basic brainstorming rules, to generate ideas without analyzing the value of the ideas, one member of the Team records all possible barriers that is impacting performance. Some of the barriers identified in past brainstorming sessions have been misinterpreting policy, timely communication of information, and ineffective work practices. The goal of this phase is to identify the barrier that has the greater impact on the goal and sub-goals. Based on the barriers, a method is developed in order to remove that particular barrier.

**Method.** The strategy is developed in the method phase. The strategy is designed to impact the root cause of the performance problem and creates new knowledge for the Team. If the method is successful, the Team will have enhanced their knowledge base for insurance, also known as domain-specific schema. For example, the Team is responsible for getting closed files to the subrogation department. The subrogation department is responsible for collecting money that is owed to the company due to negligence by the other party. The subrogation department must receive the file twenty days after file closer. The team was not meeting this deadline. Upon investigating the
barrier, it was discovered the auto appraisers were holding up the paperwork. The auto appraisers were waiting for the customers to be completely satisfied with the repairs before sending in the paperwork. The Team explained to the auto appraisers that supplemental paperwork can be sent later, but the initial paperwork should be sent to the claims department immediately after the check was issued. In this step, duties, roles, and expectations of each Team member are defined and the procedures for achieving the performance standard are documented. The Team establishes time lines and checkpoints. Each Team member is given a copy of the method. Next, the measurement instrument is chosen for monitoring the method.

*Measurement instrument.* This phase establishes how the Team will monitor progress and results? The Team determines what tools are currently available, such as company reports, and other measurements that may be employed. Other measurements may include how well the Team worked together and how well executed was the method? Do we need to adjust our initial method in light of new information? This step fosters early detection of unplanned events and adjusts to maximize the achievement of the performance goal. Once the Team reaches the deadline for achieving the objective, the Team will review the results.

*Results.* This phase determines how well the task was performed? The Team use the objective criteria and measuring instrument results to help answer that question: conditions, what is needed; identifies the issue, what needed addressing; performance, who will do what; action to be taken, define roles; and quality standards for completion, Team effectiveness and goal achievement. Open-ended problems are seldom resolved on the first attempt. Due to the nature of open-ended problems (they have no known
solution), there are usually interim goals that will move the Team closer to a final solution. This phase will assist in determining the next step, if any is necessary, for the Team. However, beyond learning to address a new problem, what else did the Team discover? The Team should discuss the other new findings.

Discussion. At the time of this paper, this phase has been renamed to represent the total goal of this phase. Because this phase allows the Team to dialogue regarding those other experiences that came out of the problem-solving process, this phase is called dialogue and discussion. It is important for Team members to share insights with one another in order to build understanding and applying the new understanding to future interactions that will improve Team performance. The Team would dialogue, meaning to seek understanding of how another Team member perceives the experience, without critiquing the perceptions. Once all members have been heard, then the Team Members discuss how to best apply the perceptions to future events. This phase has embedded the value of reflection.

Intervention Implementation

The consultant suggest to the MCM to communicate his support of the team building effort directly to the Team. To continue communicating to the Team throughout the process, ensuring to tie rewards and recognition to team efforts versus individual efforts. At this time the Team was reminded by the Team Leader that the criteria for an exceed employee has a strong component for demonstrating team behaviors. The Team did not realize that this was already apart of the BNI's reward strategy.

The consultant conducted a series of workshops, during the Team’s regularly scheduled meetings, to educate the Team regarding giving and receiving feedback,
conflict management, the stages of team building, understanding each Team member’s personality per the DISC model, and peer coaching. Prior to each meeting the Team would read a topic on teamwork and discuss the relevance to their work environment. The majority of the meeting was focused on the Team deciding what performance challenges to address. Toward the end of the meetings, each member is encouraged to state what is working well with the Team and what are opportunities areas. The Team Leader facilitates to ensure that all members had an opportunity to participate and may introduce information that will assist the Team in deciding what issues to address.

In order to create a supportive work environment, the consultant encouraged the Team and Team Leader to establish ground rules that would govern the Team’s and Team Leader’s interaction. These ground rules were designed to enhance cooperation, trust, empowerment, and productivity of a self-directed team. The Team Leader and the Team members agreed on the following ground rules:

- The Team Leader or the Team may identify a problem, based on progress towards meeting weekly or monthly company goals.
- The Team has the responsibility for creating strategic solutions that will benefit the Team, not the individual
- The Team is accountable for implementing the strategic solutions
- The Team will only involve the Team Leader if information or authority is not within the Team’s control
- The Team will monitor the solution implemented and adjust the solution when necessary

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During the meetings, the Team reviewed their monthly reports to identify goals that were not being met. The Team decided on the goal with the most impact on Team performance. This was challenging because some goals were sub goals of even larger goals. The Team had to create a problem statement that accurately explains why meeting the goal was a challenge. The problem statement expressed the benefits to the Team for resolving the problem and how they knew it is a problem. It is assumed that there is not a known procedure that will assist the Team in meeting the performance goal. The Team established the objective, ensuring that they recognized when the objective was met. The Team identified barriers to performance and decided which barriers are within the Team’s control to resolve; this process is done in a brainstorming format. The Team designed a plan or method for achieving the desired results, ensuring the entire Team participated. Measuring tools are identified to monitor the progress. The Team reviewed the results and adjusts the plan as necessary. After the plan is achieved, the Team takes time to reflect on the plan and any other findings that may be applied to future endeavors. This is the dialogue and discussion phase.

Two performance issues were addressed using CIM: Pending Files and Subrogation Handling. Subrogation is defined as collecting money from the at fault insurance company for damages to Buffalo National Insurance’s customer once BNI incurred the cost (see Appendixes C, and D respectively). The Team met all the goals for the two performance issues.

Follow-Up Survey

A follow up survey was administered in June 2000, after several problem-solving enterprises to measure to what degree did the Team find CIM helpful as well as the other
eight categories for effective teams (see Appendix E). The survey suggested great improvement in all areas, especially problem-solving. Thus, it was concluded that the intervention was effective. The consultant now was looking for indications that the Team and management, MCM and Team Leader, would own and continue the intervention once he exits from the process.

*Team Ownership*

*The team.* There were indications that the Team adopted their new structure for achieving performance goals and teaming. The Team changed their name to Kaizen®, which is a Japanese word for continuous improvement. The name was adopted from a reading on continuous improvement. The Kaizen® name is a registered trademark, thus, the Team chose a different spelling that would sound the same, Kyzen. The Team created a sign using Japanese characters and hung the sign above their area. Furthermore, white cotton polo shirts were purchased with the same characters appearing on the left chest area. The Team displayed great pride by wearing the shirt on Fridays. These behavior created many opportunities for team members to discuss the new teaming methods being used to mange their team’s performance.

*Management interview.* The Buffalo claims department was re-organized to remove the personal lines discipline to another office, the current Team members were transferred to new work areas. Thus, the Team was not available for a follow up focus group. The consultant conducted a follow up interview with the Team Leader and MCM. The following is a summary of the key points expressed regarding their experience or observation of the Team development experience.
The Team Leader indicated a transformation with the Team and her own behavior. Prior to the intervention the Team looked to the Team Leader to resolve a majority of issues, were cynical of achieving the goals, distrustful of Team members and management, did not demonstrate networking skills, were cliquish, and had a self-defeatist attitude. The Team Leader noticed that she was frustrated with her ability to find answers for the Team. The Team Leader was the arbitrator of conflicts, and had difficulty doing her primary duties due to the performance issues of her Team. To some degree the Team Leader viewed her Team as low achievers that did not take ownership of the business challenges.

After the intervention, the Team Leader noted the Team taking ownership for the business issues that impacted Team’s performance, leveraging the Team’s skills and experiences, willing to lead projects, and witnessed tremendous pride in themselves by changing the Team’s name to Kyzen. The Team Leader felt her role to be leader/consultant, responsible for empowering the Team, creating a more intimate relationship with her Team in order to understand how to lead them, and encourage her self-development. Self-development means to seek information regarding group dynamics, performance technology, team building concepts out side of what the company provided. The Team Leader felt that she had more time to conduct strategic planning sessions with the MCM that would assist in the Team with performance management. The Team Leader indicated the continued use of CIM for her new Team and is using all the tools and strategies learned from developing the Kyzen Team.

The MCM stated that he agreed with the assessment made by the Team Leader. The MCM also noted some behavior changes in the Team Leader. The MCM noted an

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improvement in the confidence of the Team Leader, even though the Team Leader was new to management. Due to the results the Team Leader was able to achieve, the MCM expected more from the Team Leader than prior to the intervention. Also, the MCM witnessed a greater understanding of the business issues by the Team versus other workgroups.

Block (1981) encourages consultants to have an exit strategy from an intervention. The Team should not become dependent on the consultant but feel empowered in order to achieve the desired outcomes in the absence of the consultant. Due to the behavior of the Team, Team Leader, and MCM the consultant was planning a gradual egress from this particular intervention, a three weeks exit strategy.

Consultant's Exit Strategy

The consultant was offered a position with another firm prior to completing his three weeks exit strategy from his intervention role. BNI offered a counter position that would transfer the consultant to the claims department as the Team Development Manager, conducting similar interventions for the other claims offices throughout the Northeast United States. It was reported that BNI did not customarily extend counter offers to employees who are planning on leaving BNI but the value demonstrated is what BNI needs if BNI wanted to continue to be competitive; the consultant accepted the other firms offer. Fortunately, the Team was demonstrating the ability to identify and plan strategies to address performance dilemmas prior to the consultant egress. The consultant stayed in contact with the Team and Team Leader, answering any questions and visited until the Team was disbanded August 2001.
Part Two reviewed BNI’s claims Team workplace environment. Although the consultant’s approach was ultimately effective, Part Three, literature review, addresses whether the consultant’s approach was grounded in the theoretical framework of HRD.

Part Three

Literature Review

The literature review focuses on understanding the difference between a workgroup and a work team. Additionally, this paper will review the theoretical framework for work teams and the Continuous Improvement Model.

Team Theoretical Frameworks

“Workgroup” and “work team” are terms that are used interchangeably. To bring clarity to the study, Exhibit 3 illustrates the difference between a workgroup and work team.

Exhibit 3. Difference Between Workgroup and Work Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workgroup:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Leader lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• members compete for individual approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• respond to authority rather than peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• not accountable for group performance, only for individual performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Team:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• members focus on group performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mutually accountable to each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leader is viewed as consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• expected to identify problems and solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• members has the authority to implement solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Researchers such as Eric Trist, Mary Parker Follett, and Douglas McGregor have espoused that when the worker was given an opportunity to participate in the efforts to
enhance the product or service, the company and the worker benefited from the experience. The next section introduces the researchers and the corresponding theories that influenced the intervention method for creating a self-directed team.

*Mary Parker Follett.* Porter and Beyerlein (2000) assert Mary Parker Follett, a social scientist that espoused, in the 1920s, groups that create greater unity will achieve greater success. She (a) encouraged cross-functionality among departments to enhance a more horizontal versus vertical authority; (b) develop a system of interaction that would take the opposing view points and incorporate those points of view for a win-win; and (c) develop mutual accountability to foster interdependence.


*Kurt Lewin.* Kurt Lewin, founder of group dynamics, believed that employee performance is impacted by the level of satisfaction with the work assigned and further believed that employee performance is impacted by the level of satisfaction with the work assigned Tedford & Beyerlein (2000).

*Tuckman.* Adair (1986), Shaw, & Barrett-Power (1998), and Rottier (1996) asserts that Tuckman identified four stages of team development in 1965: forming; storming; norming; and performing. These stages are a method for understanding the natural behaviors that occur in developing into an effective team. As teams initially form they will naturally storm, be in conflict; then the team will create norm, standard of
interacting; this new norm will allow the team to perform at level not achieved as a workgroup.

*Eric Trist.* Eby, Sinoway, & Parisi, (2000) reported that Eric Trist believed that the environment can support or diminish human interaction. Also, the social aspect of human interaction will influence productivity and personal fulfillment.

*Fred Emery.* Fred Emery, a follower of Lewin, created the foundation for bringing whole system thinking to the workforce. Treat the problem as the problem relates to the entire organization and not in a vacuum. This approach demands that the problem solver fully understand the issues on a broader scope Weisbord (1987).

*Rensis Likert.* Porter and Beyerlein (2000) assert Likert's System 4-Participative Group Management concept gave vision to self-directed teams. Management should empower employees to make day-to-day decisions and apply their knowledge to operations. This will save time by giving decision-making authority to those who know the work best; and provide a more personally rewarding work environment.

Work teams are becoming the standard unit for conducting business in the United States (U.S.). Engleberg, & Wynn (2000) and Stewart, Manz, & Sims, Jr., (2000) studies report that team usage is on the rise in corporate America, Exhibit 4. lists three key points:

**Exhibit 4. Work Team Projection In U.S. Workforce**

- 7 percent of U.S. companies were using some form of self-managing teams.
- 40-50 percent of the U.S. workforce may work in some kind of empowerment team.
- 47 percent of the Fortune 1000 companies are using self-managing teams.
Even though corporations’ usage of teams is on the rise, teams are not always effective at achieving performance goals. Beyerlein (2000) notes that 50-70% of team initiatives fail. This illustrates a very important point: all teams are not created equally. The literature review will examine the key elements for effective team building.

**Effective team building.** An effective team building initiative must start with understanding the unique skills, abilities, and experiences of the team members; the other key to effective team building is the level of management commitment, which is required to foster a supportive environment. Mears (1994) and Schoennauer (1981) assert that in order for a team to learn and grow, a learning environment must be established and maintained. Management has the authority to establish a learning environment. In summary, an effective team is a combination of the team members’ readiness (internal) and supportive management (external). Exhibit 5. shows what Kinlaw (1991) views as internal and Salas, & Cannon-Bowers (2000) view as external elements for effective team building.

**Exhibit 5. Criteria for Effective Team Building**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal (Team members):</th>
<th>External (Management):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open communication</td>
<td>Management set clear direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct and honest feedback</td>
<td>Establish appropriate leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team takes risk</td>
<td>Management encourages risk taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict management, seek win-win</td>
<td>Management sets common goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team collaborate on possible solutions</td>
<td>Management give authority to implement solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team members takes responsibility for own actions</td>
<td>Management provide necessary training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team members are mutually accountable to each other</td>
<td>Reward system reflects team goal achievement versus individual achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Consultant’s role.** Team building should be a guided by an HR practitioner with the competence for team building. Exhibit 6. reviews the consultant’s behavior for successful team building.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit 6. Consultant’s Behavior for Supporting Team Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Establish collaborative partnership with team and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate understanding of client’s vision, business strategy, and work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify team behavior (performance) required for team success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify conditions in the workplace the must be established to support teaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leverage internal and external resources, other than management, to maximize potential for team success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The consultant may use one of three styles of consulting, noted Peter Block (1981). The three styles, with brief explanation are: (1) pair of hands, the client assess the problem and decides what type of intervention that the consultant will implement; (2) expert style, the consultant assess the problem and decides the intervention strategy the customer will implement; and, (3) collaborative style, the customer and consultant collaborate by assessing the data and planning the intervention strategy. The collaborative style is most recommended by Block (1981) because “it is the only style that utilizes both the consultant’s specialized knowledge …and the client’s knowledge of the operation and process” (p.21). The solution and implementation strategy is a sharing of responsibility between consultant and client, creating an effective partnership.
The theoretical frameworks for effective Team building in a supportive environment were reviewed. CIM is also grounded in the theoretical frameworks of HRD research; the next section will review the theoretical frameworks that influenced CIM.

Theoretical Influences On CIM

CIM's structure focuses immediate attention on identifying the root cause of a problem by eliminating other variables that could impede performance and encourages discussion of other findings beyond the immediate goal, thereby contributing to creating a learning organization. The other phases were standard problem-solving practice of implementing and monitoring the strategy. The paper will examine the concepts, which influenced each phase of CIM.

Whole system thinking. Fred Emery whole system thinking challenges the person to understand how the problem impacts the other business systems. Understanding how the part influences the whole may assist in determining if there is a problem valuable enough to warrant action.

Objective. Gagne (1985) asserts that constructing a clear objective will allow the person to match his/her performance to the performance required to complete the objective. Noe (1999) further describes Gagne's structure for a clear objective statement as: (a) including standard for performance that can be observed or measured; (b) describing of performance to be achieved; (c) established the quality or level of acceptable performance; and (d) establishing the condition under which the person is to perform the desired outcome.

Brainstorming. Brainstorming is an example of heuristic, process to follow to find a solution. Created by Alex Osborn, brainstorming is based on the principle of deferred
judgment (suspended judgment). This technique works best for generating ideas in a short time to solve open-ended problems. Four rules to brainstorming are: (1) suspend judgment; (2) let your mind drift order to be creative; (3) strive for quantity of ideas; and, (4) combine ideas to create new ideas (Adair, 1986).

Stephen Covey. Stephen Covey (1990) introduced the philosophy circle of control. This philosophy is modified with the concept of influence. To be successful, a person should address situations within his/her control or influence. This approach allows for a better success rate. Being successful will build confidence and more opportunity for greater responsibility, which will yield more authority and influence. For example, the entry-level bank teller that is successful gets a promotion to a higher level that comes with greater authority and influence.

Dialogue and discussion. There are two types of conversations, dialogue and discussion. Both conversation styles, when combined in a structured process, are important to team learning. Senge (1994) reported that David Bohm, noted physicist, developed this process. In dialogue the group explores complicated issues from many points of view, assumptions are suspended, and understanding of the view is the focus. The result is an environment where free thoughts and experiences are shared. When the team has to reach a decision about what was explored in dialogue, then a discussion must take place. In discussion, the content of the dialogue is analyzed and a course of action is established. Dialogue and discussion is more effective when there is a facilitator to ensure all team members have an opportunity to dialogue.

Problem solving framework. Adair (1986) describes the classic framework for problem solving: “(a) defining the objective; (b) collecting data or reviewing information
already held; (c) generating alternatives feasible solutions or courses or action; (d) choosing a right answer, or the optimum course of action; (e) evaluating the decision” (p159).

*Reflection or introspection.* The ability to review past or present experiences and apply the new knowledge to future events. Eitington (1984) also asserts that introspection is fostered by learning that is done in real time while resolving real issues of importance; the result of such an event leads the problem-solver to think about the process and experience.

*Metacognition.* Metacognition is the ability to clarify and understand goals, the relationship of key components of the goal, and knowing what to monitor toward the achievement of the goals. Flavell (1979) believed “that metacognition consists primarily of knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act or interact to affect the course or outcomes and the experiences derived have to do with where you are in the process and what sort of progress you are making or are likely to make” (p.907).

*Effort-based learning principle.* Mayer’s (1998) effort-based learning principle supports the belief that a person will work more intensely to problem-solve when they believe that the problem impacts them and that they know how to solve the problem.

The theoretical framework that influences the intervention methods were reviewed in Part Three, but, how aligned are the theoretical framework to the actual intervention employed? Part Four discusses the alignment of the HRD theoretical framework to the intervention methods and how the study findings contribute to the field of HRD.

Chapter Four

Discussion

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The intervention of team building and using the Continuous Improvement Model was effective for creating team unity and resolving day-to-day business performance issues. The two key elements for the Team's success was management participation and the Team feeling empowered. However, we must acknowledge the contributions of CIM and the consultant.

Management

Management support and the type of work environment impacts the level of Team satisfaction and productivity, management support can be witnesses in how they foster a team oriented learning environment (Eby, Sinoway, & Parisi, 2000; Porter, & Beyerlein, 2000; Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 2000; Tedford, & Beyerlein, 2000; Weisbord, 1987). Prior to the intervention of team building, the Team felt that the office viewed anyone associated with their group as low achievers. The Team did not find satisfaction in the day-to-day work, other, more successful Team members were not sharing his/her techniques for fear that it would assist another Team member in outperforming them.

MCM and Team Leader were committed to supporting the Team and provide the necessary resources for the Team's success. The Team did not trust the genuine efforts from management and was hesitant in implementing strategies that the Team created. The fear was that management would reverse their commitment at the first sign of failure. Management was diligent with reinforcing their commitment through written communication, speaking to the value the Team was providing in changing BNI's culture and thanking the Team for taking the risk, and rewarding the Team as a group as much as the current system would allow.
The Team

The work environment has a great impact, positive or negative, on human interaction (Kinlaw, 1991; Eby, Sinoway, & Parisi, 2000). Research conducted by Mears (1994) and Schoennauer (1981) supports that establishing a learning environment would enhance a Team’s effectiveness at addressing the day-to-day performance problems. Also, a team must understand the natural stages of developing into an effective team, as noted by the works of Tuckman (Adair, 1986). It was necessary to set the Team’s expectations of how a team develops using the Tuckman’s model of forming, storming, norming, and performing. The Team understood that conflict, redefining roles, and adjusting behaviors would be a natural part of the Team’s development. The Team was able to monitor the status of their development by referring back to Tuckman’s model. Creating an environment that supported team interaction was crucial to the Team being able to share information and seek out new methods for addressing the day-to-day performance goals. This concept is not a new; Mary Parker Follett (Porter, & Beyerlein, 2000) encouraged teams in the early 1920’s to create team unity by redefining the work environment. The Team learned (a) peer coaching, (b) dialogue versus discussion, (c) how to give and receive feedback, and, (d) conflict management. Also, the establishment of ground rules was very effective in fostering an environment for mutual support and accountability; This new Team environment supported the CIM process.

CIM

CIM was a tool for the new learning environment. CIM was a combination of holistic system thinking, basic problems solving tool framework, and reflection.
Holistic system thinking was conducted during the challenge phase. The Team learned how to evaluate the importance of a performance problem based on how the problem impacted the entire organization. This approach allowed for the identification of others in the organization that may need to be included in the solution. Over time, the Team developed a higher level of understanding of BNI’s business than their peers. Fred Emery concept of holistic system thinking and the value of the concept was realized in how the Team behavior changed.

Being able to communicate a clear objective, assert Gagne (1985) and Noe (1999), allows for monitoring the progress towards a solution. The Team became effective at writing an objective statement, which allowed for easy adjustments to the method to ensure the desired outcome. Writing a clear objective statement may indicate effective metacognition skills. Flavell (1979) argued that metacognition skills assist in clarifying and understanding goals, the relationship of key components of the goal, and knowing what to monitor toward the achievement of the goals. Thus, Flavell’s would contribute part of the Teams effectiveness to the ability to formulate an effective objective statement, this statement would impact the Team’s ability to understand if an adjustment to the goal is needed in order to achieve the desired business outcome.

CIM, at the core, applies the basic problem solving framework as described by Adair (1886): (a) identify the objective; (b) research the root cause of problem; (c) brainstorm solutions; (d) select a method to implement; (e) evaluate decision. Identifying the root cause of problem and selecting a method was done in a brainstorming format that was very useful for creating new processes that fostered interdependence for achievement. The major factor to selecting a method was the Team’s ability to implement
solutions without management permission. The Team was effective at achieving the desired outcome, which increased the Team's confidence and belief that they could identify and resolve performance issues.

The Team was allowed to reflect on their experiences and attempted to apply any new knowledge to future Team issues. The Team used reflection, which included dialogue and discussion. Dialogue gave a safe approach to understanding different perspectives about a particular experience without critiquing the value of the perspective. In discussion, the content of the dialogue is analyzed and a course of action, if any, was established. A peer, to ensure all team members have an opportunity to dialogue, facilitated dialogue and discussion sessions.

Consultant

The consultant was effective because he employed sharing the responsibility of Block (1981), collaborative work, and team building with the Team, Team Leader, and MCM. Because of his understanding of the claims business, he understood that any intervention must be implemented in real-time, using actual business problems in order to minimize disruption in productivity and performance. The consultant also understood the need for the Team and Team Leader to own the responsibility for learning and getting the results, thus, he had an exit strategy in place. Once it was evident that the Team and Team Leader was adopting the intervention and CIM, the consultant role started to diminish allowing the performance to be managed by the Team with Team Leader as consultant.
Contribution To HRD

In response to the competition, BNI initiated strategies of downsizing, flattening organizational structure, and encouraging their employees to participate in enhancing the product or customer service of the company. With the assistance of a BNI consultant, a collaborative work philosophy was established with the Team, Team Leader, and MCM. The results of the collaboration were an effective intervention that created Team unity, improved human performance, and effective use of CIM at the workplace.

The results of the intervention were presented at the annual managers conference and selected HR senior management. The response was in favor of sharing the intervention with other claims locations. The consultant value was validated and he was seen, perhaps the HR department, as an effective partner for addressing human performance issues that impacted productivity which impacts employee morale, competitiveness of BNI, and customer satisfaction. The HR department, as early as 2002, started to provide team development training to the sales department.

HRD professionals strive to build creditability, value, and trust with the customer by demonstrating their understanding of the business issues, knowledge of human performance, partnership skills, and consulting skills (Robinson, & Robinson, 1996). Today business conditions prefer intervention methods that are performed in real-time with minimal disruption to productivity, which is a paradigm shift from the traditional intervention of classroom or workshop training. Today business climate no longer can afford the traditional methods of learning that took the employee off the work floor, which immediately resulted in lost of productivity that negatively impact performance resulted in an untimely response to the performance problem. This intervention method
was effective because the intervention enhanced human performance in the actual workplace thereby significantly increasing the consultant's value to the customer.

This essay has examined through reflection, how a workgroup, with performance problems, sought assistance from a consultant that implemented an intervention that resolved the performance problem. Also, how the consultant's creditability and value was enhanced due to his ability to effect change, positively impact employees' and management's behavior, and enhance the efficiency and profitability of the organization.

Finally, this essay asserts that workplaces where employees can learn and grow through cooperation are productive and profitable; this assertion is endorsed by Weisbord (1987) belief that, “we hunger for community in the workplace and are great deal more productive when we find it. To feed this hunger in ways that preserve democratic values of individual dignity, opportunity for all, and mutual support is to harness energy and productivity beyond imagining”(p. xiv).
Appendix A - Team Effectiveness Feedback Questionnaire
TEAM EFFECTIVENESS FEEDBACK

Instructions: Indicate on the scales that follow your assessment of your Team and the way it functions by circling the number on each scale that you feel is most descriptive on your Team. Please explain your assessment by providing specific behaviors that support your assessment.

Please take time to answer this questionnaire, as this will be used as the basis for the design of your Team Effectiveness session.

E.g. Trust and conflict resolution 1 2 3 4 5 6

Team members keep quiet during meetings and are afraid to speak up.

Goals and Objectives

There is a lack of commonly understood goals and objectives. Team members understand & agree on goals and objectives.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Please explain:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Utilization of Resources

All member resources are not recognized and/or utilized. Member resources are fully recognized and utilized.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Please explain:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Trust and Conflict Resolution

Renard L. Beaty© Do not duplicate, store, or transmit in any form without written permission, contact WandRBeaty@aol.com
There is little trust among members, and conflict is evident. Conflict is dealt with openly and worked through.

There is a high degree of trust among members, and

1 2 3 4 5 6

Please explain:


4. Leadership

One person dominates, and leadership roles are not carried out or shared.

there is full participation in leadership; leadership roles are shared by members.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Please explain:


5. Control and Procedures

There is little control and there lack procedures to guide Team functioning.

There are effective procedures to guide Team functioning; Team members support these procedures and regulate themselves.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Please explain:


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6. **Interpersonal Communication**

Communication between members are closed and guarded. Communication between members is open and participative.

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Please explain: ________________________________________________________________


7. **Problem Solving/Decision Making**

The Team has no agreed on approaches to problem solving and decision making. The Team has well-established and agreed on approaches to problem solving and decision making.

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Please explain: ________________________________________________________________


8. **Experimentation/Creativity**

The Team is rigid and does not experiment with how things are done. The Team experiments with different ways of doing things and is creative in its approach.

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</table>

Please explain: ________________________________________________________________


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9. **Evaluation**

The group never evaluates its functioning or process.  

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

The group often evaluates its functioning and process.

Please explain: ____________________________________________

------------------------------

10. To achieve your Team’s goal what task, structure, process, technology, people, information flow or behaviors do you think your Team needs to:

- Continue doing (to leverage strength of the Team)

  ____________________________________________
  ____________________________________________
  ____________________________________________

- Stop doing (because they are not working)

  ____________________________________________
  ____________________________________________
  ____________________________________________

- Start doing (to tap new opportunities)

  ____________________________________________
  ____________________________________________
Appendix B - Team Effectiveness Feedback Questionnaire Summary
**Summary**

TEAM EFFECTIVENESS FEEDBACK

3-8-2000

*Instructions:* Indicate on the scales that follow your assessment of your team and the way it functions by circling the number on each scale that you feel is most descriptive on your team. Please explain your assessment by providing specific behaviors that support your assessment.

Please take time to answer this questionnaire as this will be used as the basis for the design of your Team Effectiveness session.

*Example:* Trust and conflict resolution

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Team members keep quiet during meetings and are afraid to speak up.

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1. **Goals and Objectives**

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Please explain:

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2. **Utilization of Resources**

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Please explain:

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3. **Trust and Conflict Resolution**

There is little trust among members, and conflict is evident. There is a high degree of trust among members, and conflict is dealt with openly and worked through.

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<td>33%</td>
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<td>11%</td>
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Please explain:

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4. **Leadership**

One person dominates, and leadership roles are not carried out or shared. There is full participation in leadership; leadership roles are shared by members.

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Please explain:

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5. **Control and Procedures**

There is little control, and there is a lack of procedure to guide team functioning. There are effective procedures to guide team functioning; team members support these procedures and regulate themselves.

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<td>33%</td>
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</table>

Please explain:

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6. **Interpersonal Communication**

Communication between members are closed and guarded.

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Communication between members is open and participative.

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<tr>
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Please explain: ________________________________

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7. **Problem Solving/Decision Making**

The team has no agreed on approaches to problem solving and decision making.

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The team has well-established and agreed on approaches to problem solving and decision making.

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Please explain: ________________________________

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8. **Experimentation/Creativity**

The team is rigid and does not experiment with how things are done.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22%</td>
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<td>44%</td>
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The team experiments with different ways of doing things and is creative in its approach.

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<tr>
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Please explain: ________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
Team Effectiveness Feedback  
Content Analysis

Goals and objectives:
We all understand our goals/measurements and work to achieve them.
Most goals and objectives are understood and agreed but all casualty goals
are given to us by the CPs, FPEs, and the FPLs agree to them.
We have regular meetings to discuss these. (goals & objectives)

Utilization of Resources:
The unit is composed of experts in different areas and all members are
always willing to assist fellow co-workers, at any time.
I try but I’m probably missing something.

Trust and Conflict Resolution:
No one is reluctant to address issues/conflicts as they arise.
Definitely high degree of trust but conflicts is not always dealt with...
I feel the unit is close knit and trust is evident throughout

Leadership:
We are all “leaders” of our own desk/pending. However, Kim is our leader,
as it should be.
Certain people chose not to be leaders but the opportunity is available to all.
The monkey is not shared by all.
Various unit members are on teams.

Control and Procedures:
We do regulate ourselves, but Kim assist us by keeping us on course/track.
Absolutely on casualty file handling

Interpersonal Communication:
Some communication is guarded between unit members, possibly fear of
getting into an issue.
No one is reluctant to address issues/conflicts
Very much so, everyone is comfortable with one another and all feel free to
speak their mind.
Problem Solving/Decision Making:
Everyone respects each other's opinions.
We can work through issues but seldom use a structured approach. Decision making often defaults to FPL.
We are all good at solving problems but it's nothing formal.

Experimentation/Creativity:
We tend to customize processes where we can.
We strive to become more efficient, looking for ways to best utilize our time.

Evaluation:
Only through file review results, performance goals.
10.

Continue doing (leverage strength of the team)
Being supportive of each other

Stop doings

Procrastination, older files, training

Start doings (to tap new opportunities)
Getting more involved in personal development.
Appendix C – Pending Files
PENDING

Challenge:
High pending that is not closed in a timely manner (soon after receiving proper information) effects severity, workload, customer satisfaction, subrogation, most importantly employee morale by creating a perception of more work. It is the team challenge to develop a strategy that will have a positive effect on those items mentioned. It is our aim to create a pending closing strategy that is rooted in trust, shared responsibility and mutual respect.

Objective:
The closing of B,D,& H pending coverage’s over 30 and 60 days and anything else that is improperly pending to 3/15/00, excluding suit files. This to be completed in three phases:

I. close any file from 1999 - 1/1/00 by 3/15/2000
II. close files from 1/1/00- 1/15/00 by 3/22/2000
III. close files from 1/15/00 - 3/15/00 by 4/15/2000

Method:
Each team member was responsible for going through their List 57 and pulling the files that met the criteria.

- The files were then put into a box
- Each team member will take files from the box, regardless of whether they were from their pending or not, and working them to a conclusion.
- Project manager will monitor the project (installed during the second phase) and report status to the team weekly.

Measuring instrument:
List 57 to be utilized by the project manager.
Results:
I. close any file from 1999 - 1/1/00 by – 3/15/2000
II. close files from 1/1/00- 1/15/00 by – 3/22/2000
III. close files from 1/15/00 - 3/15/00 by – 4/15/2000
Deadlines were met and pendings were reduced.
* Per list 57, the unit had an average of 2 DD’s and 8 BB’s pending per rep over 30 days. Since the implementation of this team process the average has dropped to 1 DD’s and 3 BB per rep pending in excess of 30 days.

Discussion:
There was some reluctance at first, of the team to include any “dog” files. After assurances from the whole team that everyone has at least “one” and that the file would be worked “without prejudice”, there was then a comfort level in everyone on the team and the project proceeded.
Monitoring the closing quality and file distribution was a challenge for the team. Thus, the team created a project manager.

Any new project will have a project manager. The project manager is responsible for keeping the team moving towards the deadline and ensures that performance quality is maintained during the project. The project manager is the liaison to the Team Leader (FLPL) for any issue relating to that particular project. The team found this change to be very beneficial.
Appendix D - Subrogation
SUBROGATION

Challenge:
Complete triggers within 24 hours of DD payment processed.
Subrogation is a source of revenue. A quick recovery of money owed to Allstate means more working capital for business initiatives.

The team has a goal of 17 days to log a file into the subrogation office from the date collision dollars are posted to the system. Previously, the goal has not been met because the unit waited until a request came from the subrogation center for the triggers to be completed.

February 2000 there were 23.22 days to log a file into subrogation. March 2000 there were 21.23 days to log a file into subrogation.

Objective:
Target goal of 17 days to log-in from date of DD payment with all triggers completed.

Method:
1. When a manual check is written, the claim number and file handler is written on a log and distributed daily to the unit.
2. The claim handler assigned is responsible for completing liability screen 28 for the insured and claimant(s) for their own desk location.
3. The claimant carrier screen gets completed on a rotational basis by another member of the unit.
** There is a 24-hour turn around time to complete the “triggers”.

Measurement Instrument:
A monthly calculation from SAR list S028 will determine the average days to log a file into the subrogation office. Ultimately, the fewer days required to log in a claim into the subrogation center will result in a quicker recovery of revenue owed to Allstate.

Results:
------- Started the process March 23, 2000 -------
April 2000: 17.91 average days to log in. May 2000: 18.83 average days to log in.
Discussion and Observations:
The Kaizen team’s requests for triggers have dropped dramatically on a daily basis. The requests from PTAC (subrogation unit that pulls the files into subrogation) have decreased because triggers are present earlier in the claim process. See Attached.
Appendix E – Follow-Up Team Effectiveness Feedback Questionnaire
Summary of Team Improvement: By Comparing The First Survey To The Second Survey.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals and Objectives</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of Resources</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control and Procedures</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Communication</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>33+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving/Decision Making</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>50+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimentation/Creativity</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>33+</td>
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**TEAM EFFECTIVENESS FEEDBACK**

*Instructions:* Indicate on the scales that follow your assessment of your team and the way it functions by circling the number on each scale that you feel is most descriptive of your team. Please explain your assessment by providing specific behaviors that support your assessment.

Please take time to answer this questionnaire as this will be used as the basis for the design of your Team Effectiveness session.

E.g. Trust and conflict resolution

1 2 3 4 5 6

Team members keep quiet during meetings and are afraid to speak up.

1. **Goals and Objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>There is a lack of commonly understood goals and objectives.</th>
<th>Team members understand &amp; agree on goals and objectives.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5-45% 6-55%</td>
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</table>

Please explain:  

Base – 100%

2. **Utilization of Resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All member resources are not recognized and/or utilized.</th>
<th>Member resources are fully recognized and utilized.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-9% 2 3-9% 4-36% 5-36% 6-10%</td>
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Please explain:  

Base 46%
3. **Trust and Conflict Resolution**

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<tr>
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<th>2-9%</th>
<th>3-9%</th>
<th>4-45%</th>
<th>5-37%</th>
<th>6</th>
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There is little trust among members, and conflict is evident. Conflict is dealt with openly and worked through.

There is a high degree of trust among members, and

Please explain: 

Base 37%

4. **Leadership**

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<th>3-9%</th>
<th>4-18%</th>
<th>5-55%</th>
<th>6-18%</th>
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One person dominates, and leadership roles are not carried out or shared.

There is full participation in leadership; leadership roles are shared by members.

Please explain:

Base 73%

5. **Control and Procedures**

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<th>3-9%</th>
<th>4-9%</th>
<th>5-82%</th>
<th>6</th>
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</table>

There is little control, and there is a lack of procedure to guide team functioning.

There are effective procedures to guide team functioning; team members support these procedures and regulate themselves.

Please explain:

Base 82%
6. Interpersonal Communication

Communication between members are closed and guarded. Communication between members is open and participative.

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<th>3-9%</th>
<th>4-36%</th>
<th>5-28%</th>
<th>6-18%</th>
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</table>

Please explain:

Base 46%

7. Problem Solving/Decision Making

The team has no agreed on approaches to problem solving and decision making. The team has well-established and agreed on approaches to problem solving and decision making.

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<tr>
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<th>3-27%</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>6-18%</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Please explain:

Base 73%

8. Experimentation/Creativity

The team is rigid and does not experiment with how things are done. The team experiments with different ways of doing things and is creative in its approach.

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<tr>
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<th>1</th>
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<th>3-18%</th>
<th>4-9%</th>
<th>5-28%</th>
<th>6-45%</th>
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</table>

Please explain:

Base 73%
9. Evaluation

The group never evaluates its functioning or process. 

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<th>5-64%</th>
<th>6-36%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</table>

Please explain: _____________________________________________________________________________ Base 100%

10. To achieve your team’s goal what task, structure, process, technology, people, information flow or behaviors do you think your team needs to:

- Continue doing (to leverage strength of the team)

  Live by the groundrules, have hard/honest discussions on the issues affecting the business.

  _______________________________________________________________________________________

- Stop doing (because they are not working)

  _______________________________________________________________________________________

- Start doing (to tap new opportunities)

  _______________________________________________________________________________________

  _______________________________________________________________________________________

  _______________________________________________________________________________________
Team Effectiveness Feedback
Content Analysis
June 19, 2000

Goals and objectives:
- **Members have been agreeing on goals and objectives**
- We work at different levels but are learning to address this
- Members do understand but may not agree on the process

Utilization of Resources:
- **A ways to go, some members may not work together even if it makes good business sense**
  - Everyone has shared in the success of the team
  - Still need to utilize members with more experience/expertise
  - Members do (Diana’s Spanish, Moe’s & Jim’s subro, Sr. Staff Rep., etc)
  - All members tried to help out in our many “operational strategies”
  - Situations are being referred to adjuster that processors are well versed in handling

Trust and Conflict Resolution:
- More trust but still some conflict may be due to daily stress
- **Must be comfortable bring up issues, some people are still not dealing with each other**
  - I am having difficulty with this but it’s beneficial
  - Colleen bringing issue into the open, let people know issue will be dealt with – diminish bad mouthing behind people backs.
  - I feel everyone is trying to do their best
  - Conflict is evident, team members still talking behind team members’ back.
  - The progress with team members working through conflict greatly improved

Leadership:
- **Everyone is trying to achieve this, will take time**
  - We are not quite there but getting better
  - Some people choose not to take leadership role
  - A couple of people dominate the meetings
Control and Procedures:
- Team appears to be functioning more self-sufficiently
- Ground rules are the glue, performance model adds structure and direction; quantitative data keeps us on track*

Interpersonal Communication:
- There’s still a hesitance to bring up the hard issues.*
- I feel the team has achieved this.
- Communication has greatly improved
- Team members are still shutting down
- Members often pleading with other members not to bring up controversial subjects in our weekly meetings.*

Problem Solving/Decision Making:
- Team is much better in problem solving and decision making.*
- The results speak for this issue.
- The team moves forward after much discussion to clear concise direction via Kaizen Model.

Experimentation/Creativity:
- Think there is still rigidity due to inflexible system (matrix).
- Team exhibited creativity & not afraid to throw out any ideas during brainstorming. We tried many different things.*
- Team shown to not be held to the status quo, unit, or Allstate parameters.

Evaluation:
- It’s all in the numbers.
- I feel the group evaluates our processes.*
Continue doing (leverage strength of the team)
   Live by ground rules
   Have hard/honest discussions on issues affecting the business
   Re-evaluate areas that fall short of our goals.
   Being proactive versus reactive.
   Let the small things slide.
   Continue to get recognition for team efforts.
   Self monitoring our time (breaks, lunches)
   Brainstorming sessions

Stop doing (because they are not working)
   - Forcing “team” members to bring up some source of conflict even it
     there is no problem, being forced to explain everything to death.
   - Weekly meetings, too much time off floor
   - The bad mouthing behind members back, improved but still
     happening
   - Let the small things slide
   - Keep meetings concise
   - Put the petty differences aside and work together

Start doings (to tap new opportunities)
   - Utilize more experienced members.
   - Have mini meetings w/out FLPL or HR, some people may be more
     open.
   - More efficient ways to meet our customer sat. results.
   - Having conversation to tackle issue of true teamwork-coaching each
     other on pending control, matrix compliance, contact, etc. etc.
   - Find out why certain individual team members numbers are out of
     pattern with team numbers and assist each other in finding a better
     way to accomplish goals.
   - Self managing – proactively looking at the weekly report and seeing
     what the team can do to drive the numbers and assist peers, on a
     consistent basis.
   - More members need to give input and not just sit there.
References


