Team Building

The Need:

Work team effectiveness is a critical link in organizations. The effectiveness of any organizational unit depends highly on the quality of collaboration within and between work teams. Work teams have an ongoing need to work effectively together in planning, problem solving, decision making, integrating resources, sharing information, and dealing with problem situations that arise. Team building is a process for helping a work team conduct a self-examination to identify and resolve conditions that keep the team from functioning effectively. Conditions that might signal the need for a team building program include:

- Loss of production or team input
- Confusion about assignments or unclear relationships
- Conflict among team members
- Decisions misunderstood or not carried out
- Ineffective staff meetings, low participation

The Process:

The objective of team building is to surface and resolve differences among team members that hinder the team’s productivity. To do this involves the following four-phase process:

- Data gathering
- Data clarification and analysis
- The team building meeting
- Follow-up

To gather information prior to the team building session involves conducting one-on-one interviews with each team member to identify their issues and concerns and their perspective on the team’s improvement needs. This information is then condensed and crystallized around a few priority issues that the team as a whole needs to address. A team building session can then be conducted, usually offsite, to clarify and resolve the key issues that have been identified. This session, which typically lasts one full day or more, revolves around two basic questions in each area of discussion:

1. What keeps us from being as effective a group as we can be?
2. What changes do we need to make to be more effective?

Getting clear responses to these two questions is at the heart of team building. At the end of a team building session, in addition to compiling an action plan for carrying out needed changes, the team also decides when and how it will follow-up its own team building activity.
**Who Makes Up a Team?**

The definition of what constitutes a work team varies widely from workplace to workplace. In a matrix environment this is especially confusing. People may belong to several teams at the same time on a project or program basis. For the purposes of this process, a work team is any group of employees who need to act interdependently to get work done. This might include:

- A cross functional project team
- A task team or committee
- A management staff from the same functional department
- A newly formed department
- A staff group that must work jointly to deliver services

Regardless of reporting structures if a group has goals in common, if they engage in common planning or decision-making, or if they need to meet together or interact in any way in order to get their jobs done, then they are a team.

For further information regarding this consulting service, please contact the BYU Human Resource Development Department at 422-5011.