

■ What Happens When Team Membership Changes?

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Business Tool Kit

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You are member of a work team and one of the members gets a new assignment and leaves the team and a new person takes his or her place. Do you:

- a. Ignore the change and continue business as usual?
- b. Assume the new person will take on the responsibilities of the departing member without having to say anything to them?
- c. Buy the old member a beer and tell the new member what is expected?
- d. Reform the team?

The answer is "d. Reform the team." Here's why.

According to psychologist William Schutz, when several individuals come together to form a team, that group needs to work through three types of issues— inclusion, control, and affection—in that order. Inclusion issues focus on team membership and a sense of belonging. When team membership changes, the team needs to find a way to acknowledge the work of the departing member and

to bring in the new member so that he/she feels part of the team— simply having the new member assume the duties of the departing one is a recipe for disaster. Instead, understanding and leveraging the unique talents of the new person helps that individual feel like they want to be part of the team.

Control issues focus on how much structure the team needs to get results. What worked for the team in that past may need to be re-evaluated when its membership changes. Perhaps new procedures around decision-making will better serve the "new" team.

Finally, affection issues are about how open and honest team members can be with each other. With a new configuration of membership, the needs for openness and the comfort level in disclosing information may also change.

Teams can be a very effective structure for getting outstanding results. However, a lack of attention to the changing team dynamics that accompany changes in team makeup can undermine even the most effective business teams. ■

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