# Teams

## Overview

Teamwork is the ideal way for organisations such as the Bunjappy Regional Tourism Centre to reach their goals and objectives. Teams play a key role in the tourism industry as multiple service groups (e.g. information centres like ours, booking agencies, tour providers, accommodation providers, etc.) endeavour to ensure the travelling public receive exemplary service.

Teams can help our business respond more rapidly as it supports our staff members empowerment in making decisions, viewing things from several perspectives and helps each of us to accomplish more with less resources.

## What is a team?

Teams are created with a specific goal and are given the responsibility of achieving those goals. This assists members of the team by allowing them to focus on their diverse skills in solving complex tasks, as well as attaining shared goals. Teams focus on using the strengths of each team member, as well as making for more efficient problem solving.

### Four types of teams

**1. Work Group**

A ***work group*** refers to a team that is made up of members from a single section, e.g. the group working the café/restaurant. These groups of people may work together consistently or be drawn together on a regular basis to undertake some specific work or task. Work groups are involved in decision making, as well as goal setting. Furthermore, they assist in identifying potential issues that may arise that must be solved or avoided. There may be one or several work groups within an organisation.

In our Centre, our work groups are formed by each of us undertaking work on a rostered basis across many areas. This approach where each employee learns the roles of others while working within a work group ensures we have the flexibility to respond to staff absences and emergencies while also building awareness, knowledge and respect for the work of other employees.

**2. Action Group**

An action group will usually work on the first stages of quality improvement. Action groups may include members from various sections of our business that are affected by a common problem or challenge that must be solved. For example, if there is a marketing challenge within the business, the action group may include those who organise our promotional booths at exhibitions, the front counter staff, as well as those who manage and process travel/accommodation bookings behind the scenes. Therefore, the action group becomes representative of the area where the challenge exists.

**3. Quality Improvement**

A quality improvement team will usually include middle management personnel, service supervisors, as well as others who have specialised knowledge or skills in our industry. When these types of teams are formed, they generally take the idea from action groups, help to develop suggestions for quality improvement, as well as presenting them to the organisation’s senior management team. A quality improvement team may also acknowledge and reward any progressions in quality management, provide approval for ideas and projects, as well as monitoring quality improvement via measurement and analysis.

For example, a quality improvement team may create procedures to organise exhibitions and promotions to ensure that our people are able to consistently guarantee that the businesses relying on us get value for money when we market their tourism services. The team =could, for example, establish a checklist that our people use when setting up booths at conventions, exhibitions and other promotional opportunities.

**4. Senior Quality Improvement**

The final type of team is composed of senior management members of our business, i.e. the board of directors. This team defines policies and procedures regarding quality management in our daily operations and future intentions. They direct, coordinate, refine and improve recommendations in quality improvement processes.

## Teams - the Key to Success

It is important to note that our teams will only be as strong as the members who participate in them. Achieving full participation and cooperation involves ensuring that each team member is motivated and encouraged.

Motivation is achieved when the values and vision of each team member is in line with the team and our Centre. It is essential that each team member understands the individual roles and contributions of all other team members, as well as the goals and objectives of the team.

As a member of our staff, we expect that all employees will be part of our teams and that each person will help in the building of effective teams. You will be expected to contribute to the building and sustaining of our teams by:

* Acknowledging commitment and achievements
* Respecting each team member
* Understanding that everyone is doing their best
* Making a commitment to each team member’s success
* Working towards a shared goal

The management of our business has a role in building successful, self-directed teams. However, each staff member also has the responsibility that clearly understand how to be an effective team member. Each team members’ vision for our workplace and the values underpinning our work must be connected to the those expressed by our Centre (i.e. the value of the individual, safe workplaces, respect for all, etc.).

## Supporting teams

When working in our Centre where we serve the public and the tourism industry, no matter the job, teamwork plays a key role in the success of the team and the business.

When team members do not work cooperatively, it is evident to our clients and customers resulting in damage to the reputation of our business.

In each workplace, no staff member works for the benefit of an individual or manager. Each member contributes to the main goal of the business to provide exceptional customer service.

### Encourage teamwork

Teamwork requires cooperation.

When there is cooperation across all levels of employees and throughout the business, service focused interaction improves significantly and this in drives the success of the business. Positive and work focused interaction between all employees is crucial to promote teamwork. It is the responsibility of all employees to maintain effective interaction between themselves and their colleagues.

Each team members must be aware of their importance in the work group and to be aware of this, each contribution should be acknowledged and appreciated. The more that each person is encouraged to share thoughts and suggestions, the more that they will want to produce higher quality work.

There are some simple guides to being effective in your teams:

* Set a good example and be a good role model. This will promote cooperation within the team and build respect for your contributions.
* Be friendly to other staff members. Form connections and show that you are a staff member that is valued so that others wish to work with you.
* Promote camaraderie in the team. When the team works together effectively, it assists in implementing new policies and request support for new developments. To encourage this, team building, and other group focused activities will enhance cooperation and interaction in the workgroup.

When these viewpoints are apparent in a workplace, it makes for easier maintenance of effective teamwork.

The benefits of supporting team members to meet workgroup goals are:

**Increased efficiency**

When working as a part of a team, an individual is working towards a common goal or set of objectives. The entire process becomes more efficient as more team members results in the work being completed faster. Encouraging teamwork in the workplace will allow the department or the business to take on extra work, generating additional revenue.

**Idea generation**

One of the key benefits of working as part of the team is the generation of ideas and inspiration that can arise from conversations. When working as part of an effective team environment, staff members are more likely to suggest their ideas. Working autonomously and being directly responsible for their own ideas, staff members may present the safer option to management. In brainstorming situations, creative and unique ideas are more encouraged. Furthermore, teams tend to bring individuals together from various backgrounds and levels of experience, assisting in forming the ideal solution.

**A learning experiences**

Teamwork is essential in the workplace, bringing individuals together from various backgrounds and levels of experience. Teamwork also provides an opportunity for professional development and learning; this may be through learning during a meeting or unintentional learning from listening to other members of a team. The learning from other members of the team enables existing skills and capabilities to develop. Billie Nordmeyer mentioned that ‘Individual team members serve as educational resources to other employees in a team environment’. Furthermore, confidence levels increase as staff become more knowledgeable, as well as improving staff attitudes.

**Enhanced communication**

The success of many projects is dependent on communication, it is therefore imperative to engage in activities that will enhance communication skills. Teamwork requires written as well as verbal communication skills and regularly working in this manner allows for development for all team members. The discussion allows for each team member to be well informed of a project, which allows for it to be completed effectively and efficiently.

**Share the workload**

Working as part of a team to achieve a common goal means that the workload is shared between team members. In the ideal situation, this workload would be shared equal and distributed according to the strengths of each team member. Teamwork also creates the opportunity for team members to help and support each other once the workload has been completed. It is important to keep in mind that everyone is working toward the same goal. Management should use this perspective to distribute the workload with the strengths of each employee in mind. Assigning tasks to the correct staff will ensure optimum efficiency and help to create high-quality output.

**Support network**

It is important that a key contributor to job satisfaction is staff feeling as though that they are supported and feel a sense of belonging in the workplace. Creating a strong team environment can be a great support mechanism for staff members. Group members will help each other, rely on other team members, and build trust within the group. Support is crucial in the success of the project, particularly during challenging times. Handling challenges individually runs the risk of staff becoming overwhelmed and making irrational decisions.

## Contribute constructively

An effective work group achieves high levels of performance and is also effectively in making use of resources. This is evident over periods of time. While it is the role of your supervisor to promote and ensure the effectiveness of the work group, it is also in the best interests of each team member to contribute to the success of the team.

The structure of a group or team becomes effective and valued if the members of the group support each other in the following ways:

* Providing an explanation and helping to clarify work tasks
* Helping with tasks when this is identified or required
* Working through problem solving together as a team
* Supporting new members of the group by providing encouragement and support
* Providing feedback for all members of the group
* Participating and undertaking additional tasks if required.

### Effective Communication

Communication in the workplace is crucial to our business as it allows both the business and each employee to operate more effectively thereby enhancing our productivity.

When staff feel as though they can communicate with anyone in our organisation, it can increase morale, productivity and commitment to our common purpose. Communication involves the sending of messages to others. There are several ways to communicate, including:

* speaking
* writing
* analysing
* interpreting
* using the telephone

A basic model of communication is shown in the diagram below:



## Sharing information

Strong interpersonal relationships involve having the courage to build and maintain good relationships with others in our workplace. These relationships are key if work is to be performed effectively and efficiently in accordance with our Centre’s goals.

Contributing to the goals of BRTC includes:

* Brainstorming solutions to problems
* Sharing the information
* Clarifying and defining goals
* Resolving issues as they arise
* Providing encouragement for team members to share information regularly

The sharing and updating of information within the work group ensures:

* The assigned goals are met
* A sense of professionalism exists and is embraced by the team members
* Effective promotion of products and services can occur
* Improvement in customer and client service
* Positive workplace relationships are created.

Information that needs to be shared may include:

* Identifying hazards, risks and controls in the workplace
* Clarifying the preferred methods for completing tasks
* Issues related to processes, resources, timelines and changing parameters of a task
* Providing acknowledgement for satisfactory performance
* Providing acknowledgement for unsatisfactory performance
* Helping and encouragement to a fellow worker
* Building a sense of camaraderie between team members.

Identifying opportunities for improvement in the team as well as individuals involves:

* Evaluating or assessing the performance
* Conducting regular team meetings
* Learning from other staff members

## Identify and plan for improvement

As a work in our dynamic and collegial organisation, we all expect that you will help the business prosper by identifying and planning strategies for continuous improvement.

This is expected of all staff members and is carried out by a range if methods which include:

***Emphasising the importance of teamwork*** - We should all understand why a task and our general business is better because of working in a group. You should always be able to say how each team task you are involved in is better because there are a group of people working together. If you cannot work it out, ask why teams are used for those specific tasks!

***Learning teamwork skills*** - All team members at some time require strategies for coping with other members who are not completing their share of work. Each of us will require methods for resolving disagreements constructively, as well as advice on time management.

***Team-building exercises to construct cohesive groups*** - Team members require the chance to become acquainted and discuss how they would like to work together. Team or work groups do not just come together and work fantastically! It takes time, training and discussion to build teams and you must be part of that. Even discussing what went wrong or bad behaviour can help to identify what actions/behaviours should be avoided in future efforts. As part of a team, you should be active in discussing what is needed from the group and its members to work effectively.

***Creating reasonable workloads and set clear*** ***goals*** - Teamwork can assist in achieving large, complex tasks and goals. No matter the task, the goals and objectives of the team should always be clear and aligned with the BRTC’s goals and objectives.

***Considering the roles of team members*** - The assigned roles within a team may remain the same or they can be rotated to ensure everyone becomes upskilled. Changing roles within a team often encourages our workers to learn new skills, find hidden attributes and even keep them engaged in the task instead of becoming bored or over-comfortable.

The development and acceptance of work rosters can be one of the most challenging tasks in our organisation. This because everyone has a set of needs or wants about their worktimes, there are business needs in terms of tasks being completed or offices being opened and quite simply because labour is costly. If our business does not generate the funds to cover the wages of our employees, people will end up with no jobs.

If we overstaff our business, this reduces our operating funds. Allocating human resources (i.e. people to do jobs, rosters of work, casual and permanent employees, etc.) is a balancing act between the research on previous trading periods and estimating customer demand, and then making assessments regarding the current workload of all staff. Rostering, or scheduling, involves creating a balance between the number of staff and the labour cost, with the required and suitable level of service. The overall aim is optimal efficiency and service quality and each staff member in BRTC contributes to this balance.

## Feedback from supervisor(s) and colleagues

Feedback is important to you, both at a personal level and as an employee of our organisation.

Strategies to obtain feedback from supervisors or colleagues may involve:

* Directly requesting feedback from supervisors or senior colleagues.
* Ensuring that supervisors or senior colleagues are aware that their feedback is valued, i.e. you take it seriously and do consider their suggestions and advice.
* Specifically asking supervisors or senior management whether they have noticed a change since your team changed work practices.
* Accepting and dealing with positive and negative feedback.

It is always easier for a person to hear positive feedback and that they are effectively contributing to the success of our organisation. However, negative feedback is important, as it provides knowledge that will support growth and improvement, either for yourself or BRTC.

Regardless of whether the feedback is positive or negative, it is our organisation’s core value that it must be delivered respectfully, tactfully and with the clear focus on helping the person to enhance their attitude, knowledge and skill in this industry. Remember, the SAID model underpins all feedback in this organisation.

**Worker responsibility**

It is the responsibility of the employee to improve on their work practices based upon the feedback that they have received. The failure to respond to feedback may lead to disciplinary action. If the individual is unsure of how to make improvements based upon the feedback they have received, they should ask specific questions regarding how the feedback can be adopted and used in work practices. Senior staff members can assist all new staff in enhancing their work practices; simply ask for advice and assistance.

## Currency

Technical industry currency is the process of remaining up to date in the industry and discipline areas; it is focused on retaining, updating and broadening any competencies that you have already achieved. Retaining technical currency requires you, through our organisation, to be aware and understand the industry-related skills, as well as knowledge, innovation, organisational culture, people, structures and networks.

There are several methods that can be used to maintain or increase your technical industry currency. Individual and workplace strategies may involve professional association memberships, accreditations, committee memberships, professional reading, attending conferences, etc. Other methods include regular staff meetings, industry training opportunities and the mentoring of younger staff members.

Key management techniques that assist with this are prioritisation and delegation. When there is a positive dynamic and effective teamwork, it is rare for customer service problems to arise. When one of our team becomes dysfunctional and staff are not willing to assist each other, it leads to a decrease in the quality of service, the effectiveness of our organisation and often diminished work performance by individual workers.

Thankfully in our organisation this is not common, but if it does occur it is usually because of one or more of the following:

* The team is not trained effectively
* The team lacks the required equipment or resources
* There has been limited positive feedback or ineffective negative feedback to workers
* Individuals have forgotten their purpose and commitment to their employer (BRTC).

### Workflow

The following figure outlines steps for planning and organising workflow.

Team meetings should focus on the systems and procedures, the problems and service incidents (positive and negative) of completing the task. Some analysis of problems will be required. Solutions to identified problems or challenges must be established to meet the standards set out by our organisation and these then applied in future work tasks.