



IMPROVING YOUR NETWORK, YOUR TEAM AND YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Presenter: Greg Fairchild, E. Thayer Bigelow Associate Professor of Business Administration at the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business

Leadership

Video Transcript

[TEXT: YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE
ONLINE TRAINING SERIES]

[TEXT: IMPROVING YOUR NETWORK, YOUR TEAM AND YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL
STRUCTURE]

[TEXT: Learning Objectives

1. Learn the benefits of close network relationships.
2. How to examine your leadership team's strengths and weaknesses.
3. The advantages of a diverse demographic organizational structure.]

[TEXT: Greg Fairchild, Associate Professor, University of Virginia]

My name is Greg Fairchild, and this is "Improving Your Network, Your Team and Your Organizational Structure."

In this lesson we will learn, first, the benefits of close network relationships, second, how to examine your leadership team's strengths and weaknesses, and third, the advantages of diverse demographic organizational structure.

Individuals within an organization are in many ways a coordinated set of relationships. The work we do, the vision, the loyalty to each other is the glue that binds people together. Relationships are critical. And the set of relationships you have, and don't have, can be the key factor in helping your NGO or business grow and innovate, or slowly stagnate, and even atrophy. Let's face it: It's easier for birds of a feather to flock together. However, effective leadership calls on us to think about the hard work we need to do in building a team that represents those we want to serve and those who can challenge us.

Why is this? Because people who spend a lot of time together tend to see problems in the same way. Having an especially close top team may leave your organization vulnerable. You may tend to agree with each other when it would be better to have some healthy disagreement.

Let's look at who is on your team. In addition to your own talents, the set of skills your team has, and doesn't have, are important factors in the effective management of relationships. Research has shown that your team needs strength in the core set of skills to get things done.

How can creating diversity in your entire company help your organization succeed and grow in a global market? Well, by bringing fresh and different perspectives to the company conversations. If the top layer of your management all think and act alike, it could affect how your company performs.





Let's look at all the company team members. There is the team of middle staff in your organization. They are the people that perform important functions, like accounting, human resources, finance or dealing with regulations and policy requirements. Then there is the front line, the on-the-ground team of your company. These are often those who directly provide the services to your target constituents.

If left to our own devices, our inclinations are to hire others that we know personally, share the same perspectives and possibly the same place in society. If this is the case, over time as organizations grow, the people at the top will begin to look the same. When we find organizations with a healthy cross section of groups, it's generally because someone took careful steps to encourage such a structure. They avoid either numerical or hierarchical dominance of one group over the other. Let me give you an example.

Let's look at the makeup of gender within an organization. You might find precious few women at the top, more in the middle, and possibly a large percentage dealing directly with your target constituents. Imagine for a moment the vulnerabilities of an organization with hierarchical or single-group dominance. One area where an organization might suffer involves the glue that holds them together, the loyalty to a shared mission. If those in the bottom group, say women, see few women at the top, it becomes easier for doubt and distrust to seep in. Things may appear to be moving just fine, but in times of crisis, lingering doubts will likely reveal themselves in harmful ways.

Another vulnerability of a hierarchically dominant organization is the common knowledge that communication is more robust and open within groups of similar people. When an organization is top heavy with one group, and another group is at the bottom, what we know of human nature tells us that it can be difficult to pass unique perspectives up and down the organization. Imagine if those on the front lines learn of a problem with management's latest directive, but because of these social barriers, they fail to pass critical information up to the leaders. This could be catastrophic for the company.

If an organization has a numerical dominance, it runs a serious risk of being overrepresented with one set of perspectives and skills. Over time, the organization could stagnate in this globally diverse world.

One of the key tasks for leaders of organizations is in setting the vision and the strategy. Forming the proper network and team is equally, if not more, important. Without conscious efforts and proper planning, leaders will tend to build organizations that look just like them. This may be easier, but in the long run it isn't in the best interests of the company.

After you've completed all the units in this course at YALI.state.gov, you can test your knowledge and earn a YALI Network certificate.

[TEXT: Test Your Knowledge
YALI.state.gov]

[TEXT: YALI Network]
[Produced by the U.S. Department of State]