This chapter discusses the ‘hard’ aspects, or the configuration side, of teams. The following aspects will be reviewed:
• the mission and the vision
• the objective and the assignment
• the tasks and the roles
• the procedures
• the scope of the team
• the composition of the team.

THE MISSION AND THE VISION

Mission statements are usually an issue at the organisational level. It is interesting, however, to consider the mission of your team. A mission reflects the reason for your team’s existence: it answers the question ‘What is our purpose as a team?’ A mission statement expresses the purpose of the team briefly and concisely. It summarises what the team wants and represents. Nevertheless, a group or organisation’s mission statement often appears to be nothing more than a paper tiger. But people have an implicit or explicit need to feel useful and want to make a meaningful contribution to a larger whole. An inspiring, shared mission can help to satisfy that need.24 We have seen teams with inspiring missions perform well despite extensive time pressure and insufficient resources, energising the team members. A strongly shared mission provides direction and commitment. People are better motivated as a result and are willing to look beyond any differences of opinion; the real importance is a greater good. A great mission also provides commonality and combines forces. It can also serve as a way of communicating with a team’s environment. The next reflection will help you to consider your team’s mission.

Reflection 6: Determining the team mission
Here are some questions to help determine the team’s mission:
• Who are we?
• What do we represent?
• What is our purpose?
• What are our ideals in the work we do?
• What are our core values and basic principles?
• How do these relate to the core values and basic principles of the organisation to which we belong?
What distinguishes us in a positive manner from comparable teams?

The vision is a concise description of the desired future when all activities within the framework of the mission have been completed. A vision reflects the team's desired dream. For example, ‘we are the first team in this organisation to succeed in discovering new markets’. A vision is a guideline for the team's objectives and activities.

**THE OBJECTIVE AND THE ASSIGNMENT**

Every team needs an objective. Important here are clarity of targets and the strategy for achieving those targets. ‘Clarity of targets’ expresses the fact that the manner in which the assignment is formulated must not allow too much room for varying interpretations. It is necessary to determine whether there are any significant differences in how the parties involved in the team interpret what is expected of them. This relates to the following individuals:

- members of the team who are collectively responsible for the team's success
- parties directly involved who are not actually members of the team, including the person issuing the assignment and any departments that are expected to provide personnel for the team (e.g. a project group or working group).

The following topics will be discussed:

- the team's assignment
- assignment analysis
- formulating targets
- the resources and conditions
- the strategy the team must follow to achieve the target.

**The team's assignment**

As already indicated, there are a wide variety of teams. The assignments, objectives or orders issued to teams can also vary significantly. The approach used by ‘this team with this specific assignment’ needs to be attuned to both the assignment and the team's situation.

With temporary teams, an issuing party formulates the team assignment, often after consulting with all the parties involved. With the assignment, it is particularly important to know whether it merely consists of compiling plans and finding alternatives or of making recommendations, and whether it also includes the activities involved in implementation.

**Assignment analysis**

The team's assignment must be clear. Whether a team is to determine a specific policy viewpoint and is therefore required to make choices, or is to formulate a variety of alternatives and/or viewpoints without choosing a specific and explicit viewpoint makes quite a difference. It is important that your team members have a shared understanding of the assignment. The following reflection can help you.

**Reflection 7: Assignment analysis checklist**

1. The team considers the assignment within the whole of the organisation's policies. What is the importance of the assignment within the whole?
2. The team analyses how much leeway it has in completing the assignment, including in terms of policy. Within which limits may (and must) the team operate?
3. The team clearly understands the expected results in terms of delivery period, quality and quantity. Describe in SMART terms (Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic, Traceable) what is expected of the team.
4. The team knows what resources are available in terms of manpower, money, space and tools.
5. The team knows who is responsible for their output – the team’s results – and understands the team’s accountability.
6. The team knows what is to be done should conflicts arise that it cannot resolve. Does your team have a method for resolving conflicts?
7. The team understands the rules regarding the confidentiality of meetings and ‘documents’, whatever form they may take. What are the exceptions to these rules?
8. The team knows who the formal spokesperson is with:
   • the person issuing the assignment
   • the organisation
   • the environment.
9. The team knows who will maintain formal contact with the departments providing personnel for the team and who else needs to be informed about what is going on. Who is to provide this information, and who will receive it?
10. The team knows who is responsible for input by team members. Is it the team leader or someone else?

Formulating targets
The team’s targets are derived from its mission and vision. The targets must be clear to the entire team and must be translated into concrete, measurable results. It is also important for each team member to understand and approve the targets. If this is not done, the team members will probably work from different perspectives and in different directions. This can also result in unnecessary conflicts among team members and all the stresses these create. There are few things more frustrating than a lack of team targets or highly ambiguous ones. In those circumstances team members can individually interpret the objective, regress into personal hobby horses or waste time on unnecessary discussions and activities. Nevertheless, teams are often unable to collectively answer the question ‘What are your objectives?’, let alone translate those objectives in SMART terms. Motivation theory has taught us that in order to enjoy their work, people need unambiguous direction. In the ideal situation, this is derived from the organisation’s objectives. However, it is certainly not the intention that an objective should always be imposed from above, though management should ensure that there is a definite objective in place. In general, the more the team members themselves are involved in formulating the objective, the better their commitment and motivation will be.

The resources and conditions
In order to achieve its targets, the team needs resources and conditions. In addition to some self-evident resources including time, funding and access to information, there are a number of other matters that should be considered in advance:

• Sufficient importance
  An important condition for achieving the target is ensuring that the parties involved assign
sufficient importance to the team’s assignment. The parties involved – the team members and its leader – must reflect this in more than words alone. The importance that the people behind the team members assign to the team’s work is expressed in their behaviour. If their behaviour indicates that they think the team’s work is unimportant, sooner or later any results achieved by the team will be ignored; the necessary resources may not or no longer be made available, and no one will appear to care whether or not the team produces any results.

- **Continuity in the group composition**
  Another important condition is a level of continuity in the composition of the group. Members of temporary teams in particular must have the opportunity to get used to and to grow towards one another. Adequate interaction between the members of the team is essential. Team members must be able to devote a certain part of their working hours to the team’s activities. The available budget must at least guarantee that the team will be able to perform its tasks adequately.

- **Clear lines of communication**
  A third condition relates to the accessibility and distribution of information. The external lines of communication in particular must be clearly determined. This is particularly important in temporary teams which are not automatically included in any existing communication structure.

- **Adequate team composition**
  An adequate team composition is another condition that must be satisfied. This will be discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter.

**The Strategy**
The strategy lies between determining and achieving the targets. Alone, agreement on targets and satisfaction of the required conditions will not guarantee success. The team must also share an understanding of the path that will lead to achieving their goal. If this is not the case, the team members may undermine one another in a variety of ways.

### AN EXAMPLE
Initially, a team is highly enthusiastic and active, but their motivation slowly drains away. The team members lose sight of their goal and the team turns into a marketplace for personal initiatives that do not appear to be clearly related to the members of the team. Personal interests gain increasing importance. Ironically, the formal objective is often used to legitimise these personal interests. The group deteriorates into solo players and competing coalitions. Why? In this team, there is no clarity or communality regarding the main lines of the team’s strategy. The answers to the question of how to get from A to B – in the hope that B is clearly defined – differ. This leads to a variety of different interpretations and activities, resulting in disorder and demotivation.

**THE TASKS AND ROLES**
A team is therefore formed around an assignment that requires collective effort from multiple individuals. In your team, you must rely on one another. All the team members have different
skills. Each member is a professional in his or her field, and each has an individual view of the team’s assignment. Achieving the defined target requires differing contributions. None of the team members can fulfil the assignment alone; if that were possible, the assignment would have been given to that person. Using the first assignment in this chapter, you have analysed the team’s assignment. You were given the opportunity to determine whether there is sufficient clarity and a joint understanding of the assignment and the main lines of the team’s strategy. Now we will take a closer look at what you can do if that clarity and understanding do not exist. You will have realised that a simple statement like ‘You know what to do: just look at the task description’ will not be enough.

It will not be enough because official task descriptions rarely describe everything, always leaving room for different interpretations. Each member of the team has his or her own ideas about the way in which other members of the team should work. Each member of the team, and possibly other people outside the team, has a personal view and expectations about:

- What your contribution should be in terms of quality and scope; the results that you should provide.
- How your contribution should be made – the way you function inside the team. Are you to be an objective chair or should you make difficult decisions?
- What your contribution should be in terms of time, energy, skills and expertise.

What applies to the assignment and objectives also applies to the team structure. It is important to have a clear and logical division of tasks and roles. This means that each member of the team, and the team leader, must clearly understand what is expected of them. Role conflicts should occur as little as possible.

In today’s era of rapidly changing environments and assignments, this is easier said than done. Roles and positions will increasingly change in response to changing external circumstances. Some organisations react to this with a kind of laissez-faire attitude towards roles and tasks: ‘Everybody contributes what they can; we have no role or job descriptions.’ Undoubtedly, job descriptions may result in a lack of flexibility: evasive behaviour such as ‘that’s not in my job description’ starts to dominate. It can also thwart team work: why should I help you? However, the other extreme is not the solution, either. People will then be confronted with unnecessary role conflicts and lose their sense of making a useful contribution.

The best path to follow, in our belief, is when people learn to initiate discussions with their team members and their external environment about role views and expectations and modify their behaviour accordingly, and do so continually. The team leadership has the task of directing this process, and of intervening when conflicts arise which the parties involved are unable to resolve by themselves.

There are plenty of examples of high-performing teams in which the division of roles and tasks change rapidly. However, these are more the exception than the rule. This places high demands on the team members in terms of flexibility, involvement, communication skills and availability. The fact that a team can be highly successful under such conditions is often the result of a lengthy group process.

We will offer you a procedure with which the network of relationships inside and outside of
your team can be mapped (Reflection 8). In a number of steps, you can analyse your role within
the team and explore the similarities, differences and contrasts in tasks and roles. A procedure
for role negotiation will be provided at the end of this chapter.

**Reflection 8: Role analysis**

How can you clarify your most important expectations as well as those of your team members –
and any outsiders? Use the following procedure.

**Step 1: Map the network of relationships**

Start: you are the centre of a network of players with reciprocal views and expectations about
task and role. This is illustrated by an example.

Here’s the explanation:

- Each team member (ME) makes a list of people inside and outside the team with whom
  contact is maintained (no more than ten for the sake of clarity).
- In the blanks, insert the names of individuals, reflecting the contact frequency in the distance
  from the ME in the middle. (The closer the position, the more frequent the contact.)
- Use a number of ‘i’s to indicate the importance of the contact. This means that a contact with
  iii is more important than a contact with i.
- Use a connecting line to generally indicate the nature of the relationship.

**Step 2**

You have registered your most important contacts in your relationships network (Step 1). This is
your network as you see it. Now you can move on to Step 2. Select five individuals in your relation-
ships network who have the greatest influence on you: the people who are the most important for
your role, and remember that these are not always the people you work with. Who are they? Are
they critical of you? Do they take you seriously? How dependent on them are you, and on whom
are you most dependent? These ‘role transmitters’ expect something of you, the person in the role.
This part of the theory can be reflected as shown above.
The key concepts in this role theory are, therefore:

**Standards**
Views on how a person should and, especially, should not behave.

**Expectations**
Views on how a person will behave.

**Role**
The entirety of a person’s standardised expectations regarding behaviour in a certain position.

**Role transmitter**
The individuals or groups who have these expectations.

**Role bearer**
The individual from whom something is expected.

**Identity of the role bearer**
The views the role bearer has on his or her own contribution.

**Step 3**
For each role transmitter, list the five most important expectations that he or she has of you as a member of this team. This relates to three types of expectations:

1. expectations about the end results (output oriented)
2. expectations about the way in which you approach matters (process oriented)
3. expectations about your contribution (input oriented).

Now, by category, circle the most important expectation.

You will compile five of these lists. Make a separate list for each role transmitter. Then describe your own expectations about your membership of the team. Again, circle the most important expectation for each category.

**Step 4**
In this step, summarise the most important expectations for the five role transmitters and yourself.

**Step 5**
Study these expectations and identify similarities, differences and contrasts. List these for each category. Indicate any specific task or role conflicts. Circle the number that you think applies for each question. Next, indicate whether the question relates to output, process or input expectations.
**Step 6: Determining the bottom line**

Based on the work you have done, determine the bottom line. To what extent do the role transmitters have the same expectations about your position? To what extent do they have differing expectations about it? To what extent do you agree with their expectations, as a whole, on what you should be doing in your position?

With this procedure, you can clarify your position in the relationships network and see the similarities, differences and contrasts between the tasks and roles in your team, as you see these. In the next section we will describe a procedure for role negotiation within the team.

**ROLE NEGOTIATION**

Task and role conflicts and contrasts, and the necessity of resolving these, are facts of life in any and every team. Here we will present a procedure that can be used to clarify task and role views and to deal with any ensuing contrasts. In this procedure, everyone who is involved in a problem is called upon to provide information about it. This exchange of information will lead to an ‘agreement’ between the ‘negotiating’ parties.

Taking and giving, all in the interest of improved cooperation and team effectiveness, is an essential element in task and role negotiations. This method can be used in conflict situations that have not really escalated. In other words, ones where there are tensions but the parties are still willing to resolve the conflict together, to give and take a bit and to keep things businesslike. Assistance from an outsider is often recommended, especially if the team leader is a party in the conflict.

**Procedure for role negotiation**

**Step 1** Each member of the team writes a message for each of his or her co-members, saying:
- what each of the other participants should do more of, or do better
- what each of the others should not do, or do less
- what each of the others can continue to do because the writer believes that it’s helping everything go as planned.

**Step 2** Each member of the team receives the relevant lists of role expectations and compiles a summary that is subsequently displayed for all to see.

**Step 3** Based on these summaries, the participants may ask their role transmitters for clarification and an explanation (meaning no reactions or discussions).

**Step 4** Each team member/role transmitter names one or more points that he or she would like to see change, together with one or more points that he or she is willing to change in return.

**Step 5** Changing pairs negotiate with one another – if necessary with help from a discussion leader – based on the principle of give and take, until a compromise has been reached.

**Step 6** The agreements about what each member will give and take in his or her role are recorded and assessed by the team in terms of their feasibility.
Step 7  After an agreed period, the team assesses whether these agreements have been met, and whether they need to be modified or replaced.

A few comments, in closing. Negotiating is impossible if no offer is made; it’s a two-way process, after all. The changes you are asking one another to make must be specific, feasible and unambiguous. You will often need to help one another clearly understand exactly what is meant and what has caused the desire for change.

This exercise will ultimately provide clarity about:
• the tasks and roles of the members of the team
• the differences and contrasts in the views of roles and tasks.

OTHER ASPECTS
In addition to the division of roles, there are other matters that should be taken into account when it comes to tasks and roles in a team. The following three aspects, for example, also relate to the organisation of tasks:
• organisation of the work process
• autonomy of the tasks
• complexity of the tasks.

Work process
The manner in which the work process is organised will affect the team’s effectiveness. Changing how these are organised can change the interdependencies around the task and have an impact on the ensuing advantages and disadvantages.

The second reflection in Chapter 1 was used to describe four basic types of work process organisation: serial connection, assembly, parallelism and reciprocity. Each type has its own fields of tension and its own member interdependencies. It is important to choose communication structures and decision-making procedures that are in keeping with this primary process. In our experience, problems in cooperation are often caused by forcing people to work in teams while the work process requires a different kind of cooperation. It is important to analyse exactly why you need one another, where uniformity is required and – especially – where the individual should be free to act as he or she sees fit.26

Autonomy
Research has shown that people need some space in order to make decisions in their work; they need to be able to think for themselves. In other words, people need some degree of autonomy. Efficiency also demands this; having to consult other people all the time only delays decision making. Rapid action cannot be taken, frustrating the person responsible. However, when there is complete autonomy there is also no cooperation, so an individual will always be required to relinquish part of their need for autonomy. Both too little and too much autonomy will be detrimental for team effectiveness.

Complexity of the task
Based on the knowledge that people need to feel that what they do has meaning, it is impor-
tant to ensure that a task is sufficiently complex. This makes it clear to the team members that they are making a tangible contribution to the whole. What’s more, individuals can be more flexible because there is no need to consult with other teams or departments about every change. With self-regulated teams, tasks as complete as possible are assigned to a single team. A team in the production department, for example, can be assigned responsibility for its own quality management, safety supervision, personnel administration, etc. Of course, give and take applies here, too: the team members must believe they are competent to deal with complexity and have enough room to manoeuvre. Insufficient task complexity can result in passiveness; tasks that are too complex can result in stress, especially if there is little room to manoeuvre. Extensive manoeuvring space also requires alertness: can the team or individual handle this?

THE PROCEDURES

One of the important tasks of a team is collectively making decisions, and so it is vital for the members of your team to understand the procedures with which they should make their decisions. Here, too, differing expectations can cause confusion. Differences in expectations about the extent of participation are often seen. One assumption made by team members, for example, is that a consensus is always needed before making important decisions. If others – especially the team leader – assume that the leader will make the decisions, tensions can only be expected. It is important for your team to discuss the decision-making process collectively and to clearly understand the procedures that apply. When solving problems as a team, it is important for the members to clearly follow each of the steps in the problem-solving process. The same applies to all procedures followed by the team: they must be clear, have as much support as possible among the team members, and contribute to completing the task. Here, too, it is a matter of finding a balance: too many procedures will feel like a straightjacket; too few can cause too much uncertainty.

THE SCOPE OF THE TEAM

The next important aspect is the size of the team. If truly intensive cooperation is needed, our experience tells us that five to nine team members is the optimum. If there are more than twelve members, it is difficult for them to get to know and understand each another – both prerequisites for cooperation. In actual practice, however, teams with twenty or more members are common; a team of that size is sometimes considered necessary in order for the work to be done. Assembling a large team is unavoidably costly, however: there are frustrations caused by faulty or slow decision making and a lower level of commitment among team members. If at all possible, we recommend that such big teams be divided into smaller ones.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE TEAM

In addition to the necessary professional expertise and skills, team members must also have cooperative competencies. These competencies consist of two sets of quality requirements:

1. Team members must demonstrate significant professional competency. If they cannot, any
efforts devoted to improving the team will be wasted.

2. Team members must also have a number of qualities and competencies:
   • individual members must have the opportunity to participate in the group
   • team members must be open to the expertise and qualities of others
   • they must have practical meeting skills
   • they must also be capable of identifying and dealing with important rational and emotional elements in the group process.

3. And the members of the team must have the necessary authority. This is related to the fact that, when in a team, you are functioning in at least two and often three roles:
   1. as ‘specialist’, based on your professional competency
   2. as ‘team player’ with certain specific cooperative competencies
   3. as ‘representative’ of an organisation with the necessary decision-making authority.

Functional criteria are involved in roles 1 and 3: does the team include those members of the organisation (or organisations) who can contribute the necessary expertise, authority and experience for this assignment? This often leads to the question of whether the departments and/or organisations that should be influencing the solution to the problem are represented in the team. Role 2 is related to personal qualities and competencies. This aspect will be discussed in more detail here.

PERSONAL QUALITIES AND COMPETENCIES
You have your own style for solving problems. Your team includes people who work in the same way as well as people who approach problems in an entirely different manner. Each person acts in his or her own way. This is a result of the individual’s character and talents as well as learned behaviour.

Every individual has his or her own set of competencies that will – or will not – make them suitable for the team’s work at each stage of completing the assignment. A competency is a specific quality – knowledge, skill, attitude – needed to perform a certain work process. For teams, a distinction can be made between core competencies, team competencies and individual competencies.28

Core competencies
These are competencies that are closely related to the core competencies of the organisation and the team. They are derived from the organisation and team missions, as well as the added value of both the organisation and the team.

Team competencies
These are the competencies needed if the team is to operate successfully. Examples include behavioural factors such as cooperation, effectiveness, tact and sensitivity, empathy, etc.

Individual competencies
These competencies are needed to fulfil the position – for example, cautiousness or problem analysis.