



DESIGN GROUP International™



Depth Perception

1 August 2013

Team Effectiveness

In front of me sits the academic article "*What makes teams work: group effectiveness research from the shop floor to the executive suite.*" It was published in 1997 by the Journal of Management, and developed by S Cohen and D Bailey.

As with many academic articles, working your way through their research can be ponderous. Most articles like these send me to the back to read about the conclusions. If they catch my attention I work my way back to how they arrived at their findings. I'll make your work even shorter here by telling you what the authors concluded about Team Effectiveness. It is a doozy:

A Team whose members are substantively involved in the work of the Team (including self-direction of the Team), means that Team is more likely to achieve the outcomes it seeks. Teams where member participation is largely limited to consultation are less likely to achieve desired outcomes.

Let me state it more bluntly and less academically: Ownership of the process leads to higher team performance. An attempt to control a team's work from the beginning or from outside lessens effectiveness.

Because this article has been around for a while perhaps you knew this and function in this manner. Our experience, however, is that many organizations and leaders struggle to recruit teams, prepare them for their work, and remove obstacles that prevent excellent outcomes. More often than not these struggles grow from attempts to control outcomes from the beginning, which only wastes money and people resources.

A CEO's presence on a team can lead to its underperformance because team members are concerned about what their senior leader is thinking and end up withholding information, playing political games, or spinning data to look more positive. This increases the senior leader's isolation.

Team participation of senior leaders is better done in peer-based cohorts—teams of non-competing CEOs who meet in confidence to foster lifelong learning, consultative assistance and personal/organizational excellence. They then can take their insight (such as what makes for team effectiveness) into the executive suite and implement it.

Design Group International is busy fostering coaching cohorts and peer-based consulting teams such as these. You can learn more via a recent blog post [located here](#).

-mark I vincent

[Subscribe to Depth Perception](#)