Three steps to better collaboration

What can we usefully learn from these insights?

First, leading companies view teams quite differently from other companies.
The former have integrated teams into every aspect of their activities.
Teamwork is not only important to leaders, but teams tend to be formed
enterprise-wide rather than within a function. This will tend to break down siloes.

Second, dynamic and virtual teams are going to become much more common in the
next few years. Companies should prepare for this by analyzing what technologies will be
needed to support these kinds of teamwork and by organizing workflows to be more
flexible and agile. Virtual collaboration in teams whose memberships constantly evolve
is a skill that is likely to require new kinds of training programs.

Third, leading companies do not take a passive approach to team performance.
They continually assess how well teams are doing and use more criteria for judging them.
Teamwork is so important that it tends to be tracked centrally by leading companies.
They will collect a rich trove of data to help make their teams even more effective in
the future. By making the work environment as supportive as possible, companies
are likely to maximize the power of teamwork.

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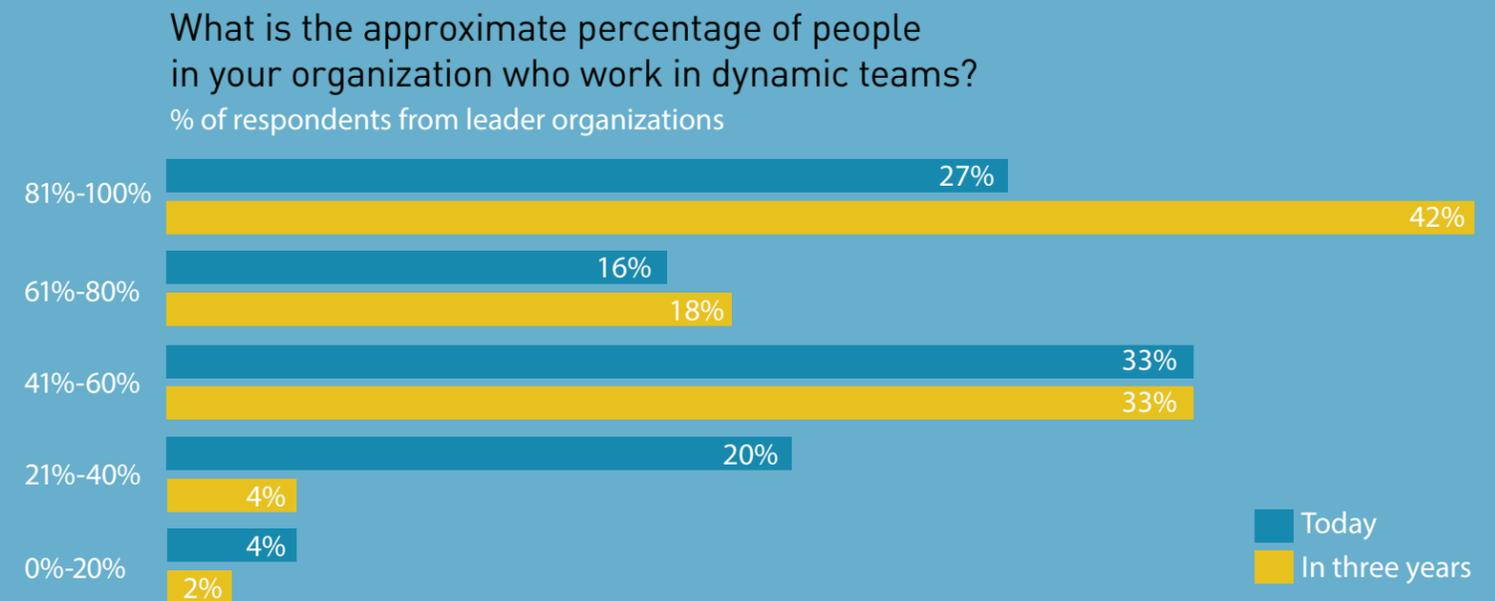
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*Ashley Goodall, Senior Vice President of Leadership and Team Intelligence at Cisco, has said that there is a set of characteristics that the best teams possess. They revolve around all team members playing to their strengths every day and – as a team – having a shared understanding of what excellence and quality look like.[1]
How can companies create an environment which enables those characteristics? And what are the hallmarks of companies that are leaders in team collaboration?*

To answer these questions, Cisco partnered with Fortune Knowledge Group to conduct a survey exploring corporate practices that maximize the power of teams. The online survey was conducted in October 2016 and collected the responses of 201 executives in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, India, Singapore and Australia. The executives work in various functions in large and small companies across a range of industries.

To find out which companies are leaders in this field, we asked respondents to tell us whether they strongly agreed with four attributes of teams at their organization: there is a clearly defined team strategy; team collaboration is an important part of the culture; recruitment focuses on whether job applicants are likely to fit in teams; and the business demands that more people work in dynamic teams. *(Dynamic teams are usually created to address specific business problems and may include different people at different times. Static teams have a stable membership and ongoing responsibilities.)*

[1] "How Cisco is Rewriting the Rules on Performance Management," APQC article, April 2016.

Based on an analysis of the survey data, we found the following hallmarks of companies that focused strongly on teamwork:

1
Leading companies are much more likely to have a high proportion of dynamic teams and the proportion is expected to rise markedly in the next three years.

What is the approximate percentage of people in your organization who work in dynamic teams?
% of respondents from leader organizations

Range	Today	In three years
81%-100%	27%	42%
61%-80%	16%	18%
41%-60%	33%	33%
21%-40%	20%	4%
0%-20%	4%	2%

Today
In three years

2
Leading organizations are more likely to have a high proportion of virtual teams.

These are teams where members are dispersed and rely on communication technologies. In three years, almost half the leaders say their organizations will be composed almost entirely of virtual teams.

3
Leaders also work harder to assess the performance of teams and identify top performers.

They use more criteria for their evaluation and do so more frequently. Both leaders and other companies evaluate team leadership, but nearly four fifths of the former do so compared with only about half the latter.

5
Teams are tracked centrally by leading companies and there is a much stronger focus on measuring how well they collaborate with other teams.

Both leaders and others, though, share a propensity to measure teams' impact on the business.

4
The formation of teams tends to be treated by leaders as a job that should be done across the company and not performed by business lines or functions. Leaders have their HR department manage teams as discrete entities, select team leaders through a codified process and make concerted efforts to create diverse and multigenerational teams.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your organization's approach to teams?
% of respondents who 'strongly agree'

Statement	Leaders	Others
We make concerted efforts to create multi-generational teams	93%	48%
We have a codified process in place to select team leaders	88%	51%
Our HR department makes concerted efforts to manage teams as an entity	86%	42%
We make concerted efforts to create diverse teams	81%	53%
We consider the roles of team leader and people manager to be distinct	33%	23%

Leaders
Others