



## OPSOMMING

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Organisasies is toenemend ten gunste van spanwerk en die ontwikkeling van spanne in hulle strewe na effektiwiteit in ‘n vinnig veranderende markomgewing. Bestuurders sowel as leiers moet hulle spanne toerus ten einde resultate deur ander te bereik. Sterk spanne versterk bestuurders en maak uiteindelik die organisasie as geheel sterker. Die teendeel is egter ook waar – oneffektiewe spanne kan potensieel suksesvolle organisasies drasties verswak.

Alhoewel daar baie uiteenlopende sienings van spanne en spanwerk is, bly die algemene entoesiasme rakende dít wat effektiwe spanne kan vermag, baie sterk. Werkspanne in Suid-Afrika is besig om ‘n winsgewende besigheid te word. Reeds gedurende die negentiger jare het niks minder nie as 82% van maatskappye met meer as 100 werknemers aangedui dat hulle van spanstrukture gebruik maak (Gordon, 2002). Gedurende dieselfde tydperk het soveel as 68% van die Fortune 100 maatskappye van self-besturende spanne gebruik gemaak (Lawler, Mohrman & Ledford, 1995).

Die twee hoofbeweegredes vir hierdie studie was om my eie natuurlike drang te bevredig om spanne in die praktyk te probeer verstaan en om spanwerk, en wat werknemers verwag van spanwerk in 21<sup>ste</sup> eeuse organisasies, na te vors. Die studie het gepoog om die uitdagings waarmee spanne



gekonfronteer word te ondersoek, te beskryf en in konteks te verstaan. 'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsaanslag was die beste manier om die navorsingsvrae te beantwoord – en wel vanuit die konteks van die veelvuldige vlakke van organisasiegedrag (die individu, groepe en organisatoriese vlak).

'n Totaal van 20 in-diepte, semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gedoen, asook vier fokusgroeponderhoude met 38 vrywillige deelnemers. Die transkripsies is toe deeglik ontleed en vergelyk ten einde gedeelde temas insake spanervaringe en verwagtings asook verskille en ooreenkomste uit te wys.

Vier temas asook verskeie sub-temas het uit die navorsing na vore gekom. **Tema 1** was die *verwagtings van spanwerk op individuele vlak*, en toon die individu se behoefte om deel te wees van die organisasie en om hierdie ervaring te geniet. **Tema 2** beskryf *spanverwagtings* in terme van spanwerk. Spanne verlang duidelike doelwitte asook om beloon te word as hulle hierdie doelwitte bereik. Spanvaardighede was ook belangrik. **Tema 3** verwys na die *verwagtings wat leiers en ondernemings* van spanwerk koester. Dit blyk dat organisasies soms spanwerk implementeer sonder om spanne van die nodige ondersteuning te voorsien. **Tema 4** verwys na die grootste *spanuitdagings* wat 21<sup>ste</sup> eeuse Suid-Afrikaanse organisasies toenemend sal moet aandurf. Virtuele spanwerk asook die voortdurende verlies van identiteit is voorbeelde van sulke uitdagings. Die temas en sub-temas word in detail in Hoofstuk 4 bespreek.

Op grond van die bevindings word verskeie aanbevelings gemaak, grootliks gebaseer op die gedeelde ervarings en unieke terugvoer van hierdie 38 individue vanuit alle organisasievlakke. Verskeie “span-paradokse”, soos ek hulle noem, is ook aangetoon en die relevansie van hierdie paradokse vir 'n beter begrip van spanne is verduidelik. Die bevindings bevraagteken ook sommige veronderstellings rakende spanwerk, en vorm die basis vir moontlike toekomstige navorsing. Daar is nog baie te doen om spanwerk te optimaliseer en om 'n beter organisatoriese begrip teweeg te bring van die kompleksiteite van individue wat saamwerk in spanne.



## CONTENTS

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### CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND ORIENTATION OF STUDY

---

<b>1.1</b>	<b>BACKGROUND, RATIONALE FOR AND VALUE OF THE STUDY</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.2</b>	<b>RESEARCH PARADIGM</b>	<b>4</b>
1.2.1	The qualitative versus quantitative debate	4
1.2.2	The history of qualitative research	4
1.2.3	The essence of qualitative research	5
1.2.4	The approach used in this study	5
1.2.5	Philosophical assumptions	6
<b>1.3</b>	<b>PROBLEM STATEMENT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.4</b>	<b>RESEARCH QUESTION</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.5</b>	<b>CONTEXT AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6</b>	<b>PURPOSE AND UNIQUENESS OF THE RESEARCH</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.7</b>	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.8</b>	<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>11</b>
1.8.1	Research population and sampling	12
1.8.2	Data collection	15
<b>1.9</b>	<b>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>1.10</b>	<b>OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS</b>	<b>17</b>

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: TEAMING IN ORGANISATIONS**

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<b>2.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE OF A LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>INTRODUCING TEAMS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.4</b>	<b>DEFINING TEAMS</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2.5</b>	<b>TEAM IDENTITIES / TYPES OF TEAMS</b>	<b>23</b>
2.5.1	Self-managed teams	25
2.5.2	Virtual teams	26
2.5.3	High performance teams	28
2.5.4	Virtual high performance teams	30
<b>2.6</b>	<b>TEAM ROLE THEORIES</b>	<b>32</b>
2.6.1	Belbin's team role analysis	32
2.6.2	Mc Shane and Von Glinow's view on team roles	35
2.6.3	Blanchard's team research	36
<b>2.7</b>	<b>TEAM DEVELOPMENT THEORIES</b>	<b>37</b>
2.7.1	Tuckman's model of team development	37
<b>2.8</b>	<b>TEAM FUNCTIONING THEORIES</b>	<b>40</b>
2.8.1	Team Bonding	41
2.8.2	Adapting for ultimate team functioning	42
2.8.3	Learning in teams	44
<b>2.9</b>	<b>INDIVIDUALS IN TEAMS</b>	<b>44</b>
2.9.1	Tony Allesandra's relations strategies	45
<b>2.10</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>46</b>

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

---

<b>3.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>CHOOSING A SUITABLE APPROACH</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>RATIONALE FOR SELECTING A QUALITATIVE APPROACH</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>THE ROLE OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCHER</b>	<b>50</b>
3.4.1	Challenges faced by a qualitative researcher	52
<b>3.5</b>	<b>RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING STRATEGY</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>DATA COLLECTION METHOD</b>	<b>54</b>
3.6.1	In-depth interviews	54
3.6.2	Focus group interviews	59
3.6.3	Pre-interview interventions	61
3.6.4	Conducting the personal interviews	63
3.6.5	Recording the interviews	64
3.6.6	Advantages of interviews	65
3.6.7	Disadvantages of interviews	66
3.6.8	Post interview actions	67
<b>3.7</b>	<b>DATA REDUCTION</b>	<b>69</b>
3.7.1	Themes	70
3.7.2	Coding the data	71
<b>3.8</b>	<b>USING TECHNOLOGY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>3.9</b>	<b>DATA MANAGEMENT, STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>3.10</b>	<b>ENSURING RESEARCH TRUSTWORTHINESS AND QUALITY CRITERIA</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>3.11</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>76</b>

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

---

<b>4.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>CODING AND IDENTIFICATION OF THEMES</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>THEME 1: INDIVIDUAL LEVEL EXPECTATIONS</b>	<b>83</b>
4.3.1	A need for a supporting culture	85
4.3.2	Fun, humour and energy in the workplace	94
4.3.3	Empowerment and trust	95
4.3.4	Work-life balance	97
<b>4.4</b>	<b>THEME 2: TEAM LEVEL EXPECTATIONS</b>	<b>100</b>
4.4.1	Clear roles and responsibilities	101
4.4.2	Guidance and leadership	103
4.4.3	Goal-setting	108
4.4.4	Rewards and recognition	111
4.4.5	Mutual understanding / knowing each other	115
4.4.6	Sound communication	119
4.4.7	Dependency and synergy	122
4.4.8	A need for team skills	123



---

<b>4.5</b>	<b>THEME 3: ORGANISATIONAL / LEADERSHIP EXPECTATIONS</b>	<b>125</b>
4.5.1	Meet final targets / make a profit	126
4.5.2	Quality and efficiency	126
4.5.3	Strong teams / strong individuals	127
<b>4.6</b>	<b>THEME 4: 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY TEAM CHALLENGES</b>	<b>133</b>
4.6.1	The 21 <sup>st</sup> century organisation in context	134
4.6.2	Evolution of organisations: From past to present – 21 <sup>st</sup> century organisations	135
4.6.3	21 <sup>st</sup> Century challenges: sub themes	139

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

---

<b>5.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>THE FOUR EVOLVING THEMES</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>5.3</b>	<b>EXPERIENCING TEAMS AND TEAMWORK</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>KEY OBSERVATIONS: THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TEAM PARADOX</b>	<b>167</b>
5.4.1	Be a strong individual but also be part of a strong team	167
5.4.2	Teams need freedom and creativity but also clear guidelines	167
5.4.3	Teams suffer form an information overload but do not communicate enough	168
5.4.4	We need to work harder and smarter but also need to maintain a work-life balance	168
5.4.5	Teams are important, yet our systems do not support teamwork	169
5.4.6	Team development and continuous learning is our priority but there is no time of budget for these interventions	169
5.4.7	We need to have fun but make lots of money	170
5.4.8	We need high quality connections between people but our motto is “show me the money”	170
5.4.9	We introduce virtual teams but fail to re-define teamwork	171
5.4.10	We hire of skills or IQ but expect emotional intelligence	171
5.4.11	We implement team activities but fail to create team culture	172
5.4.12	We say we embrace change but we do not comprehend “flux”	172





---

<b>5.5</b>	<b>LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY</b>	<b>174</b>
5.6.1	Implications for organisations	174
5.6.2	Implications for teams	174
5.6.3	Implications for the individual	175
<b>5.7</b>	<b>RESEARCHER PERSPECTIVES</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>5.8</b>	<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH</b>	<b>176</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

---

Figure 1.1	Three levels of organisational behaviour	3
Figure 2.1	Tuckman's team development model	38
Figure 2.2	Ed Kur's Faces Model	39
Figure 2.3	Relationship Strategies	45
Figure 3.1	The researcher	51
Figure 3.2	Making sense of the data	70
Figure 4.1	Summary of emerging themes and sub-themes	82
Figure 4.2	Individual Expectations	84
Figure 4.3	Team/group expectations	101
Figure 4.4	Voice: Key practices of 21 <sup>st</sup> century business leaders	112
Figure 4.5	Organisational expectations	125
Figure 4.6	21 <sup>st</sup> Century team challenges	134
Figure 4.7	Evolution of behavioural practices	136
Figure 4.8	Neethling Brain Profile	148
Figure 4.9	EQ Facet scales	152
Figure 5.1	An expectancy model for motivation	166



## LIST OF TABLES

---

Table 1.1	Theoretical assumptions about interprevitism	6
Table 2.1	Belbin's role synopsis	33
Table 2.2	Roles for team effectiveness	35
Table 2.3	Kriek and Viljoen's team building view	40
Table 3.1	Characteristics of qualitative research	50
Table 3.2	Personal interview guide	58
Table 3.3	Focus interview guide	60
Table 4.1	Summary of interviews conducted	79
Table 4.2	Factors that indicate organisational support	85
Table 4.3	Yesterday vs. tomorrow	137
Table 4.4	The four brain quadrants	147
Table 4.5	Expectations on multiple levels	157

## REFERENCES

178

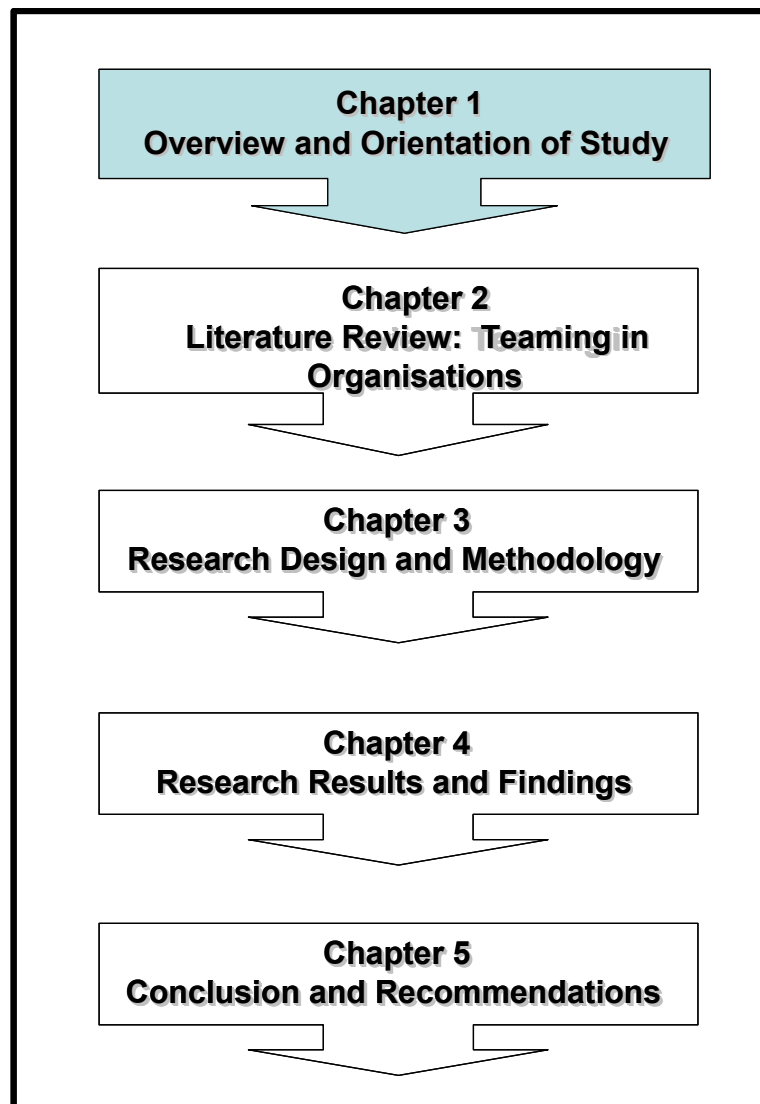
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## CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND ORIENTATION OF STUDY

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The following chapter layout is used throughout the study and is referred to in each chapter.





## 1.1 BACKGROUND, RATIONALE FOR AND VALUE OF THE STUDY

Teams and teamwork have become and remain popular amongst leaders in organisations. Because of the popularity of teams, there are a large number of practitioners and team building “experts” entering the market. Many offer packaged solutions, following a shotgun approach and hoping that one of these approaches will actually work. It is therefore no wonder that some authors are sceptical about the true value of teamwork. In this regard, Allan and Hecht (2004:437) refer to what they call “the romance of teams”, suggesting that teams are not necessarily the answer to all managerial problems. They remark that empirical data on team effectiveness are often not as impressive as the theories on teams would suggest. Naquin and Tynan (2003:2) express a similar view in an earlier article, where they comment on a “Team Halo effect”. They argue that team complexities are frequently not fully understood when teams are implemented.

My interest<sup>1</sup> in teams and teamwork, which resulted in this study, developed as a result of my role as a so-called “team building expert” and trainer. Often, corporate leaders told me what to do and what they wanted the ultimate “team edge”<sup>2</sup> to be. None of them ever consulted with their teams before announcing another “team building event”. As the one who had to make these team events work, I began to ask myself whether this kind of approach was correct. I sensed that this was not the most appropriate way to develop teams, but I could only speculate as to what teams really expected from the phenomenon called “teamwork”.

Exposure to organisational behaviour as a field of study changed my understanding of team complexities. This study was therefore conducted taking into account the multiple levels of organisational behaviour:

- the individual level;

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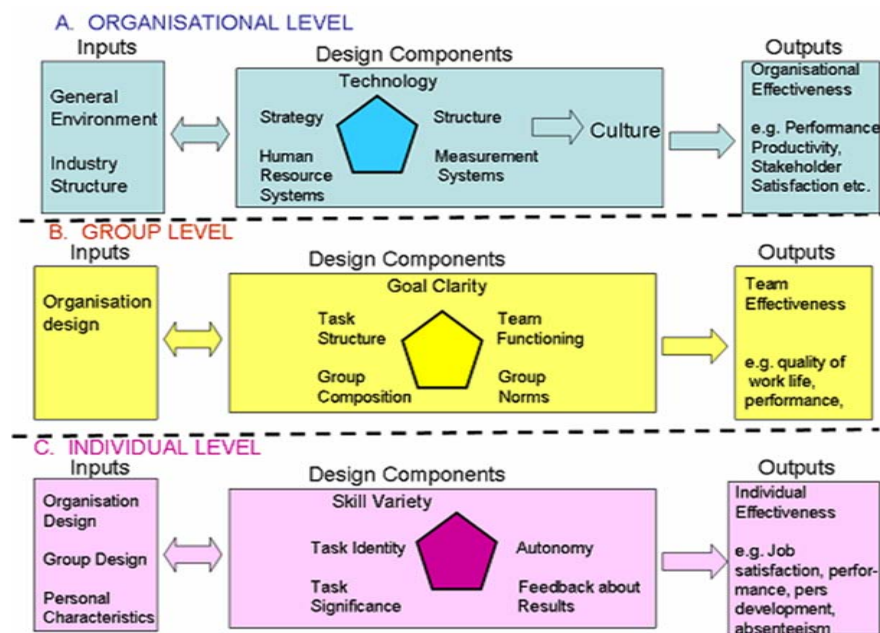
<sup>1</sup> The first person pronoun is used throughout this thesis to refer to the researcher, because, in line with a postmodernist approach, it was decided to reflect the presence of the researcher in the research process explicitly throughout the text.

<sup>2</sup> A word used by the researcher to describe extreme team effectiveness.

- the group level; and
- the organisational level.

The field of study of Organisational Behaviour has changed the way in which organisations and the people who work in them are perceived. There have been significant changes that have had a vast impact on all spheres of work and on those who engage in it. Organisational Behaviour, as defined by Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2004:668), is “a field of study that investigates the impact that individuals, groups and structures have on the behaviour within organisations, for the purpose of applying such knowledge toward improving the organisation’s effectiveness”. This study falls within the field of Organisational Behaviour.

The research findings and recommendations will therefore add value to this body of knowledge. A model suggested by Cummings and Worley (2005) is a useful graphic depiction of where teamwork could fit into the total Organisational Behaviour picture (see Figure 1.1, below). However, it is important to note that teams and teamwork cannot be neatly categorised, since they are affected by many factors and only a truly integrated approach would make strategic sense.



**Figure 1.1: Three levels of organisational behaviour**  
(Cummings & Worley, 2005:89)

## **1.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Qualitative and quantitative research can be seen as representing two different paradigms, each historically assuming a different ontology and epistemology. Merriman (1998:3) argues that it is helpful to link research and philosophical traditions in order to illustrate different research orientations.

### **1.2.1 The qualitative versus quantitative debate**

A qualitative research method was chosen for this study. To explain why this choice was made, it is important to note the different focuses of qualitative and the quantitative research approaches.

Trochim (2006:4) notes: "There has probably been more energy expended on debating the difference between and relative advantages of qualitative and quantitative methods than almost any other methodological topic in social research." He prefers to see similarities rather than differences between the two approaches, and he summarises the central issues as follows:

- all qualitative data can be coded quantitatively; and
- all quantitative data is based on qualitative judgment,

Some authors in this field suggest that the research question should guide the researcher when selecting a relevant approach (Thomas, 2003). There seems to be no clear-cut prescription when deciding which paradigm to use – qualitative or quantitative, or a combination of both.

With regard to this debate and controversy, it is perhaps apt to conclude, as Trochim (2006:5) does, that it "seems as if social research is richer for the wider variety of views and methods that this debate generates".

### **1.2.2 The history of qualitative research**

According to Adler (1987), qualitative research methods began to gain wider recognition in the 1970s. Until then, the phrase "qualitative research" was marginalised as belonging to the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. Phrases such as "fieldwork", "observations", "ethnography" and "sociology"

were used instead of qualitative research. However, in the next decade, qualitative research began to be used in other disciplines as well, and it soon became significant in the fields of disability studies, women's studies, education, human studies and others.

This led to the development of new methods of qualitative research in the late 1980s and 1990s, especially after much criticism was levelled at this approach by proponents of a purely quantitative approach. Giddens (1990) argues that qualitative research has gained popularity mainly because of the subjective or linguistic bent that has gained a foothold across the globe. Qualitative researchers believe that their type of research is particularly well suited to getting insight into the subjective qualities of the lived world.

### **1.2.3 The essence of qualitative research**

Qualitative research is a research methodology that focuses on an in-depth understanding of the behaviour of humans and the motivations that govern human behaviour. Strictly speaking, this research method investigates **how** and **why** individuals and groups understand or view the world around them. Quantitative research, on the other hand, focus on the **what, where** and **when** of decision-making amongst individuals or groups. Since qualitative research seeks a deeper understanding of social behaviour and phenomena, there is a need for focused and usually smaller samples, as opposed to random, large samples (Giddens, 1990).

### **1.2.4 The approach used in this study**

In this study, a qualitative **interpretivist approach** was adopted, and the study was positioned in a post-positivist paradigm. As with any study, this study was inevitably guided by the chosen research paradigm and my view of the world as a researcher conducting this research. Some key terms are therefore explained briefly below.

According to Burrell and Morgan (1997:24), "to be located in a particular paradigm is to view the world in a particular way". Kuhn (1996:113) suggests





that a paradigm “stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values and techniques and so on, shared by members of a community”.

Table 1.1 (below) compares the paradigm of interpretivism (which ultimately influenced the choice of research approach) to a positivist paradigm (which is not espoused in this study).

**Table 1.1: Theoretical assumptions about interpretivism**

Theoretical Assumptions about:	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology	The researcher and reality are separate.	The researcher and reality are inseparable.
Epistemology	Objective reality exists beyond the human mind.	Knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through a person’s lived experience.
The research object	The research object has inherent qualities that exist independently of the researcher.	The research object is interpreted in the light of the meaning structure of the researcher’s lived experience.
The research method	Statistics, content analysis.	Hermeneutics, phenomenology etc.
Validity	Certainty: data truly measures reality.	Defensible knowledge claims can be made.
Reliability	Replicability: research results can be reproduced.	Interpretative awareness: researchers recognise and address the implications of their subjectivity.

### 1.2.5 Philosophical assumptions

Researchers involved in post-positivist research share a particular paradigm. Based on their beliefs, they might make many assumptions when conducting and interpreting their research. Based on an analysis done by Reyes (2002:3-9), in this study, various philosophical assumptions were made when embarking on the research project.

The research was physically done in the field and an in-depth understanding was reached. I was thus willing to sacrifice breadth for depth (purposeful sampling). As the researcher, I was the primary data gathering instrument;

and my understanding and generalisations were grounded in the data that was collected and analysed. Data took the form of words and pictures rather than numbers. The data also included interview notes and transcripts, and I was interested in “meaning-making”, in other words, the ways in which people make sense of their worlds.

Although the process was informed by theoretical constructs, the data was generated **inductively** and tested deductively in an ongoing or “**dialectical**” **process**. The interviewees were invited to participate in the data analysis. Lastly, in reporting the findings, I, as the researcher, included my own voice to represent the diverse voices of multi-positioned interviewees through stories, narratives and quotations.

### 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

One of the interviewees in the study (Interviewee 2, 2007:pers.comm.), an Executive at GijimaAst noted “Teamwork seems to be the strategic way to increase effectiveness and organisational growth. Yet, when it comes to practice, a fairly ‘simple’ concept becomes very complicated since we do not seem to know what makes teams tick.”

Since the beginning of time, human beings have attempted to understand the world in which they live. In this journey towards understanding their world, they have made assumptions and have tried to communicate their experiences and their observations. In this study, an attempt was made to explore, understand and explain the complexities of teamwork as experienced by individuals, teams and management of selected organisations in South Africa. In-depth interviews and focus group interviews were used to gain more information.

Exploratory research is usually done when a researcher wants to investigate phenomena that are not well or fully understood and to generate hypotheses for further research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). **Explaining why something occurs** is an approach where the researcher sets out to identify plausible relationships shaping a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). In this study,

an attempt was made to try to explain patterns related to the phenomenon in question. Fouché and Delport (2002:12) stress that the purpose of explanatory research is to “gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual”. Stebbins (1998:2) claims that exploratory research is a mission to discover as much as possible about a specific topic. Morgan and Kreuger (1993:12) conclude that qualitative research methods are ideally suited and useful for exploration, as well as for discovery purposes in research.

Many consultants and in-house trainers offer a variety of generic team solutions, but are these solutions well researched? There are many interesting theories and team development ideas, making a choice of one specific idea difficult. The diversity of the South African work force makes the team challenge even greater. Moreover, quite often the interventions suggested by consultants are expensive and do not seem to make a lasting difference. Team building "events" companies often market themselves as team experts, charging clients huge amounts of money without offering sustainable team solutions. Therefore, for example, ten short telephone interviews revealed that nine out of the ten team-building companies approached offer mainly packaged solutions and events and fail to ask clients what they need for what purpose and in which format.

I have been involved with teams and team interventions for 15 years, *inter alia*, as a trainer, training manager, business consultant and organisational development (OD) practitioner. In my years as a practitioner, I have conducted more than 200 team interventions and have advised many clients on the most suitable team approach for their organisation. However, team interventions do not always seem to work. In many cases, complexities and dynamics hinder optimal team development.

***In this study, I set out to discover what the expectations of employees are of teamwork on multiple levels in a contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century South African organisation.***



## 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on a preliminary literature review and my experience with teams, the following key research question was formulated:

**What are the expectations of employees of teamwork on multiple levels in selected 21<sup>st</sup> century South African organisations?**

I also investigated the following sub-questions:

- How do South African **employees** experience teams and teamwork?
- What do **teams** regard as critical success factors in terms of teamwork in the team development processes?

At first glance, these questions may not seem complicated (as a researcher I believe in simplicity and clarity). However, as the research journey continued and the interviewees and I began to “unpack” the questions, we were frequently astonished by the integrated nature of the phenomenon under investigation.

## 1.5 CONTEXT AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted within the context of organisational behaviour as a field of study. As a qualitative research approach was followed, the scope of the research largely evolved as this journey unfolded. This journey and its milestones are described in detail in later chapters.

The study does not cover all aspects of teams and teamwork. The study’s objective was to conceptualise, understand and explain the expectations of teamwork at various organisational levels. I do not claim either to investigate or to understand all the complexities of team dynamics and how these complexities may influence team effectiveness. The focus is on team expectations in a contemporary, 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation, based on selected South African organisations. The research outcomes were analysed and evaluated as they emerged, taking into account the paradigms that guided the study, as well as my personal values, beliefs and attitudes.

The last part of the research project required conclusions to be reached and recommendations to be made. Once again, my aim was to understand teamwork from the unique perspective of individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole. These aspects are discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

## **1.6 PURPOSE AND UNIQUENESS OF THE RESEARCH**

In more than one instance, I had to ask myself: will this study be unique?

I found no evidence that similar studies in a South African context have been conducted. The uniqueness of this study is further strongly embedded in the combination of the theme and the research method. Lembke and Wilson (1998:928) investigated various alternative theoretical contributions regarding teamwork for contemporary organisations, and concluded the following: “team research has often focused on how teams can be managed effectively without describing what teamwork really is”. They remark that, in current research, member’s interactions with other members in the team are described, but the emotional and cognitive processes involved with teamwork are often neglected. They further argue that many authors, for example Hackman (1990) and Bourgeois & Eisenhardt (1988) highlight management processes that may lead to member motivation, but do not sufficiently understand what the team members want.

By some chance, a researcher may generate a set of recommendations, only to find that someone else has also come up with the same theory using methods that are more traditional. However, the researcher may still make a contribution to knowledge, and a valuable one, since the recommendations may be made using different and unique methodology

The strengths of this type of emergent inquiry are that it leads to in-depth insights and establishes rapport with research subjects. Some weaknesses are that results cannot be generalised and that the procedure is very time-consuming (Mouton 2001:148).

However, I am convinced that my study will make an original contribution to the body of knowledge, and that the context and qualitative approach applied will add an additional element of uniqueness to this research project.

## 1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (2001:55) describes a research design as a plan or blueprint of how one intends to conduct the research. The design best aligned to the research question in this study is that of **an explanatory design** – which can be interpreted in many ways. Myers (1997) argues that the rationale for doing qualitative research comes from the fact that there is one thing that distinguishes humans from the rest of the natural world: their ability to talk!

“An exploratory research design is particularly suited to the study of behavior” (Golding, 1999:18). It seeks inductively to distil issues that are important to specific groupings of people. The aim is to create meaning about these issues through analysis and the modelling of theory (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006:8).

In this study an **inductive** theory discovery design is used that allowed theory to be developed while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical data. Data collection, analysis and theory stand in a reciprocal relationship with each other.

## 1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology was followed when conducting the research. The research design guided the selection of this research methodology. Most sciences have their own specific research methods, which are supported by methodologies (in other words, a rationale that supports the method's validity). The social sciences are methodologically diverse, using both **qualitative** methods and **quantitative** methods, including case studies, survey research, statistical analysis, and model building. A combination of the two methods is also possible.

Many authors use many definitions when describing the two major approaches in organisational research, namely a quantitative versus a qualitative approach. The **quantitative** approach is often seen as objective, relying heavily on statistics, whereas the **qualitative** approach is seen as subjective, and preferring language and description.

**Quantitative** research is often referred to as functionalist, objectivist or positivist research, whereas **qualitative research** is also referred to as interpretative or subjectivist. Both approaches are underpinned by differing paradigms and these paradigms ultimately affect the research process.

### **1.8.1 Research population and sampling strategy**

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) define the **research population** as the entire set of individuals or teams who will be the focus of the research and of whom the researcher would like to determine some characteristics.

In this research project, the population was the employees of two South African-based companies: the Auditor General (AG) and an Information Communication Technology (ICT) company called GijimaAst. The Auditor General has 1700 employees and GijimaAst approximately 3000 workers. Both companies can be described as modern, contemporary or 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. They have lean structures; they are diverse and are global in orientation. Both companies use teamwork in implementing their strategies. In both companies, employees have had previous exposure to team processes.

#### **1.8.1.1 *GijimaAst's vision, mission and values***

The vision, mission and value statements of GijimaAst illustrate the company's contemporary nature. There is a strong focus on client orientation, a desire to be world-class and an innovative drive.

The vision, mission and values of the company are described as follows on GijimaAst's (2007) website and in its strategic documents:



“**Our vision** is to be the most respected company in the ICT industry in our target markets by driving unparalleled value for our clients, staff, shareholders and our communities.

**Our mission** is to continually improve our client centricity by focusing on improving their efficiency and competitiveness through our

- world-class, innovative and affordable services;
- premier client care;
- commercial acumen; and
- proven technological leadership.

We will achieve this through the development of staff, intellectual property, our communities and the investment in our technology and service based partnerships and resources.

**Our values:**

- **The client is key**

GijimaAst aims to create a service experience that is unparalleled in the industry through its unique client-centric model.

- **Esteem through growth**

Growth is essential in order to maintain and sustain a healthy business that is profitable and effective.

- **We love what we do**

We will make every effort to ensure that the work environment is pleasant, challenging and conducive to growth, health and happiness. We want the workplace to be fun and a place where our employees enjoy being every day.

- **Dedication to delivery**

We aim to demonstrate our loyalty by sticking to our promises and encouraging an honest and open dialogue between GijimaAst and our employees.”



### **1.8.1.2      *The Auditor General's vision, mission and values***

The Auditor General's vision, mission and values are described as follows on the Auditor-General's (2007) website and in strategic documents. Once again, the overall strategy indicates the organisation's drive to be regarded as world-class and to provide value-added services:

#### **Vision**

We are the independent world-class provider of public sector audit and related value-added services.

#### **Mission**

Providing independent and objective quality audit and related value-added services in the management of public resources, thereby enhancing good governance in the public sector.

#### **Values**

- Integrity
- Independence
- Impartiality
- People development
- Accountability
- Commitment
- Excellence.

One reason for the choice of these two organisations was that, apart from the fact that both companies qualify as 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations and use teamwork in their day-to-day operations, I have a broad knowledge of both companies and have acted as a team development consultant in both organisations. Approval for this project was granted officially and both companies offered their full cooperation and support to this research project.

The rationale for this selection was lastly that I have had eight years of extensive experience working with and for the Auditor General and two years of experience working for GijimaAst on team development projects.

Knowledge of the target population made communication, access to respondents and networking easier. However, as a researcher I had to be very alert not to be biased or to exert my influence in conducting the interviews.

The target group also represented the demographics of the country, which made the choice even more suitable.

The **sampling strategy** that was followed was one of **purposeful sampling**, since it best suits the selected research design. Purposeful sampling has the goal of understanding a phenomenon in-depth, and not to represent the population or to generalise findings.

Patton (1990:169-186) identifies 15 different types of purposeful sampling. Based on this analysis, a **combination or mixed purposeful sampling** approach was used to conduct the research. This entailed a combination of various sampling strategies to achieve the desired sample. The combined sampling strategy was helpful in triangulation, allowed for flexibility, and met multiple interests and needs.

### 1.8.2 Data collection

A qualitative approach was selected and the data collection methods were aligned with the research design.

Data was collected by means of personal and group interviews, where the focus was on interaction and an in-depth understanding of perceptions and experiences:

- **focus group interviews:** four focus interviews of one and a half hours each; and
- **individual interviews:** 21 personal interviews of approximately one hour each.

In quantitative research, data collation typically occurs well in advance of data analysis (Ragin, Nagel & White, 2003). However, in most qualitative research projects, data collection and data analysis cannot be differentiated sharply.



Qualitative researchers usually analyse data as they collect it and, based on the results of this analysis, decide which data to collect next. This procedure was followed throughout this study. During and after each interview I made notes, updated my diary and started interpreting the information. I also experienced that, as Klein and Myers (1999) put it, interpretative research is not merely about reporting facts, it is rather about reporting the interpretations of individuals. In many instances, I thus had to interpret and report on individual perceptions as well as attitudes.

## 1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics is concerned with what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in terms of the research process. Since interviews were conducted and the research process directly affected third parties, the following **ethical aspects** were considered when conducting both the personal and focus group interviews.

- **Confidentiality** is a vital requirement for credible research. The individual's right to privacy and anonymity were respected at all times.
- I **explained** the process to the participants and sent them relevant documentation well in advance of the interviews to set them at ease.
- **Informed consent** was obtained from all participants in the research project. Bartunek and Louis (1996) emphasise the importance of repeatedly confirming informed consent. They argue that, in a qualitative research project, prospective participants often do not have full knowledge of the types of research or what might happen as the study progresses. Informed consent must then reflect awareness that such events can not entirely be predicted. Informed consent could and should thus be renegotiated at some stage of the research process and should not be seen as something that can be handled only once at the beginning of the study. Throughout my study, this happened. In a few cases, I had to do telephonic follow-up discussions and in all cases the process was fully explained and consent was obtained.
- **Emotional safety** was guaranteed to all employees. Since interviews in some cases elicited intense discussions and touched on sensitive

issues, the interviewer facilitated discussions in such a way as to protect interviewees.

- Individual and team **privacy** was guaranteed, especially since many issues were raised in confidence. The process of interview transcribing was explained and no hidden cameras or one-way mirrors were used. Tape recordings were used, and in all cases, written permission for this was obtained. Prior to each interview, I demonstrated the tape recorder to set the interviewees at ease.
- **Academic objectivity** was ensured by implementing a sound research methodology and following the selected research design.

## 1.10 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The rest of this study is structured as explained below.

In **Chapter 2** teamwork is defined and team roles, team development, team building and team forming in organisations are explored. I will also briefly reflect on 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations and the individual in the organisation.

In **Chapter 3**, the research design and methodology selected are discussed. I also reflect on the role of the qualitative researcher in the research process. Next, I discuss the data collection methods, as well as the mode of analysis implemented in this study.

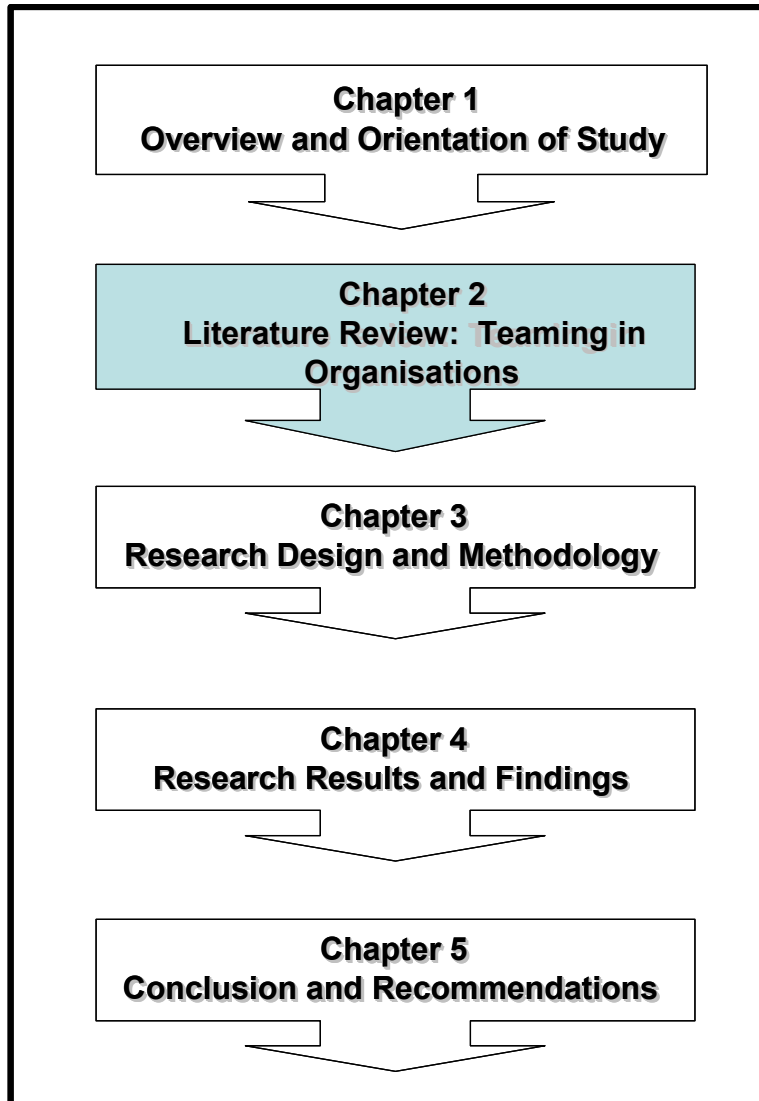
**Chapter 4** deals with the analysis of the data and the research findings.

**Chapter 5** is a concluding chapter in which the contributions of the study are discussed and recommendations for future research are made.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: TEAMING IN ORGANISATIONS

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a literature review of the concepts central to this study. Teamwork as a broad concept is defined and various types of teams are looked at. Aspects of teamwork, such as team roles (and theories relating to the role of teams in organisations), team development and team building, and how teams function, are examined. The use of teams in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations is also explored.

## 2.2 IMPORTANCE OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the research participants, an audit manager at the Auditor General (Interviewee 3, 2007:pers.comm.) commented: “Textbooks offer fascinating theories and explanations. The more you read the ‘better you get’ at leading teams. However, implementation remains the biggest team challenge for organisations”. This offers a good rationale for doing a literature review.

The literature review remains a crucial part of any research project. According to Mouton (2001:86), a literature review is aimed at finding out what has been done in a particular field of study. Babbie (2005:457) regards such a review as the process of indicating where a particular report or study fits into the context of the general body of scientific knowledge. To ensure that the research question is unique and will add value to the body of knowledge, the researcher has to find out what has been written in that particular field and discover what has been found in the empirical research in the field.

Mouton (2001:87) prefers to speak of a review of the existing scholarship, since the researcher is actually interested in a whole range of research products that have been produced by other scholars in that field. To focus this review, the following questions were used, as proposed in the guidelines for writing a literature review by two authors from Rhodes University (Grahamstown), Oosthuizen and Shell (2002:30):

- What are the broad bodies of literature relevant to this research topic?
- What method(s) and results have previous resources in this field produced?

- What theoretical models relate to this research topic?
- What different methodologies have been applied by other researchers?
- What are the most recent findings in this field of study?
- What gaps exist in these findings?

*My greatest challenge was to review all the relevant literature, but remain objective and unbiased since my interviews have to guide my report and team findings. I have to focus on the fact that my reasoning has to be inductive and that – only after the qualitative intervention – I can really make conclusions.*

### 2.3 INTRODUCING TEAMS

Teams can be depicted in terms of many philosophies and theoretical frameworks, and team-based philosophy within organisations is becoming increasingly popular and commonplace (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2001). Recently, in the United Kingdom (UK), as many as 82% of companies with 100 or more employees reported using team structures (Gordon, 2002). Banker *et al.* (1996) argue that the use of teams has led to tremendous organisational improvements in a variety of industries. In South Africa, the scenario is the same: “Teams, instead of jobs, have become the critical building block of future organisations” (Robbins *et al.*, 2004:99).

Since the beginnings of humankind, some form of teamwork has continuously taken place. Nevertheless, when people are asked to define the underlying principles of modern teams, they are often vague about the precise meaning and implications of the words “teams” or “teamwork”.

Teamwork has been investigated widely and can be defined from many perspectives. As a consultant working with team development issues on a daily basis, I used literature studies and existing models to enable me to

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▼ From the researcher’s diary. Similar reflections are included in grey shaded boxes throughout the report.

understand teams and answer my research question regarding what teams are.

There is currently a large body of work looking at very specific aspects of teamwork and team development. Many Organisational Behaviour theories on teamwork were reviewed in order to consider all the relevant theories and models that might explain teams in any way.

## 2.4 DEFINING “TEAMS”

“Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organisational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results” (Exco member, Auditor General 2007: pers.comm.). This view by one of the research participants reflects only one view of many.

In order to understand teams and their complexities, a researcher or team consultant needs to read, read and read.

Koontz and Wehrich (1988:101) define teamwork as two or more persons who

- are interdependent in executing a set of activities;
- interact face-to-face and interact frequently with each other;
- make differential contributions; and
- strive to achieve a common goal in respect of a core task.

Robbins *et al.* (2004) describes self-managed teams as teams where members are willing to

- accept change;
- try new things;
- take on more responsibility;
- be held accountable for results;
- take action instead of waiting for instructions; and
- act in the best interests of the team rather than the self.



Hemingway (1991) distinguishes between nominal teams (which are a group in name only and in essence consist of individuals trying to work together) and real teams.

Real teams are defined as teams where individuals

- understand their assignments;
- have clear goals and values;
- communicate in an open manner;
- operate in a basic climate of trust; and
- have basic team skills.

As a last comment regarding a definition of teams, Guzzo and Dickson (1996:308) refer to a so-called 'definitional struggle' in the field of team research. Authors, as explained in the stated definitions, often refer to work groups or teams alike.

Hackman (1987) argues that a work group is made up of individuals who see themselves and who are seen by others as a social entity, who are interdependent because of the task they perform as members of a group, who are embedded in one or more larger social system and who perform tasks that affect others.

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) assert that groups become teams when they develop a sense of shared commitment and strive for synergy among members. In the view of these definitions, Guzzo and Dickson (1996:309) suggest that the "labels" of team and group should be used interchangeably, recognising that "there may be degrees of difference, rather than fundamental divergences, in the meaning implied by these terms".

*▼An internet search revealed that there are more than 1 million definitions or references to definitions of teams and teamwork. As part of this project, I need to focus on my research questions instead of getting overwhelmed by all the information on teams that is available*

In the context of teams, **team effectiveness** should also be defined and understood.

There seems to be no uniform or singular measure of performance effectiveness for teams. Guzzo and Dickson (1996:309) suggest that team effectiveness should be defined broadly, and is indicated by:

- (a) “ group produced outputs like quality, speed and customer satisfaction;
- (b) the consequences a group has for its members; or
- (c) the enhancement of a team’s capability to perform effectively in future”.

## **2.5 TEAM IDENTITIES / TYPES OF TEAMS**

In order to understand teams, recent research on particular types of teams should be considered. Various classifications of teams into some kind of group or category have been offered. Hackman (1990), for example, classified teams in categories such as ‘delivery teams’ and ‘performing teams’.

Teams are often defined in terms of their type or function, and many titles are given to many sets of teams. Literature studies unveil various terms and phrases that attempt to make it easier to understand teams: work teams, groups, virtual teams (Duarte & Tennant Snyder:1999), task forces, committees and cross-functional teams (Parker, 1994), project teams, hot groups (Lipman-Blumen & Leavitt, 1999), high performance teams and self-management teams (Wilson, 1996), to name but a few.

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▼ From the researcher’s diary.

Kreitner and Kinicki (2001) describe 21<sup>st</sup> century teams in particular. They argue that the following would constitute the ideal scenario for successful organisations to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, incorporating new, innovative leadership and team styles:

- Teams are defined as small groups with complementary skills, committed to a common purpose, common performance goals, and a common approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.
- A group of individuals becomes a team when:
  - leadership becomes a shared activity;
  - accountability shifts from being strictly individual to being both individual and collective;
  - the group develops its own purpose or mission;
  - problem-solving becomes a way of life, not a part-time activity;
  - effectiveness is measured by the group's collective outcomes and products;
  - virtual teams (information technology) allows group members in different locations to conduct business;
  - self-managed teams are groups of employees granted administrative oversight for their work; and
  - cross-functional teams are made up of technical specialists from different areas.

There are many fascinating and interesting theories and models on teams and teamwork. It seems as if authors now prefer to move away from describing how teams work to describing the advantages of teams and the benefits they can generate – hence the use of terms such as “high performance teams” and the “high performance workplace”.

Vennix (1996) suggests that team learning should be better understood and used as a development tool in organisations . Sheard and Kakabadse (2001) argue that leaders should move away from loose groups towards effective teams; Nadler (1992) advocates high performance teams and Mohrman, Cohen and Mohrman (1995) describe the advantages of what they call “designing a team-based organisation”.

Some types of team that are being cited and relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation are described below.

### **2.5.1 Self-managed teams**

“Self-managing work teams offer a radical alternative to the status quo – one which allows individuals to grow beyond their wildest expectations, and at the same time allows unprecedented levels of output and quality improvement” (Wilson 1996:1).

The concept of self-directed work teams reached the popular audience in the United States of America (USA) in the late 1980s. In the late 1990s, a conference on self-managed work teams was convened in Texas, and more than over 350 delegates shared ideas on self-managed teams, improved quality and increased productivity. This era saw a boom in self-managed teams in the workplace (Wilson 1996). Cover stories in both *Fortune* and *Business Week* added to the uncritical praise of the shift toward empowering teams (Manz & Simsa, 1995:vii).

In essence, self-management means that groups perform the activities of a manager, and in many cases, have to make strategic decisions. Aldag and Riggs Fuller (1993) comment that self-managing teams will continue to grow in importance in the context of the new workplace, where structures are becoming flatter and decision-making is delegated to lower levels.

Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2004: 201) define self-managed work teams as “a permanent group of six to 18 relatively highly skilled organizational members who take a wide-ranging and joint responsibility for a whole process or product through the performance of a wide variety of tasks within clearly defined boundaries”.

Robbins *et al.* (2004) describe self-managed teams (from an organisational behavioural context) as members who have the ability to accept change, try new things, take on more responsibility, take risk, help other team members to succeed, take action and work responsibly without constant supervision.



Fully self-managed teams seem to answer to the following criteria:

- they are willing to and capable of working independently;
- they select their own members;
- they evaluate each other's performance;
- they make their own decisions; and
- they continuously evolve towards higher levels of involvement, empowerment, enablement and leadership.

It thus seems as if self-managing teams are a “concrete manifestation of the learning organisation” (Robbins *et al.* 2004:204).

### 2.5.2 Virtual teams

Until a few years ago, teams typically operated in a face-to-face environment, conducting regular meetings and postponing interventions if one of the team members could not be present. In today's business environment, team challenges are growing; and organisations literally have to adapt or die.

Globalisation, growing competition, technology and time constraints have now created an environment in which teams are logistically scattered and might not even operate in the same time zones. Teams now typically communicate and interact virtually and, as modern organisations emerge, it becomes rare to find all the team members located in the same office or place.

Katzenbach and Smith (2001:25) define virtual work as consisting of “tasks and activities that occur within today's vast network of electronics, telecommunications and information technology”. With virtual teamwork, technology and the computer continue to redefine where and how work is done. The virtual team is no longer bound by traditional team practices, time, distance or locality; and a virtual team does not follow old models and team approaches.

Duarte and Tennant Snyder (1999:4) argue that there are various configurations of virtual teams:

- networked teams;
- parallel teams;

- project or product-development teams;
- work or production teams;
- service teams;
- management teams; and
- action teams.

The three primary factors that distinguish a virtual team from face-to-face teams are (Robbins *et al.*, 2004)

- the absence of para-verbal and non-verbal cues;
- limited social context; and
- the ability to overcome time and space constraints.

McShane and Von Glinow (2003:230) note that “virtual teams leverage the benefits of team dynamics. They enable employees in diverse locations to collaborate and make potentially better decisions on complex issues”. When implemented effectively, virtual teams “represent a natural extension of knowledge management because they minimize the silos of knowledge problems that tends to develop when employees are geographically scattered”.

Katzenbach and Smith (2001) developed a short exercise to help virtual teams focus and streamline their efforts. They work through the following questions:

- Are you sure you are a team? Do you have to work together to achieve some performance purpose and challenge?
- Are a significant number of the team members located in different locations and or time zones?
- Will it benefit your team to interact routinely with one another?
- Will you be required to do a certain amount of virtual work?
- Do you have a plan for virtually acting as a team?

Guzzo and Dickson (1996) refer to an interesting study on computer-assisted groups, conducted by Hollingshead and McGrath in 1995. They found that computer-mediated groups tend to be characterised by less interaction and exchange than face-to-face groups, and often tend to take longer in their

work. They further noted that virtual teams appear superior at generating ideas. Sainfort *et al.* (1990) found that computer-aided groups generated more potential solutions to a problem and perceived themselves as making greater progress than the other groups. in the study.

Dennis and Valacich (1993) also reported that virtual teams produced more ideas during a brainstorming task that did nominal groups.

Several authors have also studied communication patterns in virtual teams and reached similar finding. Kiesler and Sproul (1992) found that the communication in virtual groups is often characterised by greater equality of participation, more risky decisions, more hostile communications and greater direct advocacy.

### **2.5.3 High performance teams**

As already stated, the concept of teams is as old as the human race, yet it remains a hot topic amongst researchers, managers and employees. The basic underlying principle of high performance teams is that “a group of people working in unison can accomplish more than those same numbers of people working alone” (Dalton, 1996:1). This concept is called synergy, and teams are often more effective than individuals because of the rich variety of talents, skills and strength they make available to the group.

Mc Shane and Von Glinow (2003: 231) refer to team effectiveness as “the extent to which a team achieves its objectives, achieves the needs and objectives of its members, and sustains itself over time”. They argue that organisations should rely on high performance teams rather than functional departments to reach organisational objectives. This argument also refers to the 21<sup>st</sup> century type of organisation with leaner structures and more integration versus a “silo” mentality.

According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2001), the attributes of high performance teams include the following:

- encouraging participative leadership;
- sharing responsibility;





- aligning on purpose;
- ensuring high communication levels;
- being future- focused;
- being focused on tasks;
- developing creative talents; and
- ensuring rapid response.

Rosenthal (2007) suggests that modern managers spend more and more time on getting teams back on track or intervening when the team is not achieving the expected results. He advises managers to focus on five key success factors when establishing and managing high performance teams:

- ensuring a shared and meaningful purpose;
- setting specific and challenging goals;
- determining a common and collaborative approach;
- clarifying roles; and
- ensuring complementary skills.

### **2.5.3.1 High performance team-based culture**

According to Kilmann, Saxton, Serpa & Associates (1985:20), culture “is to the organisation what personality is to the individual – a hidden yet unifying theme that provides meaning, direction, and mobilization”.

In the introduction to his book *Thriving on Chaos*, Tom Peters (1989) remarks: “To thrive amidst chaos means to cope or come to grips with it, to succeed in spite of it. But that is too reactive an approach, and misses the point. The true objective is to take the chaos given and learn to thrive on it”. Against the background of the changes faced by organisations, many authors are of the opinion that companies need to capitalise on the talents and skills of their teams to focus their energy on solving complex problems and harnessing chaos.

To create an entire workplace to be a high performance team-based structure is incredibly difficult and challenging (Dalton, 1996). Quite often, the organisation becomes impatient before the process is completed, and when



the team approach does not illustrate a dramatic improvement in the company's bottom line, managers often decide that teams do not work. The reality is that the workforce needs to be guided from working solo to working in teams, and that the organisational culture must be supportive of the team structure. When assessing research done in this field, it becomes clear that a high performance team-based culture is not attained overnight.

The implied characteristics of a high performance team-based culture are the following:

- the freedom to explore new technologies or approaches in order to solve complex problems (Hyman, 1993:56);
- a strong and aligned vision throughout the company (Ehlen, 1994);
- an environment which uses failures as foundations for successes (Hyman, 1993);
- a strong executive team and leadership (Nadler, 1992);
- a reward system that kicks in when the team produces quality results (Nadler, 1992);
- an open and honest communication practice where employees are encouraged to challenge and differ (Rohlander, 1999);
- an environment of trust, respect and support, where conflict is managed effectively (Dalton, 1996);
- a patient and committed culture – high performance teams are not developed overnight and require hard work (Dalton, 1996);
- a well-balanced (in terms of team roles) and diverse workforce (McCann & Margerison, 1998);
- a learning organisation orientation, where teams are regarded as a vehicle for learning to take place (Robbins *et al.* , 2004).

#### **2.5.4 Virtual high performance teams**

“Effective leaders do not achieve team goals or team objectives by controlling, “bossing” and inhibiting people. They achieve goals by creating opportunities for teams to thrive and to be successful” (Interviewee 2: 2007. pers. comm). A virtual team does not follow old models and team approaches. A virtual team



uses technology and, although team members do not interact in a face-to-face manner on a daily basis, they communicate and focus on the results to be achieved. Many software packages have been developed to enable geographically dispersed team members to operate in such a manner as to ensure high performance.

Duarte and Tennant Snyder (1999:131) suggest that virtual teams that strive to operate as high performance teams need to become more self-aware. The following simple questions could assist a virtual team to elicit feedback and grow:

- Was my behaviour consistent with expectations?
- What was productive about it for the team?
- What was unproductive about it?
- If the team were to give me advice about how to behave differently next time, what would it be?
- Did cultural or functional differences affect perceptions?

Technology is not the only thing that makes a team a virtual team. Research suggests that contextual factors, apart from mere computer programs, play a role in high performance virtual teams. Valacich *et al.* (1994) studied the results between groups using the same computer system when all members of the group were in one room, as opposed to when the members were dispersed. The dispersed group generated more high quality and unique solutions than did the proximate group.

When observing teams and trying to understand what is expected of virtual team work, other factors, like context and communication patterns, should thus also be considered.

A high performance culture does not develop in a month or two. It takes time, top management commitment, time, hard work, resilience and more time. It can also only be done if an integrated and inter-disciplinary approach is adopted. To establish long-term changes and ensure an organisational development intervention, the leader / manager / consultant should look at the organisation at all organisational levels.

## 2.6 TEAM ROLE THEORIES

Extensive research regarding the roles that individuals play in teams has also been done. I selected to focus on the views of Dr Meredith Belbin, since he has taken the lead with books such as *Management teams: why they succeed or fail* (Belbin, 1993a), *Team roles at work* (Belbin, 1993b) and later *Beyond the team* (Belbin, 2000). Understanding team roles enables a researcher to discover team complexities and understand team challenges in context.

### 2.6.1 Belbin's team role analysis

Belbin developed what is now called team role analysis. He has studied teams for many years and identified nine roles that he sees as important in teamwork. If one of these roles is not “played”, the grouping cannot be called a team, but merely a number of individuals working together (Belbin, 2000). The Belbin team role analysis is a very powerful tool in developing teams, but so far it is underutilised and it is hardly ever used as part of an integrated approach towards teamwork.

A team role can be described as a tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way (Robbins, *et al.*, 2004). The value of the nine roles identified by Belbin lies in the fact that the theory enables individuals or teams to benefit from self-knowledge. It also helps them to adjust according to the demands being made by the external situation.

Belbin conducted his team research at Henley Management College in the UK. Belbin and his co-researchers studied the behaviour of managers from all over the world. The participants in his study were given a battery of psychometric tests and they were put in teams of varying composition (Belbin, 2000). Their different personality traits, intellectual styles and behaviour styles were assessed while they were performing a complex management exercise. In his research, Belbin identified different clusters of behaviour. He found that these clusters underlie the success of teams. From that study, he identified three clusters and nine team roles, as illustrated in Table 2.1:



**Table 2.1: Belbin’s role synopsis**

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Team role</b>
<b>Action orientated</b>	<b>Shaper</b> <b>Implementer</b> <b>Completer Finisher</b>
<b>People orientated</b>	<b>Co-ordinator</b> <b>Team Worker</b> <b>Resource Investigator</b>
<b>Cerebral roles</b>	<b>Plant</b> <b>Monitor Evaluator</b> <b>Specialist</b>

Source: Belbin (2000)

Belbin (1993b) describes the characteristics of each role, as well as the “allowable weaknesses” of the roles as follows:

- **Plant:** Creative, imaginative, unorthodox. Solves difficult problems. Ignores detail. Too pre-occupied to communicate effectively.
- **Co-coordinator:** Mature, confident, a good chairperson. Clarifies goals, promotes decision-making, delegates well. Can often be seen as manipulative. Off-loads personal work.
- **Monitor Evaluator:** Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options. Judges accurately. Lacks drive and ability to inspire others.
- **Implementer:** Disciplined, reliable, conservative and efficient. Turns ideas into practical actions. Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.
- **Completer Finisher:** Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors and omissions. Delivers on time. Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.



- **Resource Investigator:** Extrovert, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities. Develops contacts. Over-optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.
- **Shaper:** Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. The drive and courage to overcome obstacles. Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings.
- **Team Worker:** Co-operative, mild, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens, builds, averts friction. Indecisive in crunch situations.
- **Specialist:** Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply. Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.

Since Belbin's research has been published, many researchers set out to test his team role theory.

Fisher *et al.* (1998) specifically studied the issue of secondary team roles, because many teams in industry had fewer than nine members. The collected data showed that team roles fell into two general categories, and they labelled these two categories as "task" and "relationship" (1998:283). They found that these categories revealed the likely secondary team role for any given individual, and also predicted the degree of harmony and productiveness of dyads within any given team.

Prichard and Stanton (1999:650) found, consistent with Belbin's theory, that mixed teams, in which a variety of team roles were represented, performed significantly better at a management game in consensus decision making than teams composed solely of individuals identified as shapers. They confirmed that shaper teams are prone to in-fighting and high levels of failure to reach consensus on decisions. However, they indicated that more research needs to be conducted in the field of team roles, for example: the validation of the team roles themselves, and to establish the reliability and validity of the Belbin team role self-perception inventory (SPI) to predict them.

The Belbin team role analysis has tremendous potential if used correctly, but many organisations tend to use it in a culture that is not team- driven. This tool needs to be understood fully first before it can become part of an integrated team solution.

*“Since both organisations in my study have been exposed to Belbin questionnaires before, it might be interesting to investigate the effectiveness of such a tool further. However, this is not part of the main research question and should not become the focus of the research interviews.*

### 2.6.2 McShane and Von Glinow’ view on team roles

McShane and Von Glinow (2003:241) define a team role as a “set of behaviors that people are expected to perform because they hold certain positions in a team and organizations” (2003:241). They differentiate between task-orientated and relationship- orientated roles. They stress that team members need to ensure that all these roles are fulfilled in order to facilitate the team’s to functioning optimally and effectively.

**Table 2.2: Roles for team effectiveness (McShane & Von Glinow, 2003:241)**

Role activities	Description
<b>Task- orientated roles</b>	
Initiator	Identifies goals for the meeting
Information seeker	Asks for clarification of ideas
Information giver	Shares information and opinions about the teams goals
Coordinator	Coordinates subgroups and pulls together ideas
Evaluator	Assesses the team’s functioning against a standard
Summarizer	Acts as the team’s memory

▼ From the researcher’s diary.



Orienter	Keeps the team focused on the goals
<b>Relationship-orientated roles</b>	
Harmonizer	Mediates intra group conflicts and reduces tension
Gatekeeper	Encourages and facilitates participation of all team members
Encourager	Praises and support the ideas of other team members

Source: McShane and Von Glinow (2003:241)

### 2.6.3 Blanchard's team research

Ken Blanchard's (1988) team research also needs to be investigated in the quest to understand team dynamics. Blanchard is essentially perceived as a trainer and motivational speaker and is not seen as an academic researcher, however he added to the teamwork body of knowledge by introducing various popular concepts used in the business arena. He built his theory of team roles around the assumption that employees tend only to be productive if they understand the importance of their contribution to the "bigger" picture and if their roles are clear. Margerison and McCann (1990) added to knowledge in this field by developing an instrument called the team management index (TMI) to measure team roles. They also stress the importance of team role balance in high performing teams.

Ken Blanchard (1988) built his theory of team roles around the following aspects:

- employees will only be productive if they understand the importance of their contribution to the "bigger" picture;
- establishing shared goals and values will lead to commitment;
- if you give employees control over the work they perform, you instil pride and respect; and
- enthusiasm in teams is created by recognising both progress and results.

He developed the “Gung Ho” approach in cooperation with Sheldon Bowles after many years of working closely with individuals and teams. He experimented, observed individuals and teams and concluded that the “spirit of the squirrel”, “the way of the beaver” and “the gift of the goose” is needed for optimal team functioning (Blanchard, 1988). The squirrel is symbolic of the need of team members to know that their work is worthwhile and driven by goals and values. The beaver illustrates the importance of putting employees in control of achieving goals. Lastly, the goose indicates the importance of team members to cheer each other on.

He argues that teams will be even more effective if constant recognition is given for work well done. Once again, the true challenge is to use this in a practical and value-adding way in a diverse and complex workplace.

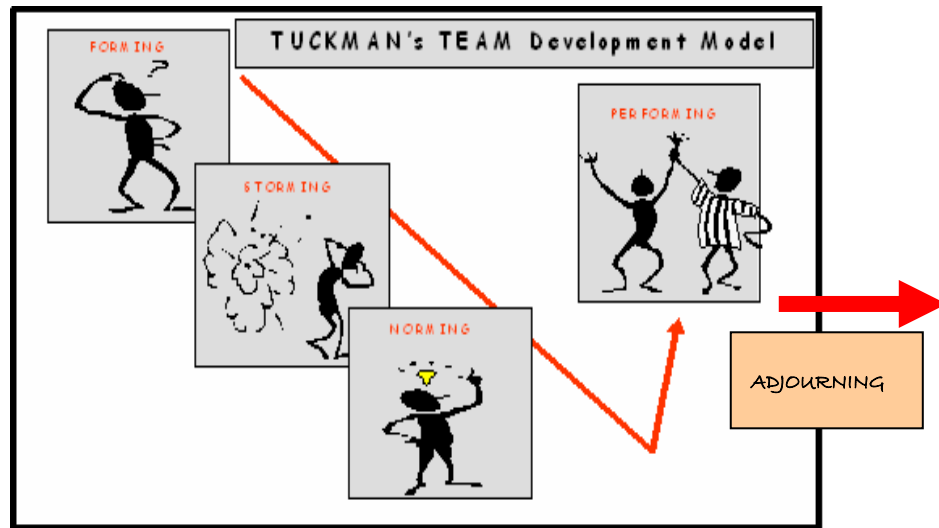
## **2.7 TEAM DEVELOPMENT THEORIES**

Researchers have always been interested in how teams are formed and how they develop in practice. Understanding the forming of teams will enable a researcher to include this theory in the journey towards a deeper understanding of team complexities.

### **2.7.1 Tuckman’s model of team development**

Tuckman (1965) developed a model for team development (see Figure 2.1) that has been widely used and adapted. He describes team stages as **forming**, **storming**, **norming** and **performing** – natural stages that each team has to go through when its members are selected as a team. These stages are iterative in nature and do not have a specific time-line. Tuckman later added a stage called “**adjourning**”, which is the stage where the group dissolves after a job well done or members leave the team.

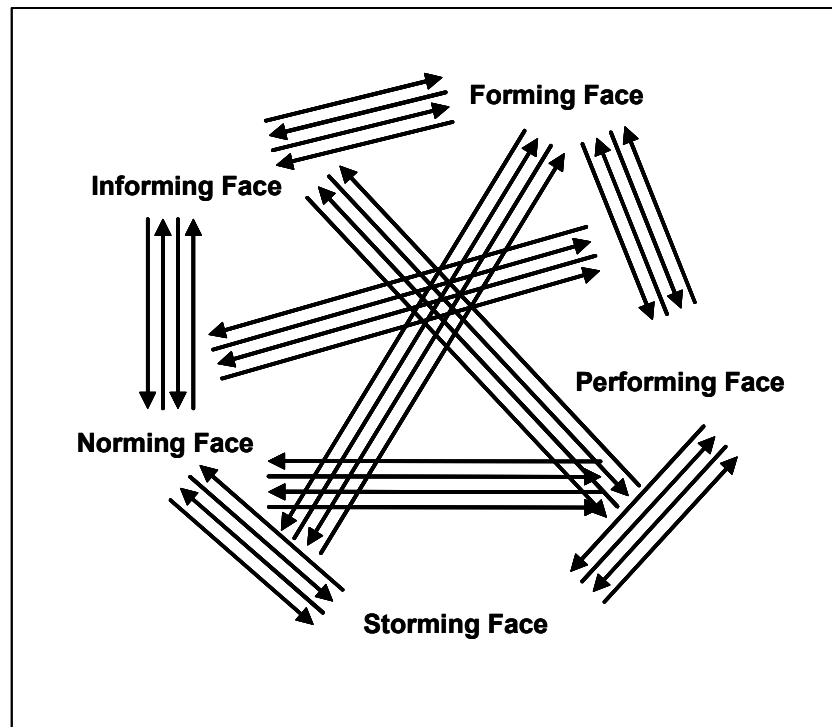




**Figure 2.1: Tuckman's team development model**  
(Adapted from Tuckman, 1965)

He defines the **forming** stage as the phase where members get to know each other and seek to establish ground rules. **Storming** is the phase where control is resisted and hostility is shown openly. During **norming** members start working together and develop a sense of camaraderie. **Performing** is the stage where all members work together to get the job done. After this phase, the group dissolves, **adjourning**, because the job has been done or because certain members leave the team. The purpose of each team is to reach the performing stage – thus operating as a high performance team.

Ed Kur (1996) added to this body of knowledge with a model he calls "the faces model". He describes it as a new model of team development which describes teams using five common patterns called "faces". This model assumes that teams wear one face and then wear other faces in no specific order, unless the team drives its members to wear a specific face or to engage in a specific pattern of behaviour.



**Figure 2.2: Ed Kur's Faces Model** (Kur,1996:33)

Kur (1996:34) describes his model as “more encompassing, more powerful, and in a sense, more forgiving than sequential development models” (1996:34).

Kriek and Viljoen (2003:1) argue that it is generally accepted that teams and their use in South African companies have become an important feature of “modern organisational life”. They add that “there are even suggestions that teams (and project teams in general) will become the entrenched and preferred form of organisational structure in future”. They focus on team building, and suggest various stages of the teambuilding process (see Table 2.3), namely

- culmination: (At this stage, questions are asked such as: what did it mean to the team and how did it measure up?);
- perpetuation: (How can we maintain our momentum?);
- regulation: (How are we doing and what do we do?);



- generation: (What binds us together and where are we going? are typical questions to be answered);
- configuration: (Questions like who are we and who are our members?).

**Table 2.3: Kriek and Viljoen’s team building view:** (Kriek & Viljoen, 2003: 16)

		SYSTEM	
		Inward	Outward
<b>S T A G E S</b>	<b>Culminate</b>	What did it mean to the team? <b>10</b>	How did we measure up? <b>9</b>
	<b>Perpetuate</b>	How do we maintain our momentum? <b>8</b>	How do we know we are doing it? <b>7</b>
	<b>Regulate</b>	How are we doing it? <b>6</b>	What do we do? <b>5</b>
	<b>Generate</b>	What binds us together? <b>4</b>	Where are we going? <b>3</b>
	<b>Configure</b>	Who are we? <b>2</b>	Who are our members? <b>1</b>

Source: Kriek and Viljoen (2003:16)

Many questionnaires have been developed to determine the phase in which a team finds itself – but the actual challenge remains to integrate this model into a holistic approach towards synergistic team development.

## 2.8 TEAM FUNCTIONING THEORIES

Motivational speaker Vince Lombardi once said that “individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes teams work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work”.

Any manager working with teams or any individual working in a team should have insight into the mechanics and functioning of teams. In this study, the focus was on the question: what do individuals expect of teamwork to make it actually work?

Teams are supposed to outperform individuals (Robbins *et al.*, 2004), especially since a team approach is an effective way to use team talents and teams can solve problems better by applying different skills, judgement and experience. Newstrom and Davis (2002) also believe this, remarking that teams are highly empowering in that they allow for flexibility, joint decision-making and multi-skilling. In terms of this framework, the challenge would be to get to understand teams better. What makes teams tick and what are the expectations teams have when operating in a modern work situation?

Ilgen *et al.* (2005) refer to various aspects of team functioning that should be understood if teams are considered. They specifically refer to theories relating to bonding, adapting and learning.

### **2.8.1 Team Bonding**

Bonding refers to “reflecting the affective feelings that team members hold toward each other and the team” (Ilgen *et al.*, 2005:526). Bonding goes beyond trust and reflects a strong sense of rapport and a desire to stay together. Bonding often takes time to occur, and consequently can be observed better when the group starts to function. Beal *et al.* (2003) suggest that bonding in teams is crucial when workflow interdependence is high. Early and Mosakowski (2000) also indicate that the key to team bonding is to develop a single culture within the team.

The management of conflict amongst team members directly impacts the way in which team members bond with each other. Ilgen *et al.* (2005:529) argue that there is emerging consensus among researchers that task conflict is generally unhelpful in terms of the functioning of teams. Instead of task conflict, teams require (a) rich, emotional debate in a trusting environment;

(b) a context where team members feel free to express their doubts and change their minds; and (c) an ability to resist pressures to compromise quickly or to reach premature consensus.

## 2.8.2 Adapting for optimal team functioning

21<sup>st</sup> Century organisations are dynamic and challenging – both to individuals and teams, and for this reason **adapting** is crucial for team functioning. Work for many in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is project-based, with free-lance independent contractors able to do their work based on their unique circumstances and preferences (Laubacher & Malone, 1997). Teams are often working as virtual teams and change is rapid and, in many cases, overwhelming. Teams comprise of multi-cultural individuals, who are also very diverse.

Key features of the newly emerging organisation are that it is a networked organisation, flat and lean, flexible, diverse and global in orientation and operations (Standing, 1999).

Other features include the need to manage and adapt to the following areas:

- **Change**

A successful 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation and manager must understand the dynamics of change, especially with the advent of new global trends. The impact of globalisation on the expansion of multi-national corporations means that change affecting accurate organisational values and culture needs to be managed soundly (Standing, 1999). Robbins *et al.* (2004:11) assert that “today’s managers need to implement quantum change and reinvent their organisations. As organisations enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they need to transform leaders who can reengineer the workplace and to get employees to ‘buy into’ the upheavals that come with quantum change.”

- **Diversity and culture**

Linked to the above are respect for diversity and an understanding of a multicultural workforce. Although historically diversity has been seen as potentially volatile and sensitive, it is now becoming increasingly important for diversity to be addressed within organisations. On the positive side, according to Fuhr (1994), diversity is creating a work

environment in which everyone has a sense of belonging and which removes the barriers that have hindered the fulfilment of human potential.

- **Empowerment of employees**

In current organisations, integral focus is placed on the individual. The authoritarian and bureaucratic structures of the past will not be successful in the new global economy. Teams will become and currently are becoming more and more important. Furthermore, Kamp (1999) concurs that a 21<sup>st</sup> century manager's power is based on being the resource that enables things to happen rather than merely being a doer.

- **Decision-making**

Decision-making is one of the most crucial elements in the success of a 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation. Decisions that influence the entire functionality and operations of the organisation must be made in a participative manner by including all the stakeholders. However, it is also essential for managers as well as teams to be able to make quick and effective decisions in times of crisis – decisions that will best suit all the stakeholders of the organisation (Goleman, 2003).

- **Communication management**

The success of a 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation rests on the pillar of effective communication. Especially with the reliance on technology and to stay ahead in the global rat race, communication needs to be clear and understood by all effected stakeholders. Diversity management can be brought into this perspective, as the medium of communication must be understood throughout the organisation. Bill Gates of the Microsoft Corporation attributes a considerable amount of his organisation's success to effective communication, especially since he has had to integrate a very diverse workforce (Goleman, 2003).

In order to function as high performance teams, a large amount of adapting to circumstances is thus necessary. A study by Waller (1999) indicated that the speed with which teams recognise environmental change was of critically importance for team functioning and adaptability. Okhuysen and Waller

(2002: 1059) found that the speed with which teams recognised the need for change was related to the number of “interruptions” that caused them to “stop and think” about their processes while engaged in the task. They further found that specific instructions to team members to raise questions, helped adaptation.

### **2.8.3 Learning in Teams**

Ilgen *et al.* (2005) identify **learning** as an important aspect of team functioning. They distinguish between learning from team members who are minorities and learning from the best team member. They argue that teams need to learn from their members under different circumstances, and then “use this knowledge to improve performance and expand the knowledge of other team members” (Ilgen *et al.* 2005:533).

Peter Senge was named strategist of the century by the *Journal of Business Strategy*. He entered the limelight when he published his book *The Fifth Discipline* and popularised the concept of the “learning organization” (Senge, 1990). Senge argues that individuals need to learn in teams to align and develop the capacities of the team. He suggests that, when people learn together, there will be good organisational results and the members will grow rapidly. According to Senge, the discipline of team learning starts with dialogue. Learning is thus no longer an individual experience: it becomes a team process and requires new and innovative ways of looking at performance

## **2.9 INDIVIDUALS IN TEAMS**

Successful team players are individuals that have a strong self-awareness. When working with teams, individual behaviour models and theories with a strong team implication should also be considered.

“Numerous profiles / explanations / models explain individual differences and behaviour. Since there are far too many to discuss, I selected the “Tony Allesandra” model to indicate that the individual in the team is unique and brings to the team a number of different behaviours. This model is furthermore used in both organisations to establish a culture where individuals are respected in terms of their differences.

### 2.9.1 Tony Allesandra’s relationship strategies

Allesandra (1992) developed a model that he calls “relationship strategies” (see Figure 2.3). He argues that the platinum rule in communication is to treat others as they want to be treated. Changing or adapting your behaviour will make both individuals and teams more successful.

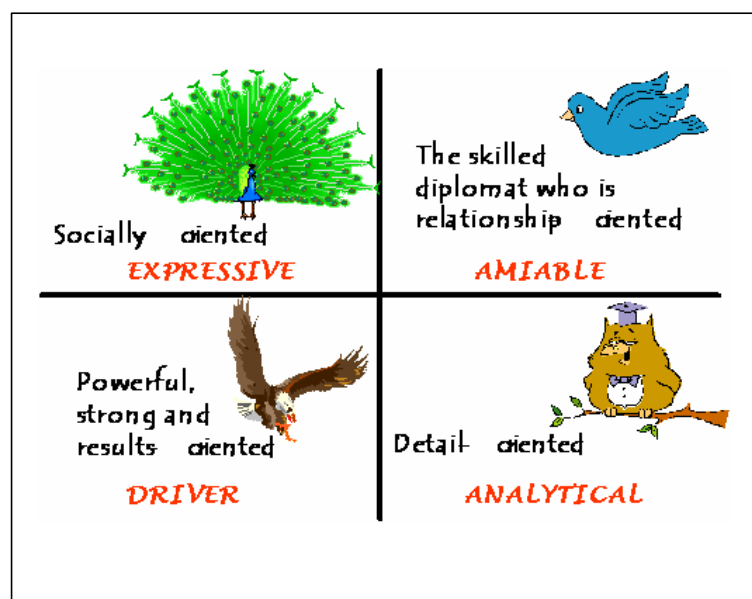


Figure 2.3: Relationship strategies (Allesandra, 1992:3)

This model builds on many others, but the truths are generic:

- individuals have different preferences;
- these preferences will dictate a specific way of interacting with others;
- understanding the behaviour of others, and altering your own behaviour accordingly, will optimise your success as a team player and communicator.

▼ From the researcher’s diary.





## 2.10 CONCLUSION

From the literature discussion above, it is evident that organisations are more successful when people work together towards a common goal. This comment incorporates and integrates many views and theories involving teamwork, which in itself is a complex domain with multiple dimensions.

Within an Organisational Behaviour context, in this study, an attempt is made to be responsive to the research situation as it is, building on previous research and going beyond that which was done before. This study therefore has as its central mission finding out what is really expected by individuals in teams in order to influence a new approach towards team development towards team performance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century organisation.

Globalisation and the resulting trends create enormous management challenges because, as organisations and the workforce change, so the types of people who manage it also need to change. The workplace has indeed transformed from being a hierarchical organisation with autocratic management styles to effective teams, which empower individuals who are in turn mentored by innovative and creative 21<sup>st</sup> century managers. However, the challenge for us as scholars of Organisational Behaviour is looking ahead, and since we are currently in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it would be interesting to speculate where organisations will be in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century and what type of people dynamics or technology will drive them to success.

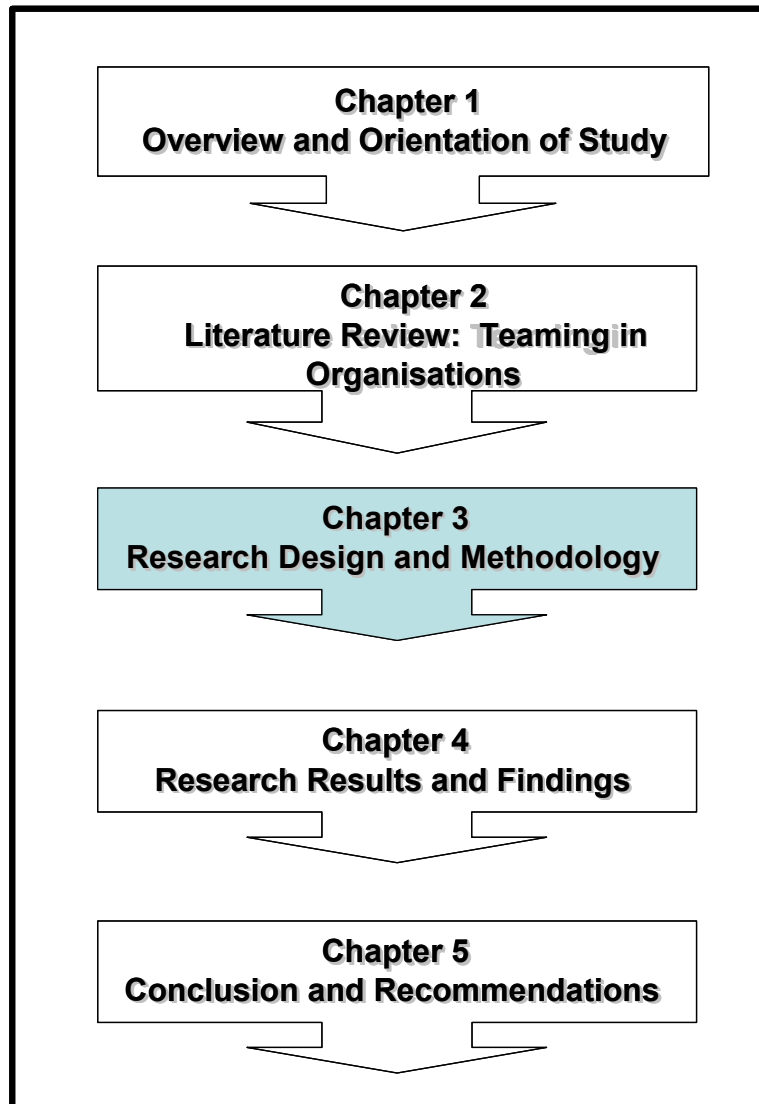
In concluding this chapter, it is perhaps apposite in the team context to remember the old Arab proverb quoted below:

*“Men are four: He who knows not and knows not he knows not,  
he is a fool--shun him;  
He who knows not and knows he knows not,  
he is simple--teach him;  
He who knows and knows not he knows,  
he is asleep--wake him;  
He who knows and knows he knows,  
he is wise--follow him”!*



## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research design and methodology used in the study are presented in more detail. A rationale is provided for selecting a qualitative research methodology, and the role of a qualitative researcher is briefly explored. The population and sampling strategy used in this study are discussed. Details are provided on the data collection methods used in the study, namely in-depth interviews and focus interviews. Next, the mode of analysis is explained and, finally, the chapter shows how research trustworthiness was ensured and what quality criteria were applied.

### 3.2 CHOOSING A SUITABLE APPROACH

Yin (1989:27) explains that a “research paradigm is the logic that links the data to be collected to the initial questions of a study”.

As has already been stated, a qualitative interpretivist approach was adopted and the study was positioned in a post-positivist paradigm. The guiding paradigm and principles have already been discussed extensively in Chapter 1. The overall strength and research value of this design lies in the in-depth insights that can be achieved, as well as in the establishment of rapport with the participants (Mouton, 2001:1). In reporting the findings, as the researcher, I had a unique and exciting opportunity to include my own voice in my presentation of the diverse voices of all the participants in this research project.

Since an **inductive** theory discovery design was used in this study, the process allowed me to develop a theory while simultaneously grounding the research account in empirical data. The strengths of this type of inquiry were that it led to in-depth insights, made the interviewees part of the process and led to thick description.



### **3.3 RATIONALE FOR SELECTING A QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

I have an inner drive to understand people and “things” – even those things which seem obvious to others. When I selected my research method, it was therefore only natural that I would select an inquiry strategy that would focus on interaction, personal communication, human relations and deeper senses of understanding.

Abraham Maslow (1949:202) once commented with some regret:

“...we are still forced by academic custom to talk about our own experiences in about the same way as we might talk about bacteria, or the moon or about white rats, assuming the subject-object cleavage, assuming that we are detached, distant and uninvolved, assuming that we are unmoved and unchanged by the act of observation....”

The approach chosen in this study and the way it was reported on illustrates my response to his lament. Avoidance of what Maslow describes in part underpins the paradigm I argued for when I had to choose an appropriate research method. From the outset, I realised that my research journey would be subjective, rather empathetic, and embedded in personal as well as in human relations. The characteristics of qualitative research that attracted me and best suits the research question at hand are summarised in Table 3.1 (next page).



**Table 3.1: Characteristics of qualitative research**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Description</b>
Research done in natural setting	Research done in the field, in-depth understanding
Human Instrumentation	Researcher is primary data-gathering instrument
Non-random sampling	In-depth, contextual understanding. Researcher will to sacrifice breath for depth (purposeful, sampling).
Open-ended, emergent design	Open-ended design, Research questions might be substantially modified during study. Discovery orientation
Grounded (Inductive) Generalisations / Theory	Understanding and generalisations will be grounded in the data collected and analysed.
Descriptive	Data in the form of words and pictures rather than in numbers. Data will include interview notes and transcripts.
“Senses making” is the primary focus	“Meaning-making”: i.e. the ways in which people make sense of their worlds.
Inductive and deductive data analysis	Although informed by theoretical notions, data will be generated inductively and tested deductively in ongoing process.
Negotiated Interpretations	The researcher will invite interviewees to participate in the data analysis.
Tentativeness in Generalising	The researcher will probably be tentative in reporting on the “generalisability” of her findings.
Multi-vocality in Reporting	Will represent the diverse voices of multi-Positioned interviewees through stories, narratives and quotations.

### **3.4 THE ROLE OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCHER**

I believe that there is no such thing as a neutral stance. Every researcher has a face, an identity, preferences, a certain style etc. Possible sources of bias need to be communicated explicitly to the reader of a research report and should not be hidden. As the researcher, I enacted a crucial role in this qualitative research process, therefore the reader should realise that true objectivity is a myth. I was **subjective** when conducting this study, since any researcher is only human. However, I made my own biases, preferences and

assumptions as clear as possible to the respondents, which illustrated my acute awareness of my own limitations as researcher.



**Figure 3.1: The researcher**

I am female and in my forties (see Figure 3.1, above); I work with teams every day, think in a “right brained” manner and believe in simplicity and honesty. Furthermore, I am a trainer and an organisational development (OD) consultant who is both a team member and work with teams. All these factors may have influenced my views. However, following a sound methodological research approach when collecting and interpreting data assisted me in working around subjective and local influences.

I regard **reflexivity** in research as very important. I therefore constantly had to take stock of my actions and my role in the research process. I consistently strove to remain non-judgemental in my approach, even though I showed empathy with the emotional undertones of the respondent’s reactions. Morse, (1994) stresses that by showing emotional understanding, a researcher can create common ground with the respondents.

In terms of researcher skills, Yin (1989) suggests that a researcher should develop or already possess the following skills when pursuing truths through research: the ability to ask the right question and interpret the answers – it is no wonder that Morse (1994:225) remarks that qualitative research is only as good as the researcher;

- the willingness to be flexible and the ability to read the situation; and
- the distance to be unbiased.

*“I am naturally a talker and needed to focus on truly listening when conducting the interviews. I prepared numerous questions prior to the interview to ensure that I stayed focused, however, not to probe or lead the answers to suit my paradigm. I also printed my main research questions and took the list along to all my interviews to ensure that I remained focused.”*

### **3.4.1 Challenges faced by a qualitative researcher**

Researchers have to “avoid control” (Ragin *et al.*, 2003), and throughout the interview process I therefore had to allow the subjects and material to guide me. However, this did not mean that the qualitative intervention could not be controlled. Instead, it implied that I acknowledged that I was unable to control the data and the environment in which the data was being collected.

Another challenge that researchers face is having to stay part of the research process and using themselves as a research tool. When conducting this qualitative research, in many cases, there was no clear separation between the collection of data and the analysis thereof. As has already been explained, quite often I had to analyse the data as it was collected and the next step was determined by what I learned.

## **3.5 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING STRATEGY**

The research sampling strategy was discussed in Chapter 1, but the selection of data sources needs to be explained in more detail.

**Typical case sampling** involves taking a sample of what one would call typical, normal or average for a particular phenomenon. Participants for my study were selected for a specific reason and not randomly. The initial two focus group interviews were conducted with “natural” project teams that were deliberately selected to enable me to gain a better understanding of the issue

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▼ From the researcher’s diary.

at hand. The business unit managers at both GijimaAst and the Auditor General assisted me in making my choices in terms of existing teams.

**Criterion sampling** was also included when selecting the sample. The criteria for interviewees were the following:

- each interviewee had to be an employee of one of the two identified organisations;
- each interviewee had to work in a team setting; and
- each interviewee had to have previous exposure to teamwork and development.

**Snowball or chain sampling** follows naturally as a research project progresses. In the current study, I asked the interviewees for referrals to other individuals who may be able to provide rich information, who could provide good examples for study or who would be good interview subjects. Excellent interviews were conducted by means of this chain sampling.

Since qualitative research seeks a deeper understanding of social behaviour and phenomena, focused and usually smaller samples are usually used as opposed to random, large samples, as suggested by Giddens (1990). This approach was also followed in this study.

The most important indicator for sample size when conducting qualitative research is often the point of redundancy also called theoretical saturation of the data (Glaser, 1994). For me as the researcher it was thus very important to interpret the data continuously in order to note and monitor patterns of redundancy. The sampling in my case was thus done until redundancy in the data was reached. Although I had planned to conduct 30 personal interviews, I was able to complete my sampling after 20 personal and four focus group interviews.



### 3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

A qualitative approach was selected and the data collection methods that were used were aligned with the requirements of the research design.

As already mentioned, data was collected by means of four **focus group interviews**, each lasting about one and a half hours, and 20 **individual in-depth interviews**, each lasting about an hour.

#### 3.6.1 In-depth interviews

An in-depth interview implies some form of intense verbal encounter. Participants usually provide the researcher with information either in a conversation or in some other form of verbal interchange. **An interview** can be defined as “a purposeful conversation usually between two people (but sometimes involving more) that is directed by one in order to get information” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982:135). The main purpose of an in-depth interview is to learn to see the world through the eyes of the interviewee.

“In qualitative research, in-depth interviewing is an important research tool for data gathering and the researcher acts as the measuring instrument” (Botha, 2001:13). In order to hone this tool, learning “about questioning, the rhythm, the form, the impact, is a task that never ends for qualitative researchers” (Ely, 1991:63). It is both interesting and appropriate that Fontana and Frey (1994) refer to interviewing as “the art of science”.

Kvale (1996) defines qualitative research interviews as “attempts to understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations”. In many cases I had to ask various clarifying questions to check my understanding as well as the context.

In my research project, the personal Interview was a very versatile method to use in order to conduct qualitative research. Kotler (1991) suggests that the

versatility of interviewing lies in the fact that more questions can be asked as the interview progresses, and observations regarding the interviewee (for example, dress and body language) can also be recorded.

### **3.6.1.1 Interview/question format**

“Because qualitative researchers depend on a field to help them ask questions, it is not a good idea to enter the field with questions that are too specific or too tight or too slanted” (Ely, 1991:56). A narrow focus from the outset might limit the researcher in terms of what he or she can see. Ely emphasises that the process of allowing questions to emerge and to be shaped during the data-gathering phase is what really makes qualitative research different from quantitative research.

Smit (2007:pers.comm.) agrees with this view and argues that structure often limits the scope and that a qualitative researcher should not use any question guide. During a personal interview, Smit (2007:pers.comm.) stressed the importance of having little structure, of using open-ended questions, of having no pre-conceived ideas and of listening.

The interviews were conducted as follows:

- The first two interviews I conducted were **informal conversational interviews**, where I focused on spontaneous conversation in the field and the topics and themes were not predetermined. After these interventions, however, I realised that I sometimes lost focus during the interviews and that the process therefore became too “loose”. These interviews lasted for more than two hours each and were consequently very difficult to code. I subsequently adapted my approach slightly: I decided to use a more structured interview guide approach during the interview.



- **The interview guide approach** is probably the most widely used method in qualitative research. At first I thought it might be limiting, but after my first encounter with the method, I decided that it seemed to be the best approach.

After my first two “loose” interviews, I followed the principles suggested by Beals and Hoijer (1971), Lofland and Lofland (1984), as well as Hitchcock and Huges (1989:83), in implementing the semi-structured approach. They all advise researchers to prepare a series of possibly significant questions to ask during the interview process. However, the purpose is not to secure answers to these questions, but rather to stimulate the subject to talk, in the hope of learning what he or she thinks.

Beals and Hoijer (1971) describe the semi-structured approach to interviewing as the preparation of a series of possibly significant questions to ask during the interview process. The purpose is not primarily to secure answers to these questions, but rather to stimulate the subject to talk, in the hope of learning what he or she thinks. Open-ended questions were therefore posed and they were particularly valuable in that the answers provided me with quotations that become the main source of data in this study.

Hitchcock and Huges (1989:83) also mention so-called “semi-structured” interviews. They define them as interviews “which allow depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee’s responses”.

The rest of my interviews were thus conducted in a more systematic fashion than the first informal I interviews. However, the conversational nature of the interviews was never sacrificed. There were a number of topics or themes to investigate, but I also had freedom in terms of the wording and the order of the questions.

The common denominator between my first “open” and second “more structured” approach was that the participant’s responses were mostly open-ended and were not restricted to specific choices provided by me as the researcher. The semi-structured approach in no way inhibited the interviewer or interviewee. It rather provided more strategic focus. We experienced the benefit of a semi-structured, question guide interview in that it established a balance between the interviewer and the interviewee. This balance provided room for negotiation, discussion and an expansion of the interviewee’s responses. The rest of my interviews turned out to be more focused and far easier to code.

### ***3.6.1.2 The personal interview guide***

Table 3.2 (next page) provides an example of the questions planned beforehand and included in the question guide. Once again it is important to note that the questions would not be asked in any sequence and were merely developed to ensure focus during the interviews.



**Table 3.2: Personal interview guide**

Definition	Prompt for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How do you view the concept “team”?</li> <li>○ What is a group, what is a team?</li> <li>○ What is team building?</li> <li>○ What is team development?</li> <li>○ What are your views about and experiences of team building consultants?</li> <li>○ What do you like / dislike about team work?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Clear examples</li> <li>○ Understanding</li> <li>○ Look at emotional words like “like” or “hate” etc.</li> </ul>
Individual level	Prompt for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are you currently part of a team?</li> <li>○ Please describe your team experiences.</li> <li>○ Do you have skills to work in a team?</li> <li>○ Do you prefer to work alone or in a team? Why?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Explanation</li> <li>○ Look for emotions</li> <li>○ Competency level</li> </ul>
Team level (Group)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Please explain your team role(s) in your team?</li> <li>○ Describe your team to me</li> <li>○ Do you have special team rituals that distinguish you from other teams? Explain them to me?</li> <li>○ What are currently the greatest problems and needs that you experience when working in your team?</li> <li>○ What do you – as a team – do to develop your team optimally?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Check understanding of perceptions of functional and team roles</li> <li>○ Look for a “team culture”, for example, ground rules etc.</li> </ul>
Organisational (Strategic)	Prompt for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What does the organisation’s strategy say about team work and development?</li> <li>○ Are you measured as an individual or as a team?</li> <li>○ Would you say your organisation has a team culture? Please explain.</li> <li>○ Explain your team training to me?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Look for references to strategy, plan, management, integrated approach, etc.</li> </ul>
General	Prompt for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If you were the leader in charge of “team development” in your organisation, what would you do?</li> <li>○ If you had to describe “the ultimate approach to team work”, what would you say?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Look for examples and understanding</li> </ul>

### 3.6.2 Focus group interviews

In this study, focus group interviews were also used. Kotler (1991) defines a focus group as "a gathering of six to ten persons who spend a few hours with a skilled interviewer to discuss a project, service, organisation or other entity". He describes focus groups as useful in gathering explanatory data and gaining new insights in perceptions, attitudes and other issues.

*†I found the focus group interviews more relaxed and spontaneous, probably since team members felt they supported each other. During each focus interview we laughed a lot and I also felt more relaxed. The discussions flowed naturally and in many cases I did not even have to open my question guide.*

Bloor *et al.* (2001) suggest the use of focus group interviews for exploratory purposes, which makes it an obvious method of inquiry for this study. Focus interviews were also used in this study for triangulation purposes.

Guidelines developed by Kotler (1991) and Dillon, Maddern and Firtle (1993) were used, and the following principles were followed when conducting the focus group interviews:

- Focus groups were selected to contain no more than twelve and no fewer than five individuals. I found that four was the ideal number of people in my study if I wanted everyone to interact and make his or her voice heard.
- The focus group interview rooms provided relaxed and comfortable settings. Both organisations made available suitable interview rooms. These rooms had comfortable chairs; they were private and comfortably air-conditioned.
- No microphones or videotape cameras were used, since their use might have inhibited the participants. Audiotape recorders were used to assist with clear conversation transcriptions. This choice was discussed, negotiated with and explained to each participant.
- Focus groups were identified and selected to be teams working together in a given work environment.

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† From the researcher's diary.



I acted as the facilitator and was responsible for generating questions and transcribing the responses.

The questions set out in Table 3.3, below, were planned for the focus interviews and included in the question guide.

**Table 3.3: Focus interview guide**

<b>Definition</b>
<p><b>Let us make associations....</b>          If I say “team building” you say .....          I say “team development” and you think.....          I say “team work” and you think.....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Let us now discuss your ideas in more detail.</li> <li>○ What are your views about and experiences of team building consultants?</li> <li>○ What do you like / dislike about team work?</li> </ul>
<b>Individual level</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are you currently part of a team?</li> <li>○ Please describe your team experiences.</li> <li>○ Do you have skills to work in a team?</li> <li>○ Do you prefer to work alone or in a team? Why?</li> <li>○ Do you know teams in your organisation that are “better” than others? Why would you say is that?</li> </ul>
<b>Team level (Group)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have you ever defined your functional role(s) in the team you are part of?</li> <li>○ Do you know what your team roles are?</li> <li>○ How would you describe your team?</li> <li>○ Do you have special team rituals that distinguish you from other teams?</li> <li>○ What are currently the greatest problems and needs that you experience when working in your team?</li> <li>○ What do you – as a team – do to develop your team optimally?</li> </ul>
<b>Organisational (Strategic)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What does the organisation’s strategy say about team work and development?</li> <li>○ Are you measured as an individual or a team?</li> <li>○ Would you say your organisation has a team culture? Please explain.</li> <li>○ Could team training be useful in your organisation?</li> <li>○ How can the organisation support individuals to become better at team work?</li> </ul>
<b>General</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If you were the leader in charge of “team development” in your organisation, what would you do?</li> <li>○ If you had to describe “the ultimate approach to team work”, what would you say?</li> <li>○ What would you regard as important elements of a team enablement model?</li> </ul>

### **3.6.3 Pre-interview interventions**

Before the actual interviews, many logistical and administrative arrangements had to be made. Once the question guides and questioning strategy had been finalised, the main objective was to get the interviewees into the interview room.

#### ***3.6.3.1 Selecting interviewees***

As already stated, I used a purposeful sampling strategy. I selected certain individuals myself, but, since I had to make sure I talked to the right people, I also requested top management to nominate individuals who would be in a position to contribute to my field of study. With the list of names in hand, I also had to ensure that the interviewees reflected the bigger population and represented all managerial levels in the organisation.

#### ***3.6.3.2 Setting up interviews***

Once I had the names, I had to motivate the selected individuals to take part in my study. Apart from telephonic conversations with them, I e-mailed them an outline of my study and formally asked their consent. To my astonishment, no one declined and all showed a sincere interest in assisting me with my research. Some interviewees even mailed me a signed consent form with dates and venues that would suit them. The following is an example of the invitation letter I distributed to all selected participants.

**For attention: Alice Muller**

**Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study: University of Pretoria**

The Department of Human Resources,  
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences,  
University of Pretoria.

**RESEARCH PROJECT: Teamwork in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations: understanding the expectations on multiple levels**





## PhD in Organisational Behaviour

### Description of the research

Dear Alice,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Adri Grové under the direction of Dr Yvonne du Plessis of the Department of Human Resources, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is empirically to determine the success factors of a team development approach in organisations. The findings will provide a better understanding of the integrated role of team development as a tool to develop organisations. The study will add value, as the findings will be used to identify organisational best practices to guide organisations in terms of future team approaches.

### Protection of confidentiality and voluntary participation

I wish to assure you that all the information I receive will remain confidential and will be treated in a professional manner. No names will be attached to any data and I will only schedule sessions if you find it convenient. Your contribution to this study is extremely important to me, especially since I am a proud member of the Auditor General.

### Your participation

I am conducting qualitative research, which means I chose to use individual or focus group interviews as an information gathering tool.

I am requesting the following:

- Two focus-group interviews with two existing teams (60-90 minutes)
- Four personal interviews with individuals at management level
- Four interviews with individuals who are not part of the two focus groups

### Potential benefits

Once the data have been analysed, the findings will be used to identify practices that will enhance team development approaches in future. The outcome of the research project will be shared with you in detail. In this way, your contribution to the research should benefit you and your institution in future. The value and outcome of the research depends on your willingness and enthusiasm to take part in this project.

### Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Adri Grové at [082 455 4733](tel:0824554733) or via e-mail [adrig@agsa.co.za](mailto:adrig@agsa.co.za).



### Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent for teams and individuals in the organisation to participate in this study. I also agree to this interview being taped.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating in this study.

Yours faithfully

\_\_\_\_\_

**Adri Grové**

**Researcher**

**2 November 2006**

### 3.6.4 Conducting the personal interviews

After I had made all the arrangements, after months of planning and a year of proposals and strategising, it was time for that first interview.

*♥This qualitative interview process was probably the most difficult intervention I have ever undertaken. Since I am a trainer, passionately like people and would describe myself as an effective communicator, I assumed the interviews would be the easiest part of this project. As I entered the room for each interview, I was reminded of the high premium placed in the literature on the technical skills of the successful qualitative interviewer. This probably added to the stress and tension I experienced during each interview.*

*Emotionally and intellectually, each interview literally drained me. Although I advocated the interview process as “a discussion regarding teams” I found it was far more than that. As both researcher and interviewer, I had to ensure that I played my roles in a defined and objective way. I had to manage the communication process and continuously ensure that we focused on answering the research question and did not stray from the subject. Some interviewees had difficulty expressing themselves in words, others, on the*

♥ From the researcher's diary.



*other hand, had a lot to say, but the information proved to have little relevance to my research.*

*Each interview was different, each interviewee unique, each intervention totally in a class of its own.*

### **3.6.4.1 Inside the interview room**

Both the focus and the individual interviews were conducted in suitable meeting rooms with air-conditioning, enough natural light and comfortable seating. Before the actual interviews, each participant was briefed and the audiotape recording process was explained. The signed consent form was then filed, the interviewee was offered a drink and I once again explained the confidentiality of the process that would follow after the interview had been conducted. Interviewees were also given the option of stopping the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable.

### **3.6.5 Recording the interviews**

As has already been mentioned, for ethical and clarity purposes, I decided to audiotape all the interviews while they were being conducted.

Patton (1990:348) describes the use of an audiotape recorder in qualitative interviewing as “indispensable”. However, Lincoln and Guba (1988:241) do not generally recommend making any recordings during interviews, “except for unusual reasons”. They base their recommendation on the intrusiveness of recording devices, as well as the possibility of the failure of the technology involved.

I decided to make audiotape recordings since they would enable me to capture data more faithfully after the interviews. This choice also allowed me to focus my attention on the interview and not on hurried note keeping. Note-keeping, I realised during the first interview, was rather difficult, since I had to make eye-contact, observe behaviour and follow the discussion on an intellectual level. I consequently obtained permission from the individuals and from the focus groups to use audiotape.

### 3.6.6 Advantages of interviews

The **aim** of in-depth interviews in my research project was to collect richly structured, detailed and person-centred information regarding my research question from one or more individuals, as recommended by Kaufman (1994:123). As a researcher, my objective was to initiate a dialogue about teams with real people and to treat them as human beings, not merely as study subjects. Throughout the data collection phase, I experienced the following **advantages** of in-depth, personal interviews, as well as focus interviews:

- During my interviews it seemed as if the participants were **motivated** because of the personal contact. Throughout my study, I made the interviewees feel that their responses were truly valued. I explained the interview process in advance, gave them feedback and thanked the participants personally for their contribution to my study. I truly did not interview one “unwilling” or “negative” interviewee.
- This **personal contact** enabled me to “read between the lines” and observe behaviour that would otherwise have been lost to the research. Throughout the process I observed pauses, sarcasm and body language as possible hints guiding me towards the truth. One interviewee (Interviewee 8:2007) was asked if he truly believed in teamwork. His answer was the following: *“Teamwork? [Long pause] ... [no eye contact] I guess it is good since it is part of our strategy.”* When he was again prompted later, this individual admitted that he thinks that teams are overrated and that he believes that the organisation would be better off focusing on developing individuals. These dynamics would have been lost if there had been no personal contact.
- The material that was obtained from the process was without a doubt **rich and detailed**, and I was able to probe beneath the surface when investigating issues.



*“The interaction between each interviewee and me was phenomenal and I was amazed by the eagerness of the participants to assist me in my quest to find the answers to my research questions.*

The total interview process yielded new insights into teams since I had the opportunity to clarify details, ask for examples and customise questions for each specific individual. These insights are shared with the reader in the next chapter.

### 3.6.7 Disadvantages of interviews

It is not fair to highlight only the advantages of interviews. There were also a number of disadvantages to the interview method:

- The interview process was very time-consuming. To arrange the sessions and find a suitable time for both parties proved to be a logistical nightmare. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted at a venue suitable to the interviewee – which implied many hours of travelling from my side. Pre-interview personal calls and documentation were also time-consuming and expensive.
- The actual interviews took between one and two hours each to conduct. After this, each interview had to be transcribed word by word. In practice, a one-hour interview comprised approximately 45 typed pages of transcript. After this, the transcript had to be sent back to the interviewee for quality control, and numerous telephone calls had to be made to verify uncertainties in the text. Conducting personal interviews is definitely not for the faint-hearted. It requires dedication, very hard work and focus.
- Large amounts of information had to be analysed and interpreted. The transcribed text was more than 400 pages of rich data that had to be studied and coded.
- The interview process was largely dependent on my personal attributes and skills. As the research process evolved, I realised that interviewing takes practice and experience. I could track the quality improvement in

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† From the researcher’s diary.

each interview and as a researcher I benefited a great deal in terms of personal development and learning.

- Interviews are **very expensive** if one calculates the time one invests in planning, arranging and conducting them. I spent more than 30 hours travelling between interviews, at least 20 hours on the phone and 30 hours inside an interview room. Transcribing also proved very difficult and extremely time-consuming.

### 3.6.8 Post interview actions

Conducting 20 in-depth personal and four focus-group interviews took effort and a long time. It was intellectually challenging and mentally exhausting.

*“I have just downloaded all my interviews electronically and I am faced with 60MB of audio material. Where will I find the energy to make sense of these 18 hour tape recordings? Where will I start?”*

#### 3.6.8.1 Transcribing the interviews

After each interview, I put my thoughts and observations down into a reflective journal or diary. I then proceed to transcribe the tapes word by word. In some cases, I had to contact specific interviewees again, since I had questions and details that needed to be clarified.

#### 3.6.8.2 Verifying data

As I started re-reading the raw data, I had to be careful not to make assumptions or read meaning into responses that were not intended. I often had to listen to the original audiotapes repeatedly and compare them with the transcribed text. In many instances, I had to contact interviewees to explain remarks or suggestions to me, and also to verify quotes. Once again, this was a very time-consuming and costly process, but it was invaluable in terms of the quality of my research findings.

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▼ From the researcher's diary.

### 3.6.8.3 Thanking participants

Both companies were facing extremely tough deadlines when I first approached individuals for interviews. The Auditor General was in the middle of the PFMA (Public Finance Management Act) cycle, and GijimaAst was preparing for year end. My timing could not possibly have been worse. Nevertheless, not one person was negative or declined my invitation in the end. In a classic example, one of the executives of the Auditor General, who was extremely busy during the PFMA cycle, at first declined, saying: "*I wish I could but we are extremely busy with the PFMA.*" A little later, he sent me this e-mail:

*Adri*

*I would have expected a peacock to be a bit more assertive and at least tried for a second time. Being an owl and having explored the impact on your feathers I have decided to at least try to accommodate you. I know you are very disappointed in me!!*

*Will 0900 Thursday do?"*

This participant proved that a culture of trust, positive attitudes and mutual respect was crucial for an effective research environment. No wonder that Buber (1957) argues that the quality of the relationship between the researcher and the respondent should be a trusting and accepting one.

Since each participant truly supported me and displayed such a positive attitude, I thanked each of them in a personal manner. Each interviewee received a small gift from me, as well as a handwritten letter to express my sincere appreciation for their effort and time.



*“It amazed me that such a small gesture had such an impact on the interviewees – I had numerous calls and e-mails to thank me and wish me luck with the outcome of my studies. The gift was small, the message was sincere and yet the response was overwhelming. I once again realised that, even though we are executives and so-called “strong individuals” or “excellent teams” our need for recognition – in whatever small form – remains huge!*

#### **3.6.8.4 Quoting interviewees**

Throughout the study **confidentiality** and the individual's right to privacy and anonymity were stressed. However, all participants agreed to being quoted in this study – personally and not anonymously. The only prerequisite was that I had to e-mail the relevant material through for their verification.

### **3.7 DATA REDUCTION**

Once the actual data is available (in this case, the transcripts from the interviews), coding, finding themes and clustering are all instances of data selection, reduction and condensation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:180).

The transcribed interviews yielded 400 pages of typed text – and then the real interpretative work began. The first step was to classify this raw data, a process that involved breaking up the data into meaningful parts and bringing it together again in a way that made sense. Classifying data is an integral part of analysis. It lays the conceptual foundation upon the basis of which the researcher makes interpretations and explains phenomena.

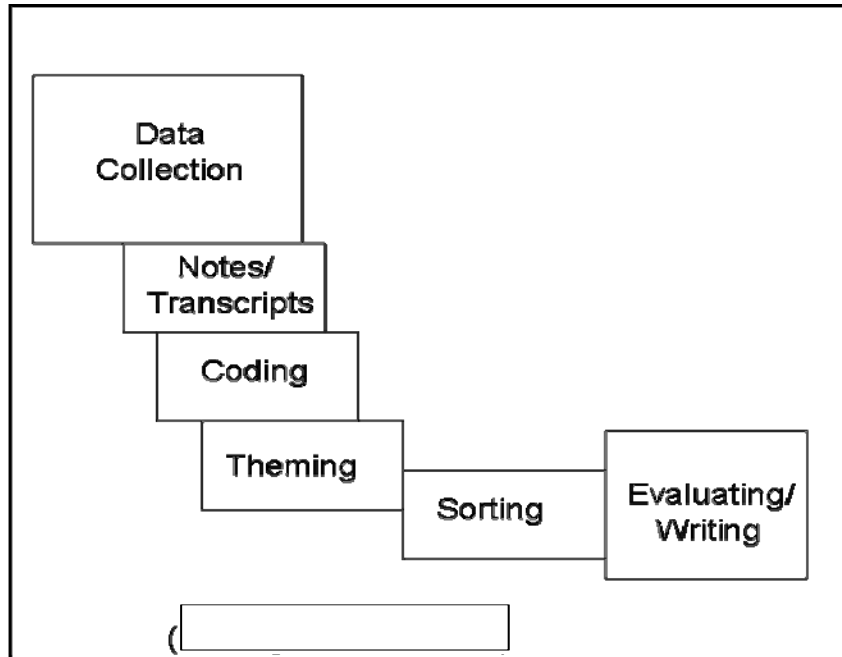
It was therefore essential to reduce the data in an anticipatory way and to choose suitable instruments, a conceptual framework and questions.

Figure 3.2 (next page) is helpful in explaining how the data was reduced to lead to better understanding.

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▼ From the researcher's diary.





**Figure 3.2 : Making sense of the data** (adapted from Denzin & Lincoln:1998).

### 3.7.1 Themes

Boyatzis (1998:1) refers to thematic analysis as “a way of seeing”. He defines thematic analysis not as “another qualitative method but [as] a process that can be used with most, if not all, qualitative methods and that allows for the encoding of qualitative information”.

Thematic analysis in this case allowed for qualitative research by means of the collection and use of information in a manner that facilitated communication with a broad audience. A theme is a pattern found in the information that describes the possible observations or interprets certain aspects of a research problem. Themes can be identified at the manifest level (in other words, they may be directly observable in the information) or at the latent level (which means it is underlying the phenomenon) (Boyatzis, 1998:4). The emergent themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.



### 3.7.2 Coding the data

“The main reason for coding in qualitative research is the same as that in quantitative research: to structure and facilitate analysis” (Weaver & Atkinson, 1994:31).

Looking for themes in raw data, in this case 400 pages of transcribed interviews, involved coding. Passages of text or other meaningful phenomena had to be identified, and labels had to be applied to them in order to indicate clearly that they were examples of a specific theme. Such a coding or labelling process enabled the retrieval and collection of all the text and other data that were associated with the same theme so that all this information could be examined together and different cases could be compared in that respect.

“Coding can be thought about as a way of relating our data to our ideas about these data” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996:27). The research challenge was to find a good thematic code that would capture the qualitative richness of the issue under investigation. The thematic code had to meet the following criteria (Boyatzis, 1998):

- a clear label / name;
- a clear definition of the theme;
- a description of how to know when the theme occurs / how to flag the theme;
- a description of any exclusion of the identification of the theme; and
- examples (positive and negative ) to eliminate confusion when looking for the theme.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) call for open coding as the initial phase in analysis-grounded theory data. Following their description, the data was coded as set out below.

During **open coding**, the focus was on concepts, categories, code notes and memo writing. I worked through all the transcripts and collected numerous illustrative quotes to saturate categories. I asked various “what, where, who, when and how” questions and put data into concepts and categories. I also labelled similar incidents together.

**Axial coding** involved the refinement of the initial list of categories. This coding formed part of the analytical process. Often, parts of data that were grouped during open coding literally had to be put back together in new ways to make new connections between these categories. Apart from the connections made between categories, causal conditions were also noted.

### **3.8 USING TECHNOLOGY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Most qualitative researchers use computers, but relatively few use software designed for qualitative analysis. There are various options available, from the use of SPSS for Windows to the options offered by Weitzman and Miles (1995) which include text retrievers or far more advanced programs.

However, the reason most often cited for researchers' abstaining from the use of specific software programs is that computers and software offer no instant solutions to the problems faced by qualitative researchers. Quite often the data handled by qualitative researchers are particularly resistant to tidy processing methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:211).

Potter (2002:149) suggests that, when data is particularly sophisticated and unstructured "there is little alternative but to rely on the most sophisticated analytical device around, namely, the professional human researcher".

In this study, a word processor was used, because it is basically designed for the production and revision of text and is thus helpful for note-taking, transcribing, writing up or editing interviews. Most word processors have helpful facilities for searching for character strings in the text. Microsoft Word for Windows, for example, allows a researcher to create hypertext links, pop-up memos and annotations.

Based on the research done and numerous inquiries, I decided to use a software tool called Weft QDA, which was developed specifically to assist with the analysis of textual data such as interview transcripts, documents and field notes. The following guided this choice:

- Weft QDA offers a generic set of facilities for working with text and does not make any assumptions about how to think and generalise from data.
- It is easy to use because it does not focus on “extras”, but on basics.
- I was already familiar with the program.
- It is backed up by complete user documentation.
- It is ideal since I was working with text and not images or videos.
- It is fully supported on Microsoft for Windows and is easy to install.

Weft QDA aided me a lot in

- managing various **documents**, which could be imported and exported quite easily (I annotated my documents with editable memos);
- creating **categories** (I could categorise and code in terms of a hierarchical pattern, and I could link editable memos to all categories);
- marking (I could record the connection between a category and a passage of text by literally “marking” the document section with the category; I could also easily retrieve marked text for the comparison and review); and
- obtaining e-mail assistance (when in need, all I had to do was send an e-mail and Alex Fenton, the developer of the system, would come to my aid).

*♥This was my first “stupid” question regarding the use of Weft QDA.  
Fortunately the answer was on a higher intellectual level.*

**Grove, Adri wrote**

Good morning,

I am busy with my PhD thesis and have just discovered Weft QDA. It is a great help to me but my problem is that I have built all the categories etc. and can now not export or print those categories. Is there any way I can print directly from the program?

Regards  
Adri

**Alex Fenton answered**

Hi Adri

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♥ From the researcher’s diary.



There's no way to print directly from Weft. But you can copy and paste the text into another programme (e.g. Word) and print from there, or you can export to an HTML file and print it from your browser.

Regards  
Alex

### **3.9 DATA MANAGEMENT, STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL**

There are many journals, handbooks, conferences and discussions involving the management and storage of qualitative data. Still, qualitative studies are often vulnerable when it comes to the data management process. Diane Garner, a teacher embarking on qualitative doctoral research, summarises the dilemma as follows (as cited in Ely, 1991:140): “Here one sits, surrounded with stacks of typed and marked field notes, computer printouts, videotapes, analytic memos, scattered and unidentified notes, a file of well-organised index cards and on and on. And here one sits alone.”

Without a clear system for storing and retrieving information, data can easily become mislabelled or mislaid. From the outset it was important that a system for data storage and retrieval be designed during the planning stage, long before the actual data collection begins (Boyatzis, 1998). In this study, I consistently kept thorough electronic and manual records as far as possible.

Since the data sets used in QDA are often very large and lengthy and can easily become overwhelming, Lewins (2005) suggests that researchers keep an open mind when faced with the amount of data and organise the data in a systematic manner. In line with this suggestion,

- multiple copies were made of the original data, as the same data may represent two or more themes or analytical ideas; and
- the material was carefully labelled in folders or files so that referring back was easy and re-contextualisation was possible.

### 3.10 ENSURING RESEARCH TRUSTWORTHINESS AND QUALITY CRITERIA

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, the points below were borne in mind throughout.

Lincoln and Guba (1988) argue that a researcher can only persuade his or her audience that the inquiry is worthwhile if the research findings are trustworthy. Criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research that are identified include ensuring credibility, member checking, transferability, dependability and confirmability, and triangulation.

**Credibility** had to be ensured. Lincoln and Guba (1988) suggest that a researcher should implement a number of strategies to ensure the likelihood that the findings produced are credible. In this case I conducted personal interviews as well as focus-group interviews. I also selected participants representing all organisational levels, diverse individuals with different views and ideas about team work. These were all strategies employed to ensure that the data emerging was credible.

**Member checking** was used throughout this research project to ensure that respondents verified data and the interpretation of that data. Numerous phone calls were made as to follow up on the actual interviews. A written copy of the findings was also later submitted to participants for their insight and verification.

**Transferability** also had to be ensured. Qualitative inquiry depends on a presentation of "**solid descriptive data**" or "**thick description**" (Patton, 1990:19) to improve the transferability of an analysis. I truly set out to describe the experiences of participants regarding team work in an empathetic and understanding manner. Hopefully this thick description will attract the attention of future researchers and open up themes for future investigation.

Lincoln and Guba (1988) suggest that both **dependability and confirmability** can be determined through a **properly managed audit**. In order to establish dependability, I continuously examined the whole research process, which included the various stages of the research project, as well as the techniques



used to analyse the data. The role of the auditor, in this case my supervisor or study leader, was to establish that the process followed was applicable in terms of the research problem and that consistent process management occurred.

**Triangulation** is a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish trustworthiness in their studies and to ensure that there are no grounds for doubting their research results. Based on Guion's (2002) arguments, I used data triangulation in this study. This involved using different sources of information and data. In this case, in-depth interviews were conducted to gain insight into the views of participants and to determine team complexities. The interviews were conducted with individuals, teams and managers. Triangulation happened when the views of all the stakeholder groups were investigated and agreed-upon views were identified. The next chapter illustrates the shared views of the participants.

### 3.11 CONCLUSION

As has already been explained, the purpose of this inquiry was to understand the expectations employees in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations have about teams and teamwork.

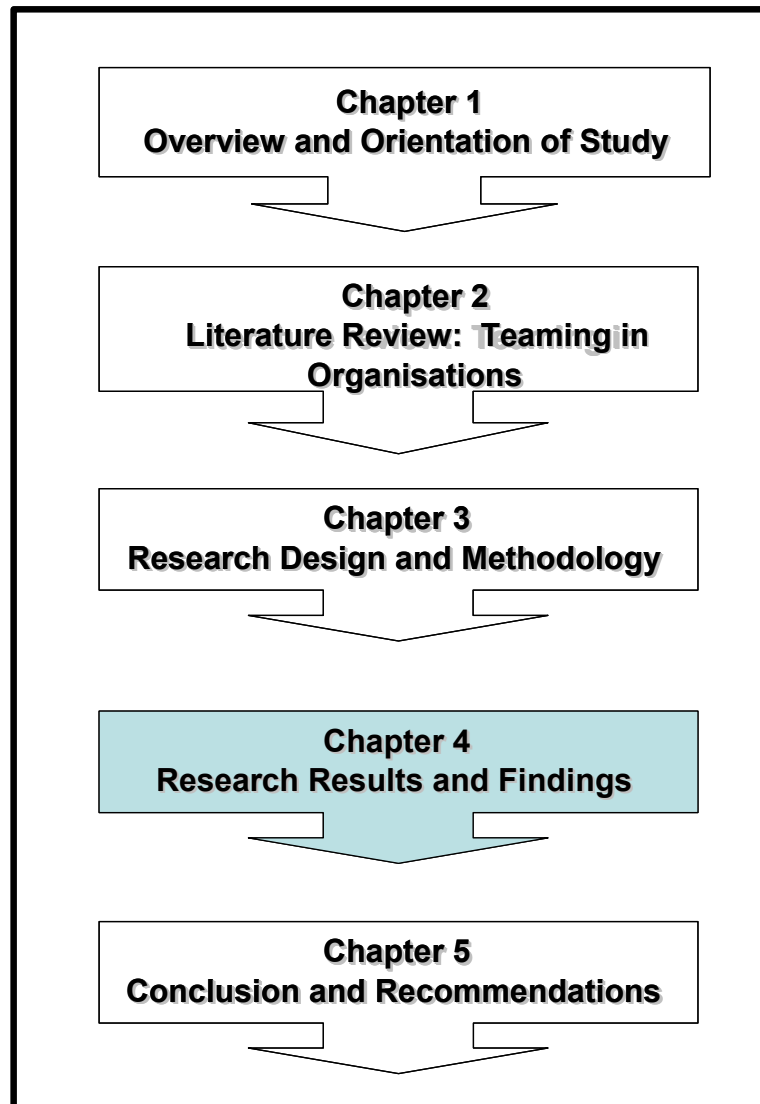
I have discussed the methodology I chose to follow, and have justified this choice. I also explained the coding and thematic process, as well as the software package I selected. The next chapter illustrates the themes and sub-themes that emerged during this study, and I will now interpret and discuss these themes in detail.



## CHAPTER 4:

# RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I justified the selected methodology in the context of the research problem and the literature review. I described the processes used to gather, interpret and analyse the data. I hope that future researchers will benefit from the process so far and that they too will embark on a further journey in the quest to understand teams better.

In this chapter, the patterns of themes elicited from the gathered data are discussed. In many cases, the interviewees were quoted verbatim, and readers should note that these quotes are presented in blue, italic type. Where I insert my own remarks as the researcher's remarks or comments, this is done in a boxed, black, non-italic (regular) style. Diary insertions continue to be presented in italics, in shaded boxes.

*♥Interpreting the interviews based on the typed script was difficult since I conducted the interviews, made eye contact, observed the behaviour and, when reading the text, these dynamics did not surface. I often concentrated so much during interviews that I did not ask obvious follow-up questions. The luxury of a transcribed text in front of me empowers me to make this remark in hindsight. However, in the interview room, it is difficult and challenging to focus and ask the right questions. In many cases, while I was working with the transcript, I thus had to conduct short telephonic interviews to follow up detail with the relevant interviewees. These follow-ups were done to check meaning with the participants, to ask for more clarification and clearer examples and to ensure that my interpretation stayed true to the original intentions of the participants. The telephonic interpretations are indicated by this symbol: ♪.*

In Table 4.1, a summary of the number of interviews, the level of participants and the duration of the personal and focus interviews is presented.

♥ From the researcher's diary.



**Table 4.1: Summary of interviews conducted**

Company	Type of interview	Employee level	Middle management level	Top management level	Duration of transcripts
<b>Auditor-General</b>	Focus	1 (Team size 4)	0	1 (Team size: 4)	4 hours
	Individual	4	4	2	7.5 hours
<b>GijimaAst</b>	Focus	0	1 (Team size 3)	1 (Team size: 5)	2 hours
	Individual	5	3	2	8 hours

The process discussed in earlier chapters was followed, and the data were interpreted with the main research question, ‘**what are the expectations of employees of teamwork on multiple levels in selected 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations?**’ in mind.

The sub-questions were the following:

- How do South African **employees** experience teams and team work?
- What do **teams** regard as critical success factors in the team development processes?

*▼These questions cannot be answered in isolation. In attempting to interpret the interviews in context, it became clear that the questions largely formed part of an integrated whole.*

From the analysis of the main research question, ‘What are the expectations of teamwork on multiple levels in selected 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations?’, **four main themes** emerged. As a researcher, I interpreted the responses in respect of these four themes regarding the expectations of teamwork in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. Sub-themes were developed under each of the following four main themes, which are:

- Theme 1: The “I” or “me” in the team (*individual level expectations*)
- Theme 2: The “us” or “we” in the organisation (*team level expectations*)

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▼ From the researcher’s diary.

- Theme 3: Organisational / leadership expectations of team work (*organisational level expectations*)
- Theme 4: 21<sup>st</sup> century team challenges (*environmental level phenomena*)

These four main themes also fit directly into the construct of Organisational Behaviour as indicated in italics above and as depicted in Figure 1.1 (see Chapter 1).

*Although some of the themes that emerged were anticipated based on the literature review set out in Chapter 2, some interesting issues arose. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the particular themes in their context – not to do a thorough literature study about the origin and meaning of that specific theme.*

*The thematic process proved to be complicated since many issues are so integrated that they can hardly be “grouped”. The reader should bear this integrated nature of the research findings in mind. If, for example, I discuss the need for respect as an individual expectation that does not mean it is a non-expectation at other levels. Most of the expectations are mutual and affect all levels. Once again, as a researcher, I realised that people cannot be “boxed” or neatly categorised. They are all unique.*

## 4.2 CODING AND IDENTIFICATION OF THEMES

Identifying the themes, coding and reviewing the coding of the material proved much harder than it seemed at first. Almost 400 pages of transcribed interview material made this task even more challenging.

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▼ From the researcher's diary.



♥A technique that really helped, since it is a visualising tool, is a system called Participlan, where I literally pasted the themes / clusters on my study wall. As the ideas evolved, I could visually “build” a story on the wall and ensure that themes were clustered in a manner that made sense and that was logical. Participlan also enabled me to unpack themes, generate ideas and cluster relevant ideas together. With the help of Weft QDA and Participlan, I used all the technology and other methods I could. Now it was up to me, the researcher, to interpret and express the ideas in front of me.

♥Another lifeline – and this functioned more at an emotional level – was my constant contact with two individuals who had successfully embarked on their PhD qualitative research journeys. I used them as both mentors and as my psychologists, and it was very enlightening to know that what I often experienced – fatigue, loss of focus, hopelessness, apathy etc. – was pretty “normal” in qualitative studies. It took many hours of thought, debate, sleepless evenings and consulting!

The themes that emerged are discussed below. They are put in the context of literature reviews and are to be read in direct quotations from the individuals who participated in this study. I trust that the reader will benefit as much as I did from what the interviewees had to share throughout more than 20 hours of combined personal interviewing.

The main themes and sub-themes can be summarised as depicted in Figure 4.1 (next page).

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♥ From the researcher’s diary.

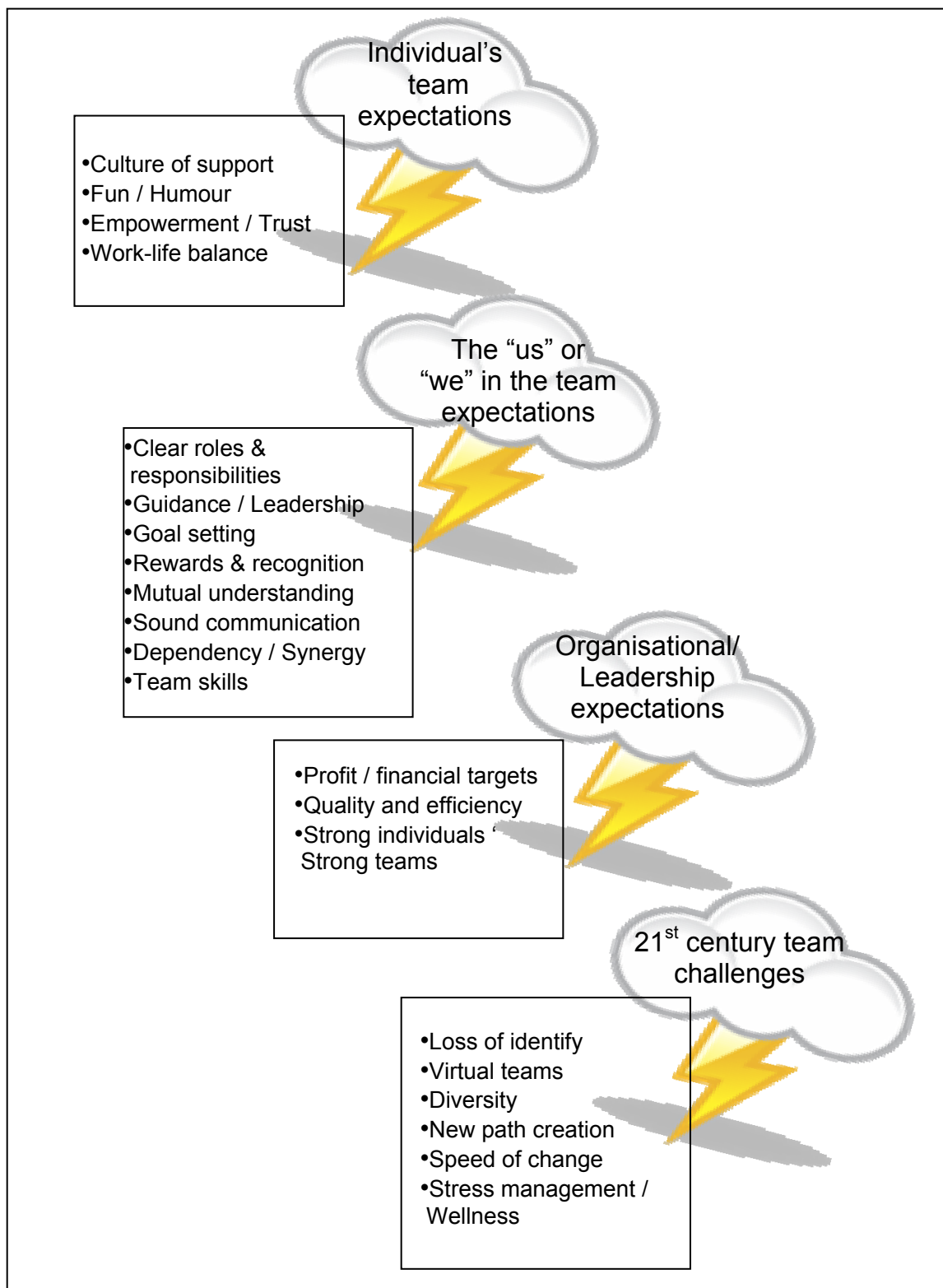


Figure 4.1: Summary of emerging themes and sub-themes



### 4.3 THEME 1: INDIVIDUAL LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

The first main theme elicited from the interview transcriptions is the various needs and expectations individuals foster regarding teams and teamwork in an organisation. In each team, there is an “I” or a “me”, and these individuals expressed certain expectations regarding 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations as their workplaces.

♥ I once again realised that the researcher remains the most important analysis tool in the integrated qualitative research process. I had to follow the principles developed by Tesch (1990: 95-97) when analysing and interpreting the collected data:

- Analysis is not the last phase of the research process; it is concurrent with data collection or cyclic. Analysis and data collection inform each other.
- The analysis process is systematic but not rigid. The analysis ends when new data no longer generate new insights.
- Attending to data includes a reflective activity that results in a set of analytical notes that guide the process.
- Data are “segmented”, i.e. divided into relevant meaning “units”, yet the connection to the whole is maintained. The analysis always begins with reading all data to provide context for smaller pieces.
- The data segments are categorised according to an organisational system that is predominantly derived from the data themselves. The main intellectual tool is comparison. The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories and to discover patterns.
- Categories for sorting segments are tentative and preliminary in the beginning; they remain flexible. Manipulating qualitative data during analysis is an eclectic activity; there is no one right way. The procedures are neither “scientific” nor “mechanistic”; qualitative analysis is “intellectual craftsmanship.”
- The result of analysis is some type of higher-level synthesis.

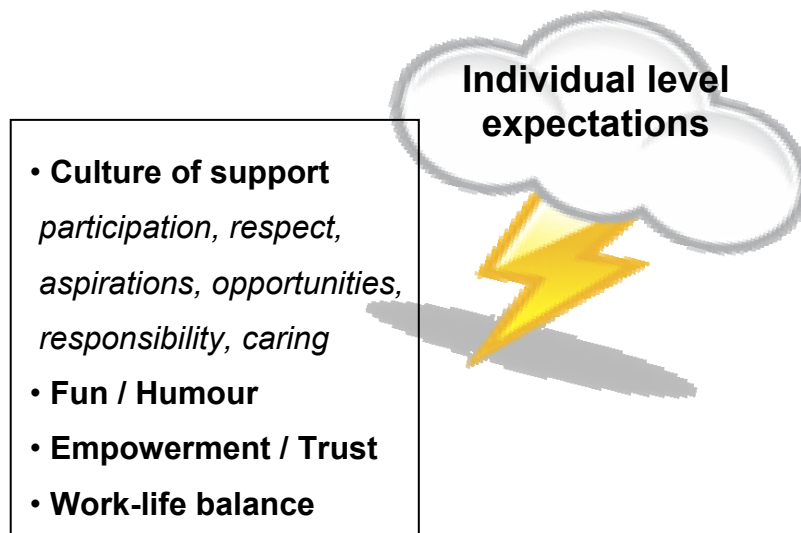
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♥ From the researcher’s diary.

Numerous research projects have been conducted about the individual and his or her experiences in organisations. Greenberg and Baron (1993), Kreitner and Kinicki (2001), Newstrom and Davis (2002), Cummings and Worley (2005), and many more have looked at the individual from an organisational perspective.

The purpose of the interpretation of the themes, however, was not to conduct more literature studies on the theme itself, but rather to understand the expectations of individuals regarding teamwork in a contemporary organisation at a deeper level. It was therefore not my intention to generalise but to focus on the participants' perspectives and thicker descriptions. In many cases, I did telephonic follow-up interviews to clarify my interpretation of the data. As already mentioned, such telephonic responses are indicated by a ♪.

Individual expectations are summarised in Figure 4.2 and further discussed in the chapter.



**Figure 4.2: Individual expectations**

### 4.3.1 A need for a supporting culture

The need to be involved, to “belong” and to experience support from others is a growing need amongst employees in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. One interviewee said: *“In order to perform I need to feel safe and experience that I belong.”* Throughout the interviews, many participants mentioned this need as an individual need in terms of teamwork.

The North-West University is doing groundbreaking South African research regarding people, policy and performance in the workplace. The Workwell Research Unit (Auditor General, 2007a) has identified a range of factors that affect the level of organisational support experienced by individuals (see Table 4.2, below).

**Table 4.2: Factors that indicate organisational support**

<b>Factors that indicate organisational support</b>	<b>Short definition</b>
<b><i>Supervisory relations</i></b>	The perceived relationship between the individual and the supervisor.
<b><i>Role clarity</i></b>	Clarity in terms of the job that needs to be executed: job profiles, specifications, competency profiles and performance agreements.
<b><i>Information received</i></b>	Information pertaining to the purpose of the work, as well as the results achieved: performance management and feedback regarding performance and work outcomes.
<b><i>Communication</i></b>	Clarity pertaining to the decision-making process in the organisation, the reporting structure, etc.
<b><i>Participation in decision-making</i></b>	The level of direct influence an employee has in the making of decisions in the workplace.
<b><i>Growth opportunities in the job</i></b>	The experiences of the individual relating to the intrinsic nature of the job.
<b><i>Variety</i></b>	The array or assortment of tasks that need to be performed, as well as the level of innovation necessary to perform these tasks.
<b><i>Opportunity to learn</i></b>	The level of challenges associated with the job, for example, personal and professional growth.
<b><i>Independence / Autonomy</i></b>	The level of respect for an employee’s expertise and the room for independent thought and action.





<b>Social support in the job</b>	Support from colleagues and contact possibilities with co-workers during work hours.
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Source: Source: Adapted from Auditor General (2007:3)

Jones (1992:17) argues that “the more people participate in dialogue and the decision making process, the more they are motivated to work and learn”. The new paradigm in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations is to encourage participation rather than to give orders. Interestingly, the interviewees in this study expressed precisely this need – to be part of the organisation and the team, to be given responsibility and to be trusted to carry out their responsibilities, and to be accepted and respected as individuals.

In the interviews, the participants in this study expressed very specific ideas on what they expected as individuals in the broader context of teamwork.

#### 4.3.1.1 A need to participate

##### On the need to participate

###### Interviewee 2:

*“I am more like just the manager and I don’t ... I can’t really participate in what the team is doing.”*

Interviewer: “Why not?”

*“It is just because of the way the organisation is structured. It is the way the Auditor General have quite clear cut bands.”*

###### Focus Interview 3:

*“I think for a team to work in my current environment, I can’t say it will work for the whole office, but you need to see where the managers are also part of the team and they are not only the people giving instructions.”*

The comments above illustrate the fact that managers often feel detached from the team since managers are expected to “drive” the team and oversee the performance of tasks. Moreover, employees are aware of this detachment and some need a more cohesive team.

When asked to explain participation, these interviewees (one was at the managerial level) commented that, although they believe in teamwork, “managers” are often not part of team interventions since they are “busy with meetings”, etc. Managers are often also called out of team meetings. This sends a message that not all the team members are equally empowered to participate in teamwork.

#### **4.3.1.2 A need to be respected**

Respect is an integral part of the core values of both the companies participating in this study. It is broadly defined as an appreciation of individual differences and a strong consideration for others. Czerniawska (2007:18) suggests that “the recognition that no one is perfect but [that everyone] has something distinctive to add creates mutual respect”.

##### **On respect**

###### **Interviewee 8:**

*“... and also respect the others and know how to communicate and how to respect other people....there are some really brilliant people out there who might not be sharing the same background as myself so how to work with them and respect them is quite important.”*

###### **Focus Interview 3:**

*Interviewee 1: “I think the main ingredient for a team is their respectability. You need to be respectful to people.”*

*Interviewee 2: “Absolutely. That time when you see ... [someone] crying you just come in and say ‘what is wrong, my dear. Can I offer you a hand?’ Tomorrow she will go that extra mile.”*

###### **Interviewee 2:**

*“I think that if you manage or are a team leader and you are with your team, that team will work better and will have more respect for you. You will get to know your team on a more personal level and if challenges or obstacles come up you can immediately deal with them, it won’t be this go back and forth, find solutions etc.*



*... If I have a problem with somebody, I might have the freedom, even though I am the manager, I have the freedom to know that my teams should respect me – we should respect each other in our teams ...if I can be honest with my team member [then] vice versa, they can be honest with me.”*

Although respect is a central individual expectation, several interviewees mentioned that respect is not a generic principle that is interpreted in the same way by everyone. They suggested communication and “value” sessions during which respect and what it stands for is defined, discussed and interpreted by the team. Only then will individuals know what “respectful” behaviour implies in their team and in their organisation.

#### **More on respect**

##### **Interviewee 2:**

*“I think from there then you would have to offer, you have to have at least some guidelines about how ... like almost ... team rules ... for respecting each other. Within that team, you would have to ask: respecting each other means what in this team? Maybe in your team it means not chewing chewing gum, but in another team, they don't have a problem with that. Maybe in my team it means don't answer the cell phone unless it is a tea break or a lunch break or whatever it is that you and that team can show for each other to respect each other.”*

##### **Focus Interview 2:**

*“We need to say ‘guys, what are your ground rules? How do you do things around here? What are your rituals? How do we show respect?’*

#### **4.3.1.3 An expectation to reach one's aspirations and be given opportunities**

A culture of support also means that the individual has the freedom to grow and accomplish his or her ambition and fulfil his or her aspirations. Interviewees expressed the expectations that the organisation will become a partner in their growth, that they will be exposed to a great job variety and that they will be offered many opportunities to grow.



### **On aspirations**

#### **Interviewee 1:**

*“...I want my manager to know what my aspirations are. But I think if you work for somebody that knows what my passions are, what my motivators are, who I am, that person can manage me better.*

*... What are their aspirations? Because a lot of people, I mean, especially in our career, where you are now is the stepping stone to where you want to be. The CAs are usually very ambitious people and everybody whose studying to be a CA is often... usually ... a very ambitious person, so where they are now is not where they want to be when they retire.”*

### **On opportunities**

#### **Interviewee 3:**

*“But I also think that they [leaders] need to give us the opportunity to get answers for ourselves as well, with guidance from them as well, not just make all the decisions themselves. I think everyone needs to be involved, not just management.”*

#### **Interviewee 8:**

*“.. What is very good is they are being helped and they are being given the opportunity to grow in that role ... although I would like more opportunities since we are a learning organisation.”*

Individuals at all organisational levels expressed the need for opportunities to learn and grow. Some argued that, although giving many opportunities to employees is part of the expressed organisational culture, this rarely happens in practice. Trust levels are in many cases too low and the lack of a training budget is often used as an excuse not to empower employees further.



#### 4.3.1.4 *The need to be held accountable / responsible*

##### **On responsibility**

##### **Interviewee 5:**

*“... we have spectacular leaders if they believe that they are allowed to do it and you can convince them to take up that challenge even if they are unsure....”*

##### **Interviewee 2:**

*“I think the office is [unclear] I think the office is actually at my level individual-driven, individual because you as an individual are responsible. You are the one who has to explain or you are the one who takes the responsibility for what is going on with your team. The team doesn't ever take that responsibility as a team and as well as that, when it goes well, you as an individual are not rewarded and ...”*

“It is well established that people who participate in making a decision and are given responsibilities tend to be more committed to the outcomes of the decision than are those who are not involved” (Greenberg & Baron, 1993:641).The interview feedback confirmed this statement and that individuals truly want to be responsible for assignments.

Employees in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations also expect to be involved and made to feel involved in setting goals and verbalising those goals.

Cummings and Worley (2005:307) refer to employee involvement as “seeking to increase member’s input into decisions that affect organization performance and employee well-being”. They add that employees can only be involved if they are given enough power, information; if they have the relevant knowledge and skills, and if they are given appropriate rewards.



### **On accountability**

#### **Focus Interview 2:**

*“...I think the crucial answer here is accountability. There needs to be in every team, whether it is a small team or a big team, there needs to be individual accountability.”*

#### **Focus Interview 3:**

*“...there has to be a clear understanding of accountability because if we allow the situation and funds mentioned where some people say how do you do it because someone else is doing it or I refuse to do it, then we are not going to move forward at all.”*

High-performing teams encourage high-performance standards, and in these teams, members hold each other accountable for performance (Dyer, Dyer & Dyer, 2007). Each team member thus takes responsibility for fulfilling his or her function in the team, not only the team leader. Throughout my interviews I found a very interesting pattern: managers seem to think that employees do not want to be held accountable, whereas employees felt that managers did not want to hold them accountable and perhaps did not trust them enough in this regard.

#### **4.3.1.6 An expectation to be “cared for”**

When I asked one of the interviewees what she meant when she verbalised her need to be “cared for”, her answer was the following: *“Ek wil weet ander gee om en maak bemoeienis met my as persoon. Dis nie net my behoefte nie – ek glo dis ‘n spanbehoefte” [I want to know others care and am concerned with me as a person. It is not merely a personal need – I believe it is a team need]* This is very difficult to translate, but the broad meaning is that individuals have a need to know that others are concerned about and interested in them. This interviewee was clear that she can only function in a team if she knows that others in the group are sincere and truthful.



### On “being cared for”

#### Interviewee 13:

*“... when somebody is working on a project, for example, everybody will chip in to try and help even though it is not in their job description that they have to help, so within the team people sort of care about each other. If people are just working in their little silos and say I am the CEO and I am not going to help you or they give you the sort of minimum information... [then you cannot be successful]”*

#### Interviewee 2:

*“You are no longer a person, you no longer have a personality, you are just a number and you must get the job done and you have those feelings that my manager doesn’t care about me, doesn’t care about what happened, even if I do my work well.”*

#### Interviewee 10:

*“You know when you are on your own and you struggle with something for example, then you are on your own, but... it would be nice then to take a break and drink coffee with someone or just chat.”*

Interviewees, both employees and managers, stated that they had a major individual need to feel that the people around them cared. They stressed, however, that the need to be cared for is not merely an individual need, it becomes a critical success factor for teams. Their biggest concern was that employees in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations no longer had time or energy for each other or the teams they worked in. In both organisations, a culture of “we do not greet each other or ask how you are” is starting to develop.



### More about caring

#### Interviewee 2:

*“[in an ideal scenario]...there would be that respect for each other, that support for each other, there would be that ... my team member’s down or my team member didn’t get the work finished but don’t worry we as a team are going to sit here and we are going to work together but in the Auditor General it is not like that ..it is about individuals.”*

*“I don’t worry [care] about my team member. As long as my work is done, as long as I am not in trouble, it is fine.”*

During telephonic follow-up conversations, I asked for examples by means of which companies could demonstrate this “care” to its employees and their work teams. I received the following responses:

♪ “Be **more family friendly** and organise functions for employees and their families. I am not only a number put part of a family – I do have a husband and children. Arrange more functions where teams are introduced to each other’s families”

♪ “Support to those teams who **travel** often – just a telephone call or mail to show you care, or a CD to play in the car while driving. My colleagues think it is fun to stay in hotels and live out of suitcases – I assure you it is not. I often get angry that the office does not appreciate what I sacrifice from my side.”

♪ “Many employees are studying. Send them a flower, organise a **study** support group etc. What I find is that we say we are a learning organisation, but when we take study leave we are made to feel guilty that we “drop” the team. Rather support us to pass than blame us for not being there.” I also suggest that all of us studying should be allowed to learn / grow in our teams.”



### 4.3.2 Fun, humour and energy in the workplace

Andy Taylor, the CEO of Enterprise, makes the following comment: “I do believe that people do their work better if they enjoy it and are having fun. If they are having fun they will go home happier and they are going to wake up in the morning and say, ‘I like going to work’” (quoted in Kazanjian 2007:204)

Employees need to enjoy themselves, be spontaneous and have fun in the workplace. This view is supported by Stephen Lundin (2002) in his best selling work *Fish*. However, Kazanjian (2007:204) points out that Enterprise, America’s #1 car rental company, sets out to employ only enthusiastic people who work and compete hard. Having fun at work is crucial, but “one needs to keep fun and forged friendships in check by never forgetting that business comes first”.

**Interviewee 1:**

*“We need more joy and enjoyment, you know!”*

Interviewees expressed a concern that work is becoming too serious and that contemporary organisations are losing their sense of humour. Since everything is deadline driven, there is no time for enjoyment; and, since stress levels are very high, nobody is really in the mood or has time to have fun anymore. Although the participants acknowledged the importance of fun in the workplace, they typically blamed factors like time constraints, stress and tough targets for what one interviewee called “a stern and unfriendly workplace”.

**On fun**

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“ I think fun makes it better, especially the role in getting everyone to focus on the same goal.”*

**Interviewee 10:**



*“I think it is a rule – they call it rules – to have fun. They are trying to bring back some fun in the work environment. Because it is so stressed, you need to laugh a bit and joke a bit and do some stuff together that is not work related.”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“I mean, in the wonderful world out there you would like to see teams more interacting with one another, having more fun.”*

**Interviewee 8:**

*“We spend a lot of time at work and if you spend it with people that you can relate to a bit and have a bit of a laugh about this or that, ... you will better be able to work towards a common goal.”*

**Interviewee 9:**

*“We are a great team – we share jokes. Most of the time if everyone... if someone gets a joke we share it and we end up discussing the joke. We laugh a lot, ja [yes].”*

### **4.3.3 Empowerment and trust**

Interviewees expressed the view that empowerment in teams is crucial for team effectiveness. Liden and Arad (1996) argue that, over the past two decades, two complementary perspectives on empowerment in the workplace have emerged. The first is more macro and focuses on contextual conditions that enable workplace empowerment. The second is more micro and the focus is on the psychological experience of empowerment at work. The essence of the contextual or social-structural perspective is the idea of sharing power between superiors and subordinates in order to cascade decision-making power to lower levels in the organisation. Psychological empowerment refers and focuses on how employees experience their work.

“Empower” means power-sharing, the delegation of power or authority to subordinates in the organisation” (Daft, 1999:251). Harrington-Mackin (1996)



suggests that to empower employees implies that there is a willing and open transfer of resources and power from one level of an organisation to another.

Empowering literally means, “giving power”. It is a process of enabling others. It means driving down decision-making, sharing information, giving people control of their work, and thereby generating commitment. It shows that the leaders believe in and trust team members.

Charlton (1992:33) argues that empowerment is a process that is implemented to develop individuals who are able, competent, or motivated, and this process allows individuals as well as teams to use their optimum potential at work. Kirkpatrick (2001:20) urges managers to ensure a “free and open flow of up-and-down communication and information”. He sees empowerment as the organisation’s ability to ensure that teams are “well trained, highly motivated and have the tools to do their work”.

#### **On trust**

##### **Interviewee 7:**

*“... a team should have certain values and we must respect that. Teamwork should be part of it, integrity should be part of it, loyalty should be part of it and those things should be there and we should trust each other. When those things are together then I think we should ... we will talk the same language and we will walk the same direction.”*

##### **Interviewee 8:**

*“With relationships comes trust so you must trust your partner or your colleagues to be able to reach a common goal. So I think a relationship is important and for me personally [it is] quite important to be able to trust and work with each other so that when one person says one thing it is not too sensitive, the other person can relate to that.”*

##### **Interviewee 5:**

*“... we get to know people in a much broader context, understand what they are about. It is partly a function of time and it is partly a function of trust and again I think the research set up is quite unique in the sense that ... probably*



*one of the key driving factors for any research type person is the fact that you need to respect the people that work with you.”*

Interviewees felt that empowerment was not possible if the parties concerned did not trust each other and demonstrated that trust in their behaviour. This is consistent with research done by Ergeneli *et al.* (2007), who found that trust has an important relationship to experienced empowerment. Especially trust in a leader was found to be particularly potent for empowerment. Moye *et al.* (2004) also found that teachers with a higher interpersonal trust with their principals reported that they found their work more meaningful and had significant self-determination and impact. It is clear from research findings that a trusting relationship with one's boss and with team members is important for individuals to experience empowerment at work. "Relationships matter for empowerment" (Spreitzer, 2007:16).

The impact of a lack of trust seems to be that managers or individuals end up doing the work and carrying the responsibilities of unwilling individuals in the team. In the end, as one interviewee rightly pointed out, "it often ends in aggression, conflict, an ulcer or all three".

#### **On empowerment**

##### **Interviewee 2:**

*"The culture is if somebody is not pulling their weight, you know they are not pulling their weight and you end up giving them easy sections to do because you don't trust that person, you don't trust that they are going to contribute towards the team so you give them whatever the lowest risk of that team and the rest of the team carries on working."*

#### **4.3.4 Work-life balance**

Both companies researched have a so-called "wellness" service provider to assist individuals with any stress- or health-related issues. The mere existence of these programmes suggests that there is a need for them. According to the *Workwell Research Unit* of the North West University



(Auditor General, 2007a), South African companies are investing more and more in the health and wellness of their employees. The members of the research unit identify exhaustion, a lack of vitality, mental distance, poor psychological well-being and deteriorating physical health levels as some of the greatest challenges in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations.

In a recent pilot study (Auditor General, 2007) in one of the companies researched, a survey amongst 71 respondents revealed the following:

- 54 employees reported serious eye strain;
- 41 complained about backaches;
- 45 suffered from stress;
- 23 reported sleeping disorders;
- 34 said they felt exhausted most of the day;
- 10 reported that they believed their work interfered with their personal lives;
- only 21 exercised on a regular basis; and
- 34 respondents had not taken leave during the past two years.

The effect on organisational effectiveness is enormous. “Unwell” employees or unwell teams do not have the energy to participate; they experience job overload; and – although they are physically present – they have “checked-out” at an emotional and spiritual level. According to Rothman (2007:48), “research has found that disengagement results in higher turnover, reduced discretionary effort, reduced productivity, reduced service delivery and reduced organisational commitment”.

#### **On work-life balance**

##### **Interviewee 10:**

*“It is important ... to relax because work is so stressful and you really sometimes just need to do something else and not think about work and not talk about work – people don't know how to. People do not know how to alleviate stress so they take it out on other people. As work teams we need to relax more”.*





**Focus Interview 1:**

*“The other main thing I think is the family versus work. I think your family thing is more and more important.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“[people]... are always under stress, there is always that stress factor, that pressure coming in and ... with stress and with that pressure you always seem to bring out the worst in people and everybody perceives that is how that person is ...”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“It is a very, very stressful, financial view that you have and you either do that or you don't make it. It takes me a while to let go when I get home. I am not dad for three hours after having come home.”*

In conclusion, it can be stated that both individuals and teams in a 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation expect a more personal approach from their managers. “Where once, people accepted being ‘led’, as one of a large body of people, all being treated the same, all directed in the same way, a model based on the military, now they expect to be treated as an individual” (Cooper, 2005:350).

The implication is that organisational leadership needs to show an interest in the lifestyle and the external issues in an employee's life, as well as in job and career needs. Cooper (2005:350) argues that this is going to be a great challenge in organisations where the “old expectation that people should not bring their problems to work” is disappearing.

There is no longer a “one size fits all” solution to problems in contemporary organisations. As clearly proven by the interview findings, individuals expect organisations to provide a culture of support, to allow fun and humour, to empower them and trust them and to facilitate and support a work-life balance culture in the organisation.



#### 4.4 THEME 2: TEAM LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

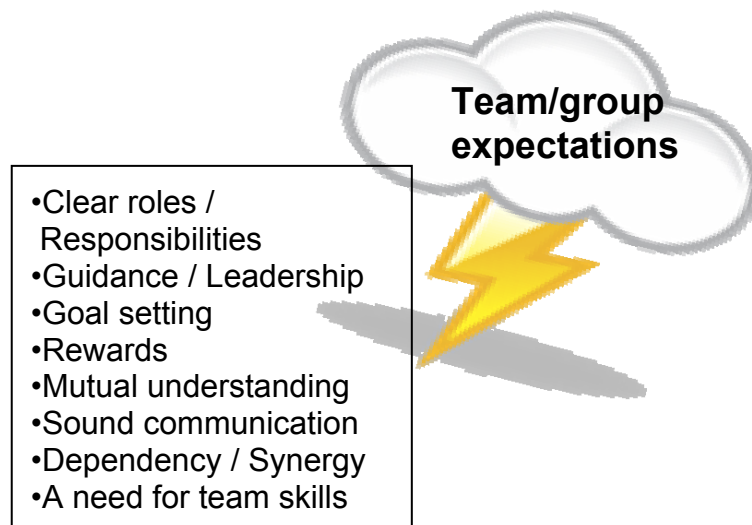
Kriek and Viljoen (2003:7) contend, “the most distinguishing feature of a team is that its members all share, as highest priority, their desire to accomplish a common goal or goals. They describe the following as the five commonly recognised characteristics of teams:

- “team exist to achieve a shared goal
- teams are bounded and stable over time
- team members have the authority to manage their own work and internal process
- team members are interdependent regarding some common goal
- teams operate in a social system context”.

“Teams are the essential building block of the organization of the future” (Bryrne in Katzenbach & Smith, 2001). This organisation of the future is now the organisation of today, and teams are playing a critical role in contemporary organisations. Katzenbach and Smith (2001:x) argue that, “despite the rapid spread of teaming in organisations..., too many people still think of [a] *team* as a name for an organizational unit or a set of companionable feelings”.

Group theory became prominent in the 1930s and 1940s and was based on the idea that people act and react differently in groups than they do as individuals. Many researchers have since communicated various views as to how and why teams succeed and fail, and the debate continues. The tactic followed in this study was to approach team members, spend some quality time with them, and obtain their assistance in understanding the expectations of teams in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations.

Each time a “new” interview was conducted, it became more apparent that team members had specific expectations in terms of teamwork and that they placed a high premium on the overall effectiveness of the team, as opposed to individual behaviour. Team or group expectations are set out in Figure 4.3 and further discussed below.



**Figure 4.3: Team/group expectations**

#### **4.4.1 Clear roles and responsibilities**

Interviewees expressed definite needs in terms of defined roles and responsibilities. This finding is in line with the findings reported in the literature, as exemplified by the following remark: “High-performing teams have a clearly defined purpose with specified outcomes, and they begin to care deeply about individual team members so that if one fails, all fail” (Staroba, 1996:65). Kriek and Viljoen (2003:21) add that teams have formal and informal roles, and that these roles are “prerequisites for any team to function”. They argue that clear roles direct the team’s effort, channel the creative effort of the team and set the team climate.

Robbins *et al.* (2004) point out that effective teams are characterised by members that are committed to a common purpose and share specific team goals. He adds that, in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations, employees should be part of the process of defining roles, to ensure ownership and eventual commitment to organisational goals.





Throughout the interviews, it seemed as if teams are often unsure of the extent to which each member understands his or her role as well as the degrees of authority and freedom that accompanies those roles. Moxon (1993:23) observes that team members often utter remarks like “I thought you were doing that” or “that is my job!” simply because roles and responsibilities were not explained and clarified in a formal way. Teams should also be empowered by being clear on what the assessment criteria is by which they will be judged in terms of whether they reach their objectives or fail (Belbin, 1996:39).

### **On role clarity**

#### **Interviewee 7:**

*“It is important that each and everyone within a team must understand his roles and responsibilities and that is vital and this is how I prefer teams to operate. We have ... we are working together as a team with certain rules that you have to abide by ....”*

#### **Interviewee 13:**

*“It is important for teams to have roles and responsibilities, yes, but it can also change, you know, depending on the situation, but it is good to have specific roles for each situation.”*

#### **Interviewee 8:**

*“... we have got special challenges in that regard, but in general I think we are now bonding as a team and getting together; and there are certain roles and responsibilities that each of us fulfils to enable the others to do their work better. ... For this project our roles and responsibilities for this specific project might not be the same as for another project so our business manager takes this project and says ... and he says: ‘All right, this is the project, this is our goal, there are two or three people available to you for this specific project’, and then we put out the roles and responsibilities for them. If we want to succeed we have to....”*

“The most powerful force for effective teaming arises from a common performance purpose, common team goals and a commonly agreed upon work approach” (Katzenbach & Smith, 2001:111). Team members must know what drives the team, what inspires them and what their vision is. They must also know what tasks need to be performed for the team to reach its goal. Team members must feel that they participate in setting the goals, as well as in measuring how well these goals are reached, and in the process will be more committed to those goals.

#### **4.4.2 Guidance and leadership**

During the 1930s and 1940s, leadership became prominent and was explored on the basis that leaders do not lead individuals but actually lead groups. Researchers discovered that people act differently in groups than they do as individuals. Ever since that movement, organisations and researchers have been trying to understand leadership – they have defined the characteristics, tried to identify behaviours and traits, observed so-called great leaders, embarked on various research projects, etc.

Smith (2007:16) argues that today, in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations, we rely on group theory and theories on team dynamics whenever we talk about how to lead teams, one of the “buzzier buzz phrases” of the past ten years. The role of the leader in the team seems to be prominent, and all the interviewees in the current study mentioned that they had definite expectations of a team leader.

Mintzberg (1973), often described as an expert in the field of power and politics in organisations, argues that the organisation and the teams within that organisation look to its formal head for guidance and motivation. In his or her leadership role, the manager defines the atmosphere in which the team will work. Leadership thus involves interpersonal relationships between the leader and the led; and the leader determines the atmosphere in a team. During the interviews, it became clear that the atmosphere in the team is most certainly determined by the team leader in that team.



### **On team leadership**

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“Your team awareness depends on the leader of that team and if the manager of that team says we do it as a team, that determines the whole culture of that little team because there is no overall culture.”*

#### **Focus Interview 3:**

*“The strong teams have their leaders that recognise the importance of people and team development, so it depends on the leadership or on the management in that team. But there is no culture to say when you are in a team in the Auditor General, this is what we do.”*

#### **Interviewee 1:**

*“It depends on who is the group leader in a business unit. Some business units tend to focus on people, other business units tend to focus on our technical [aspects]. So overall I don't think we can say the Auditor General only focuses on technical, it depends on what business unit you are in.”*

During telephonic follow-up interviews, I specifically asked interviewees for suggestions and examples as to how leadership in teams could be enhanced. The replies were impressive – not because of their high strategic and original value – but because of the simplicity and practical application of the recommendations.

♪ “Leaders need to be more visible. They need to see their teams more often and need to visit clients more. Our leaders are mostly in meetings and in their offices and never speak to us – the employees.”

♪ “Positive leadership behaviour needs to be acknowledged. There must be a forum where we share leadership successes. We must



also know about the “bad” leadership behaviours and learn from that. As long as be look at the behaviour and not the person.”

♪ “Our culture must become more ‘friendly’. We do not smile enough. It seems to me the higher your rank, the sterner you are. In some business units managers do not even greet their team members.”

♪ “We should empower our teams and also reward their good performance. We should not reward “bad” behaviour by doing nothing. We must have a process in place to keep people on track and take corrective action if necessary. Our leaders must drive this and insist that good teams be rewarded.”

♪ “We should have a reward / recognition programme for truly great leaders, for example, “person / leader of the year”. This should not be done on a structural basis – any leader on ANY level should be acknowledged.”

♪ “We should create a leadership culture by going back to basics: have regular ‘tea sessions’, have a regular ‘leadership article published’, etc. We need to see that our leaders are people and part of the team.

Good leaders have the ability to motivate and truly lead diverse teams. Silzer (2002:31) argues that good business leaders recognise the power of caring about employees as people. He adds the following seven attributes or traits of 21<sup>st</sup> century business leaders:

- business acumen – good leaders must recognise that business is a science as well as an art and data is balanced with common sense;
- customer orientation – good leaders must be focused on service, quality and satisfaction;
- results orientation – good leaders do not confuse effort with results;
- strategic thinking – good leaders anticipate future trends and directional shifts in the marketplace;



- innovation and risk-taking – good leaders are willing to explore new possibilities and approach issues differently;
- integrity – good leaders have an uncompromising and uncomplicated understanding of right and wrong, and have the courage and conviction for personal beliefs; and
- interpersonal maturity – good leaders are not focused on the self, but are rather other-oriented instead, and they follow a collaborative approach.

Other interesting remarks about leadership and the role it plays in team development are reflected in the interviewees' comments below.

#### **On leadership style**

##### **Interviewee 7:**

*"...there are different leadership styles and it definitely has an impact on certain people, there's a case of one or two people that's been in our area for a while and when they were in a different team they just did not ... when they were in another team and had another name they were just not happy and [they were] unproductive and the perception that everybody had was that this person was a poor performer, but suddenly now in our team this person is doing brilliant work and so [on] and so [on]. Leadership definitely has an impact on individuals that just can't work with certain people".*

#### **On empowered leaders**

##### **Interviewee 5:**

Interviewer: "Are your leaders empowered?"

Interviewee: *"No, but we have spectacular leaders if they believe that they are allowed to do it and you can convince them to take up that challenge."*

#### **On determining the team atmosphere**

##### **Interviewee 10:**



*“He [the leader] must help in terms of technical stuff, Ja [Yes] and friendly and he has to try and bring the people together and create a nice environment. I think the leader must set standards so ... and we must look up to him. He shouldn't be like one of the moody guys or whatever, so we can look up to him.”*

### **On challenges faced by leaders**

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“... none of them would want my job quite honestly because it is full of ... there is a whole lot of crap that comes with it.”*

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

Interviewer: “What do teams expect from their managers”?

Interviewee: *“Well as ....I said, just to get the shit (sic), the stuff that comes from the top, just kick that away. Give them direction.”*

### **On leadership skills**

#### **Interviewee 1:**

Interviewer: “What do you regard as the most important factor in team work?”

Interviewee: *“ to be a leader, it would definitely to be a leader because at this stage we have problems with the leader and also our leaders supposedly don't always have the skills or the backgrounds or the knowledge, sorry to say, technical and people skills.”*

### **On mentorship**

#### **Focus Interview 1**

*“If I'm looking at... going back to my guys, they look at me as a mentor whether I am or not I don't know. I believe I require that and I don't get that. ... I believe in executive coaching and stuff like that ... and I am saying that I don't have it with my current leadership ... the biggest, biggest, biggest lack in leadership development is that we don't see our current leaders as mentors ....”*

Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) argue that leaders have the capacity to make things better in teams, but often they make things much worse. They summarise the importance of leadership in teams when they share their short checklist to help leaders be as effective as possible. They assert that good leaders should:

- act as if they are in control, project confidence and talk about the future, even while recognising organisational limitations as well as their own limitations
- avoid to fall in the trap of losing their behavioural inhibitions and behaving in destructive ways. They need to maintain an attitude of wisdom and a healthy dose of modesty.
- learn when and how to get out of the way and let others make contributions. Sometimes the best leadership is no leadership at all.
- architect organisational systems, teams and cultures, and establish the conditions and preconditions for others to succeed.

#### **4.4.3 Goal-setting**

Goal setting is a very important indicator of effectiveness in teams (Kinlaw, 1991). Teams need to know why they exist and where they are going. Huszcsó (1996) argues that clear goals in teams define the team purpose, as well as the team direction.

Clear goals have a strong motivational component. If individuals are to be motivated, they need to have goals – “something to strive for, something they can achieve” (White, 1995:201).



## On motivation

### Interviewee 5:

*“We are very close, we do understand the dependency, we all work toward the same goals. If you look at 80% of our day, we tend to be on our own and work independently. So it is a very defined team but at the same time it is quite a strong team.”*

### Focus Interview 1:

*“... it (the goal) is purely financial and we know what that goal is, we know what that number is and that, particularly in my team, that is what we work towards.”*

Interviewer: Financial goals?

*Interviewee: “Financial goals. Because that is what is being demanded from us right now.”*

### Focus Interview 2:

*“You have to have goals ...and we need clear communication for those goals because if you know what your goals and responsibilities are... if you clearly communicate on expectations... then we can hold people accountable throughout the firm.”*

### Interviewee 3:

*“You must have goals, you must have targets, not just goals, not just I want to get there, you must know specific goals and specific targets and know that if you are exceeding it.”*

### Interviewee 11:

Interviewer: What would you do if you were the team leader?

*Interviewee: “I will make sure that they understand, we are not going for the individuals and that people are expected to work in teams and then set their team goals and make sure that everyone understands*





*this and they have to make sure that they work towards these with other teams. Measure, measure, measure!”*

**Interviewee 12:**

*“As business unit manager at present in my own sense, that is where I come into play. I will tell the developers to kindly code in the same direction, not to butt heads over some innocuous concept. So in a way I get to run the team as a dictator. So let's develop the individual so that they can contribute to the organisation. If you are a colonel and an infantry all you want is lots of guys who run in the same direction and hopefully they shoot in the same direction.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“ I mean at the end of the day the product, there are certain things that it has to meet, there are certain requirements, that you can't be inconsistent about, but how you get there, you can be inconsistent. As long as people understand the goal, it is communicated even to your team and to other teams and people understand it. Everybody works differently.”*

**Interviewee 11:**

*“Everyone must know what is expected of them as a team; I will expect of them to measure themselves on a frequent basis, and that is basically, it now sounds strange, measuring, measuring, measuring, but if they understand what they should work towards, like I said in the beginning, it is a lot of people that work towards one goal, if they understand that and they come together on a frequent basis to see how far they are to getting to that goal, it will facilitate team work within the organisation. So I will, like I say, just maybe summarise, I will make sure that they understand, we are not going for the individuals and that people are expected to work in teams and then set their team goals and make sure that everyone understands this and they have to make sure that they work towards these other teams.”*

#### 4.4.4 Rewards and recognition

Team excellence should be celebrated regularly. Blacklock and Jacks (2007:150) observe that, in contemporary organisations, “remarkably, people can be slow to recognize achievement or give positive feedback, even to those with whom they are close. Pride in being part of a winning team should be encouraged and demonstrates as a valued principle”.

The interviewees regarded rewards and recognition as important factors in team effectiveness. The problem seems that performance is mainly measured on an individual level, which cultivates an atmosphere of individual performance rather than team performance. “We know we have done a good job but we still get an enormous sense of pride when that is recognised” (Jackson, 2000:72). Jackson argues that employees need recognition to provide them with a sense of status and to feel like a star. Throughout my interviews, I found that very few managers or teams understood the power of something as simple as a “thank you”.

**Interviewee 5**

*Measuring mostly individual performance is a severe barrier in team development.*

The **VOICE** model is a practice that was developed after examining 50 high-performance business enterprises (Rucci, Ulrich & Gavina, 2000 in Silzer, 2002). These practices have been shown to affect employee attitudes that are directly predictive of improved satisfaction levels and shareholder return. The aspect of interest in this case is the fact that team members need to be rewarded for results and should be allowed to share in team success.

<b>V</b>	<b>Vision</b>	Have a purpose and create a clear line of sight
<b>O</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>	Evaluate and develop people obsessively
<b>I</b>	<b>Incentive</b>	Reward results and let employees share in success
<b>C</b>	<b>Communication</b>	Share information widely and listen
<b>E</b>	<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	Promote innovation And risk taking

**Figure 4.4: VOICE: Key practices of 21<sup>st</sup> century business leaders**  
(adapted from Rucci *et al.* 2000 in Silzer, 2002)

The dilemma in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations seems to be that team loyalty is seriously dwindling. One of the reasons could be that teams are often asked to work harder and smarter, “typically ... without praise, without rewards commensurate with gains in productivity, or without any real say in how their organisation is structured and managed” (Saul, 1991:27). The interviewees in this study were clear in their statements that money is not what they expect at all times, they rather crave a sincere thank you and other forms of recognition.

The literature refers to recognition as a variety of ways in which the organisation can let employees know that they are doing the right things in the right manner (Beck & Yeager, 1994).

#### **On rewards**

##### **Interviewee 2:**

*“...If something is going well you must reward it, don't just look past those accomplishments that you make. If you have set goals for yourself and you have accomplished those goals before the deadline or whatever, then reward the team members.”*



**Focus Interview 1:**

*“Show me the money.”*

**Interviewee 9:**

Interviewer: “What do they do to support you as a team to get to that result?”

*Interviewee: “Our manger said that if we get our calls below fifty he would buy us all breakfast.”*

Interviewer: “Did you get that breakfast?”

*Interviewee: “Well, we got our calls below fifty but we are still waiting for our breakfast.”*

**Interviewee 10:**

*“... if you give people more money then they will be more focused.”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“I want to be allowed to work from home.”*

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“Give us an award ... you get something like this, a cultural trophy with a little rhino on or so ....”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“We do reward success in our own team, like for instance one can be given the afternoon off or maybe buying cake, the rest of the team will donate money and then we go and buy a cake for the person that has done well or ... it is small things, but I think at the end of the day it is the thought that counts; it is not exactly what you do for them.”*

**Interviewee 6:**

*“...so for me having nice equipment that is working without a problem is a reward, it is not personal because not always do I want personal*



*rewards, but to have nice equipment, to have a nice mouse, maybe if you are really doing well personally, why not buy the person a special mouse, something that is nice and cordless, it is a reward, you are not taking it home but it is for you, you work for eight or nine hours a day, you are using it, it is a pleasure and I think that would be sort of a reward for me.”*

If organisations do reward teams or exceptional behaviour, it should be done fairly and consistently. Gooding (in Cooper, 2005:351) argues that rewards and incentives will play an increasingly important role in 21<sup>st</sup> century management. Whatever the form of the reward, however, managing a reward culture is “more complex”. The contemporary organisation needs to ensure that the incentive system is fair, that it is relevant to the team, and that it is generally motivational. She concludes by observing: “A failed incentive scheme is worse than no scheme at all.”

Interviewees made several remarks that support this view, and they added two areas that should be considered by organisations: rewards should be given immediately after the “good behaviour”; and, if a reward is promised, that reward should be given – irrespective of the circumstances.

#### **More on rewards and recognition**

##### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“...but the funny thing about that is, if you look at the criteria for those rewards, our team were **excluded** from eight of the nine rewards, we couldn't participate in this, it was completely out of our playing field.”*

##### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“Deloitte used to have what they call accolades, it is awards and they don't wait for a year... . Why can't we do that? We had spot rewards. Why aren't we rewarded [right away], because I don't want to be rewarded anyway two years later. I want it **now**.”*

##### **Focus Interview 2:**



*“What has this office done? Guess what, the reports were finalised within the deadline. If you look at the rewards signed last year, if you perform you get an increase. If you don't perform, you also get an increase. I have been ‘more than comply’ for four years, **so what!**”*

*“..and **don't say** you are going to give me something **and then don't** because then I lose it and that is what we do.”*

Hackman (1987), Shea and Guzzo (1987) and Gladstein (1984) all discuss the criticality of a team-based reward system. Lawler further argues that recognition is the managerial acknowledgement of employee team achievement. Katzenbach and Smith (1993:26) add that positive reinforcement “helps to shape new behaviors critical to team performance”. They state that, when teams are recognised for their work, they are more likely to continue the behaviour that was recognised in the first place. Recognition in teams will thus enhance member’s motivation to continue working as a team.

#### **4.4.5 Mutual understanding / knowing each other**

Interviewees expressed a need to know others and to be known by them, not just their own team members but also other employees in other regions. They also indicated the strong correlation between “knowing” each other and this leading to “understanding” each other.

**Interviewee 11:**

*“...Ja [Yes], I don't think the **people know each other** so they don't **understand each other.**”*

The following interview illustrates the high premium that participants in this study place on mutual understanding in teams.



### On mutual understanding

#### Interviewee 6:

Interviewer: "How important is understanding if you had to work in a team?"

Interviewee: *"I think it is very important because if ... we sometimes have very **unrealistic expectations** towards other people if we don't know what they do."*

Interviewer: "Do you think people in the teams understand one another?"

Interviewee: *"I definitely see that they don't really understand each other."*

♪ Interviewer: How do you see that? Could you give me examples?

Interviewee: *"I observe things they do – they, for example, make jokes about things when they know someone is sensitive about that issue, they don't greet when they know that person needs to feel "wanted". In general they just behave according to their own guidelines, not considering the other person – no wonder teams have problems."*

#### Interviewee 8:

Interviewer: "How can we get to mutual understanding?"

Interviewee: *"There are two things. The one is formal and the other is informal. Formally I think you need to go on the session that we have been on just to understand how this person is and that will help you to treat that person accordingly, so I think formally it is important. Secondly informally or socially I think is important just to ... I mean, sometimes you don't even know the guy sitting next to you, his kid is ill and in hospital or something like that, so for me personally that is also quite important to just have that bit of interaction between members of the team as well. We spend a lot of time at work and if you spend it with people that you can relate to a bit and have bit of a laugh about this or that, I think that is important, so there's the two ways and I think both should work."*



**Focus Interview 2:**

*“...especially where there is a crisis, where you have a lot of stress on your team, when something is not ‘lekker’ in that team, then you need something and you say: let’s understand each other. Some intervention to say let us make sure I am an eagle, you are a dove, let’s meet each other.’*

♪ Interviewer: “Have you ever had such interventions / sessions?”

Interviewee: *“Yes, we have, but they don’t mean much since we do not implement it. Belbin taught me a lot about different team roles, but some members did not even look at their report and do not know what their roles are – so sessions can only work if all decide to utilise the tool given. We were also exposed to Meyer and Briggs and brain profiles, but this will not work if we do not use it to understand differences.”*

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“...for me it doesn't matter what kind of form it is, but we just need to create a space for us or create opportunities to understand each other ...and for me the team building is really more about how would you like to change your world. I think it is... it is more of a team understanding. A team dynamics, so that I know why she does certain things in a certain way because she has circumstances or she has a personality that is in line with that, so that I can just follow that.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“We deal with different individuals with different interests, different personalities, different backgrounds, so team building is that process where you come together to learn to understand each other, learn to recognise each other’s weaknesses and strengths because when you do that and on a more of a social level or more a relaxed level, not on now we have got a deadline, now we have to get the work done. On that level it is more ... you will learn to or you understand each other*





*better, you learn more about each other and from that experience you take that team building exercise and you can put it back into the work and your team becomes more efficient.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“We need to get to know each other on a more informal setting other than just we have got to do the work now and I have got to get the deadline, pressure, pressure, pressure all the time. I think then we will learn to understand those people and you have to understand your team members. If you don’t understand them, if you don’t understand what their triggers are, what motivates them, what de-motivates them, how do they work... Some people work well in the morning, other people work well in the evenings, some people if they have got coffee all day with them then they can work, other people they don’t want to drink anything all day so you have got to understand, you have just got to understand your team dynamics.”*

**Interviewee 8:**

*“I do try and tend to have a braai at my place every now and then or make sure that the people know each other and be comfortable with each other, and so on.... If you get to know people not just in their specific area, but we get to know people in a much broader context, you will understand them. I also believe that people that know each other work together more productively”.*

These observations are consistent with research findings. Goodman and Leyden (1991) examined the productivity of various coal-mining crews and found that crews that knew each other better and were more familiar with each other, were more productive. Watson *et al.* (1991) also found that group-decision making became more effective as familiarity increased in teams amongst members. Dubnicki and Limburg (1991) also found that health care teams working together for

a while, and could be classified as “old” teams, tended to be more effective than very new teams.

The following remarks emphasise the importance that interviewees placed on familiarity in teamwork.

**On familiarity**

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“...particularly my team, my consulting guys, we are very close, and that is part of our success. We’re friends as much as we are as it appears at work. We spend a lot of time on weekends together, all our families know each other, we have our own pub three floors down, so to me it is small enough to be that.”*

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“...create space whether it is a team building method that we use or just having a bloody lunch somewhere. Ja [Yes], just coffee together, something. Just to talk. Just to know each other better. That is what make mediocre teams great teams! “*

As indicated in Chapter 2, teams and team members need to understand each other to be able to operate optimally. The value of this insight and understanding lies in the fact that it helps team members to understand their own behaviour better and ultimately to adjust according to the demands being made by the external situation (Blanchard 1988; Belbin, 2000; Allesandra 1992).

#### **4.4.6 Sound communication**

“A high-performing team, much like a good relationship, requires communication, commitment, behaviour change and continuous feedback” (Glacel & Robert, 1996:xvii).

The trouble with organisational communication is that most of us, especially management, think we are rather good at it. However, the ever-expanding



graveyard of misunderstanding, apathy, failed presentations, non-delegation, unsuccessful efforts and splintered images suggests otherwise.

All the interviewees supported the view that organisational communication skills are crucial in business. A study of executives and management teams in 130 Fortune 500 companies indicated that communication, or rather the lack thereof, is the number one problem in organisations today (Lawler, Mohrman & Ledford, 1995).

♪ “English is the business language – in our teams we often do not adhere to it and this is often a problem in terms of understanding.”

♪ “Teams – even virtual teams, should not rely on e-mails only. Follow it up with individual discussions or meetings or personal communication.”

♪ “Team members often do not know what decisions entail – leaders need to explain the decision-making process to all.”

♪ “Communication and feedback in teams should be on-the-spot and not weeks after the event.”

### **On communication**

#### **Interviewee 11:**

Interviewer: “Okay, tell me what else great teams do?”

Interviewee: *“They communicate well, they are I would say friends within the team, and therefore most probably also communicate well because they talk to each other in terms of friends and in terms of work. ...From my team members, it all comes down to open communication again, if you can talk to each other and say what is needed and if you don't like that person or he does something that you don't like, you must have the openness to go to this person and say I don't like this or I don't understand....”*



**Interviewee 14:**

*“I think it is easier to communicate today than it was 50 years ago, and I am not talking about e-mail and everything and those things, I think because you can be a lot more relaxed with your superior and it is easier to communicate, I find it okay so that's good. I communicate easily with the people I work with and to my superiors, I actually don't see a problem with it, I don't have a problem with communication. So I think it makes it difficult to see communication problems that other people could have.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“... a lot of the time I do communicate things by e-mail but I know that is not a very effective way. If it is something important then I will find the person, if I can't have a face to face meeting but even that I don't think is always the best, I...write a letter and give it to the team and say when you get there let us just go through this with the team it is also another personal way of doing things which is better than just sending e-mails.”*

**Interviewee 9:**

*“...in a big company it is not going to be... it is easier not to forgive because it is easier to avoid that person firstly and it is easier to be professional because you could e-mail over the communication. Communication is making the effort of standing up and having a verbal conversation rather than e-mail.”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“Communication, especially with IT people – we are not the biggest communicators in the world – so getting the cross-functional things working, you cannot just put us in a room full of biscuits and stuff, we are not going to talk to the other team's people – and we do talk with your own team. So that is definitely one of the challenges, IT people, maybe with the sales people it is different but for us this cross-functional communication thing is going to be hard.”*



#### 4.4.7 Dependency and synergy

Synergy is “a phenomenon in which people generates more and better solutions by working together and sharing ideas than if these people worked alone” (McShane & Von Glinow, 2003:277). Interviewees acknowledged the promise of synergy in theory, but admitted that they found it hard to “live” this synergy at times. They also admitted the need to depend on other teams and team members, but expressed frustration since not all team members realised the full impact of dependency in the workplace.

##### **On dependency and synergy**

###### **Interviewee 13:**

*“...So I need other people and they might not like doing the programming or whatever, so we need each other to be more than ... what's that thing about? Synergy. That is exactly what I am saying now. One plus one equals ten. So one will 'buy' the whole team thing when it is just implemented correctly.”*

###### **Focus Interview 3:**

*“... I can't make my targets. I can't make the deadlines and let me tell you: what is creating that synergy of having a team – we need each other.”*

###### **Interviewee 2:**

*“The team needs to be better as an individual so they ... it's almost that principle of one plus one equals three. ...In a team you are a team and you are made up of different individuals but you are like one body and you work together for the same goal. You help each other, you improve each other's work, your people complement each other? If you have a team full of people who all have the same strengths you are not necessarily going to have a good team, that team is not necessarily going to have synergy because you have put people all the same together, so you would need to balance it out.”*



**Interviewee 11:**

Interviewer: "Have you ever been part of a 'wow' team?"

*Interviewee: "Yes, I experienced it in Gijima, we were a small team but with real synergy. It was on a very low level, I won't say that we change the world in our team but we did make the client happy which is very important."*

#### **4.4.8 A need for team skills**

Throughout my interviews, it became apparent that there is a critical need to find and develop employees with team skills. In both organisations researched, employees are encouraged to work individually – they are even measured as individuals – and yet they are expected to “miraculously” operate as effective teams as well. They also do not get enough training in the area of teamwork, since most of the training is concerned with the so-called core business, which is ICT and auditing.

**On team skills**

**Interviewee 11:**

*"I think we do not necessarily do everything that we can do to get teams to work together in the correct way. A lot of, like I say, a lot of emphasis is placed on structures and standards and systems but not necessarily the softer side of team work. We need team skills."*

**Interviewee 8:**

*"It is important to send, to expose people to team training so that they understand how teams work; I believe it is important because of the specific industry we are in, the IT industry is quite individualistic."*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*"Yes, we can do team training but we will have to do it cross-functionally."*



**Interviewee 4:**

*“Definitely, yes, we could benefit from team training. I think we should educate and train and that would put us at a level where we will be ok ...”*

**Interviewee 1:**

*“Team training is definitely, definitely important, Adri. I am busy working in teams every week and believe me it brings out a different perspective on your view of what is a team. Because I was normally working as an individual and doing such courses makes you aware of such lovely things that you can do ... that can happen in a team. But because there is money involved the manager always needs to approve and it tends to not happen sometimes.”*

In conclusion, it can be said that the business environment is changing and that these changes are rapid and ongoing. In this context of turbulent changes, companies need to maintain their competitive edge to survive, and leadership has to ensure that all the necessary competencies and skills are available in this game of survival.

Teams play a vital role in this survival game, and if their unique expectations in contemporary organisations can be understood and teams can be effectively managed, Lundy’s prediction (1992:xi) below will come true:

**Together**

**Each**

**Achieves**

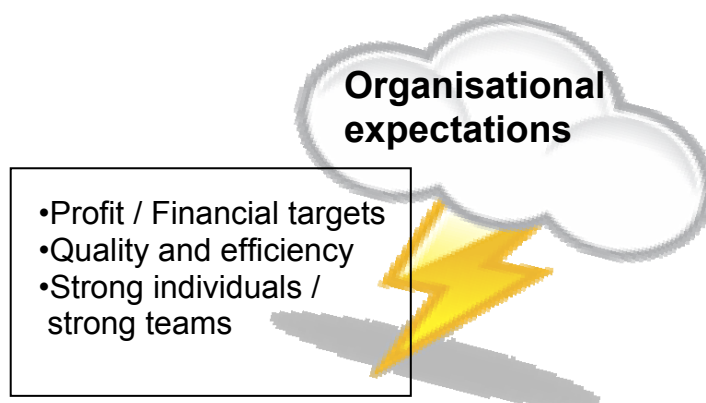
**More**

**Success**

## 4.5 THEME 3: ORGANISATIONAL / LEADERSHIP LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

Teams operate in a specific corporate environment, and this environment consists of both followers and leaders. Greenberg (1993:455) argues that teams might be seen in the category of the follower, but “followers are the essence of leadership. Without followers no leader can lead...without followers even John Wayne becomes a solitary hero, or, given the right script, a comic figure, posturing on an empty state”.

Interviewees expressed very specific expectations with regard to the leadership and management team of the organisation in terms of creating a team culture. They also shared the (perceived) expectations that this leadership team might have of them (the employees). Throughout the interviews it became apparent that this is a two-way relationship and that both the leaders and the employees had specific expectations of teams and team work. These expectations are set out in Figure 4.5.



**Figure 4.5: Organisational expectation**





One of my main questions, posed in many situations and throughout the interview process, during both individual and focus interviews, was “What is your perception, what does the organisation expect from teams?” The responses are reported below.

#### 4.5.1 Meet financial targets / make a profit

All the interviewees responded that their organisations mainly expected teams and individuals within the organisation to “make money”. They added that profit making per se was not a problem, but that contemporary companies tended to focus only on money and forget that their employees are actually their biggest asset.

##### On Money

Interviewee 11:

*“To make money.” [Laughter].*

Interviewee 13:

*“To meet targets – to meet financial targets!”*

Interview 9:

*“The expectancy of Mancom is one, financial.”*

##### On delivery on time within budget

Interviewee 14:

*“This sounds like a textbook answer now, but they expect quality products, ja [yes], like I say, on time ... within the budget.”*

#### 4.5.2 Quality and efficiency

Teams and individuals remarked that the organisation expected them to deliver quality products and be efficient in that delivery.



### **On delivery**

#### **Interviewee 2:**

*“I think that the organisation expects the team to basically just deliver a project, a product, so in our case it is the audit reports, to deliver that product of a high quality and for you to work well together but I don't ... I think it is just more, be effective, be efficient in your team work and deliver the product that you need to deliver.”*

#### **Interviewee 12:**

*“...we must just do it. It is pointless in getting into another paralysis, you want something that will work, you must focus on making it work, you must focus on providing a quality product.”*

### **4.5.3 Strong teams / strong individuals**

Interviewees expressed the view that 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations often expect strong individuals to become strong teams, without giving them the necessary support.

### **On “to make things work”**

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“...you have a goal and I have a goal financially or whatever the case may be. However bringing it back to one, say right, as a Mancom, this is the number we need, how you guys get to it is entirely up to you.”*

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“We tend to take things for granted that we have a lot of intelligent individuals and we tend to do a lot of new things and start a lot of new things and then we drop the penny [bomb] at the Mancom meeting and we expect the line managers, the business managers to implement all of those changes. It is just not possible, I mean we currently running about six or seven internal projects ...”*



Jerry Harvey (1988) wrote a rather controversial chapter with the title “Encouraging future managers to cheat” in *The Abeline Paradox and other meditations on management*. . He argues that the emphasis on doing one’s own work often has a negative impact on the spirit of cooperation that we need in modern organisations.

I found interviewees confused as to what the typical cultures of their organisations were – team-based or individual-based. The following are examples of the obvious “paradoxes” contained in their responses:

### **On culture**

#### **Interviewee 5:**

Interviewer: “What type of culture do we have, a team culture or an individual culture?”

*Interviewee: “I think we are supposed to have a team culture, it depends on the environment. If you look at my own environment, it is supposed to be a team, but it depends on how you define a team.”*

#### **Focus Interview 2:**

*Interviewee: “As manager I need to have a say in the team members that I have in my team.”*

Interviewer: “Do you currently have a say?”

*Interviewee: “No”.*

#### **Focus Interview 3: (Top Management)**

*“... we have come from a culture – and I am generalising of course, and you and I look at it from different levels – but we have come from a culture where team work was not a high priority. It was focused more on recognising individual performance. And in fact that in itself was lending itself to people trampling on each other to get to where they want to go. But again we are now at a place, at a juncture where at*





*least a concept of team work has become more recognised and accepted.”*

*“What is quite clear though is that it is a strategy saying that it is more prevalent at certain levels. For example, at the business ship level we are actually seeing very good examples of team effort... and in other cases it is very, very poor. So it is very diverse within the whole of the jungle. I don't think we will be able to say categorically there is a culture.”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“I don't think our performance management processes is aligned to what is conducive to put out to a team. Ja[ yes], everything is more individually focused.”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“... that is why I made the statement that the whole way in which we manage performance is not conducive to team work. It is actually breaking it down and saying listen, we are looking at the individuals and it is not healthy because we look at the way the profits are going down and our teams are going down, I mean it's ... the red flags are up.”*

I asked participants what the organisation could do to support team work in a visible and active way.

**On providing a team culture**

Interviewer: “What does the organisation do or what should the organisation / leadership do to support teams?”

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“They have to sit and say, do we want teams in our culture, do we want a team approach and if I want to, how can we support people to*



*be better teams, or do we purely want individuals that push targets? Because strategy at this point drives behaviour.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“We need to establish a culture of teams. I see groups and I will tell you why – because if there were teams, there would be that knowledge sharing, there would be that respect for each other, that support for each other, there would be that ...”*

### **On the Facilitation of employee wellness**

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“...an employee wellness programme for all!”*

### **On direct, support, communication**

**Interviewee 2:**

*“..to give support, to communicate, to give direction”.*

### **On putting in place systems, structures, standards**

**Interviewee 11:**

*“... putting in systems and structures especially because we are growing a bit in terms of revenue and people, I think they are looking to ensure that the standards and structures are put in place to support the teams to make money – to put it bluntly” [laughter].*

### **On empowering**

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“...when you go into team interventions and you come out of that intervention, and you sometimes take that functionality back to your office and your working environment, your working environment is not conducive to sustain that hype that you develop... the workload is also not evenly distributed, the work load and I don't think the management is taking control of that process.”*



### **On being consistent**

#### **Focus Interview 2:**

*“... we need to determine our deliverables on a regular basis because in my current experience is that you plan your day for something you want to do and in the morning when you get to the office all of a sudden Exco decide there are different priorities and everybody has to agree to them.”*

#### **Interviewee 5:**

*“... we [Exco] must provide our strategies and be consistent in terms of how we implement it that is actually it. You know that I have got a hell of a problem in terms of consistencies. Consistency is good in the sense of parameters in fairness. ...I think we are so obsessive about being consistent that we lose the ability to actually appreciate balance ... it has got to be so clear but when we need to make a decision we will always make the same decision and that in my book is taking consistency far, that is the way, in terms of any relations, that is robust.”*

When I conducted post-interviews (telephonic follow-up interviews), the following interesting remarks were made by respondents:

### **On Alignment / bigger picture**

♪ *“Our company needs to define its role in the bigger organisation and general economy. We are unsure of where we really fit in. Furthermore, we are not aware of the “bigger picture” and what all the products, services , role-players and stakeholders entail.”*

♪ *“Since we do not always know what the bigger picture is, we function only in our small teams and do not know how everything “clicks” together.”*



♪ “We are in need of regular vision alignment sessions to know if the team is still on track in terms of the organisation. We often do not know if we are on the right track.”

♪ “I feel totally lost in terms of where myself and the company fit into the bigger picture. It took me six months to realise the client I support is also supported by eight other units within the bigger company.”

### **On Policies / procedures / guiding principles**

♪ “There is no one ‘right’ way to do things. Each unit develops its own procedures and implements it in isolation. The organisation needs to give clearer policies and guidelines so that we can – in a sense – standardise. I do not mean control heavily, I just mean give us guidelines to operate in but with one focus.”

♪ “The organisation should further ensure that all policies and procedures are benchmarked. How do we know if what we are doing is based on best practices? Sometimes we just do things to meet the deadline.”

♪ “The organisation should motivate teams to work together. The absence of internal operational service level agreements (OLA) is, for example, a huge problem. Teams are supposed to work together and should support each other and need to know what they expect of each other. The opposite happens and teams often work in opposite directions. They just focus on their little bit.”

In conclusion, it can be said that teams in contemporary organisations often feel “let down” by leadership. They often do not experience the necessary support, but mostly reflect on the business’s need for them to make a profit and reach financial goals. This “misalignment” of expectations is discussed in

more detail in the discussion of the *21<sup>st</sup> century organisations' challenges*. As already stated, many of the sub-themes are integrated to such a degree that they form part of more than one theme.

#### 4.6 THEME 4: 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TEAM CHALLENGES

The 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation is not for the faint-hearted. McRae (in Cooper 2005:274) argues that contemporary organisations will be, and already are, confronted by the following phenomena:

- in their **international relationships**, they will find that they are managing complex supply chains with a workforce defined by different cultural norms;
- **at home**, they will find they are managing a much more diverse group of people – more part-timers, students, semi-retired employees, etc.; and
- thirdly, they will be challenged to make optimal use of their scarcest resource, **the human capital** of their workforce.

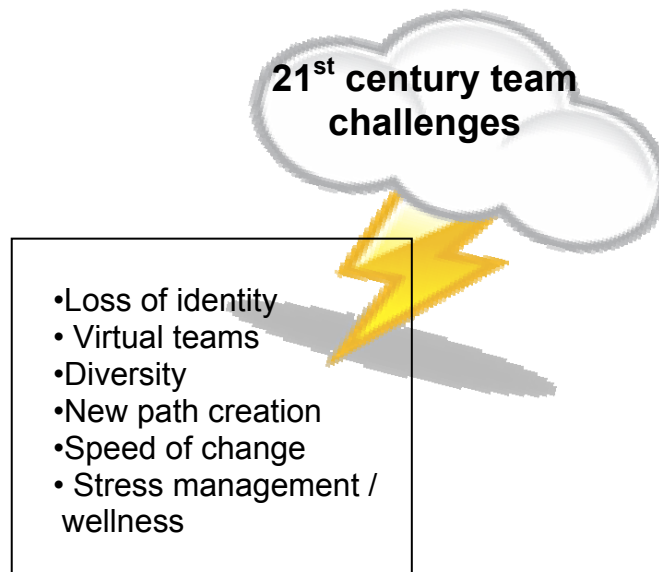
The challenges are summarised in Figure 4.6

*♥Developing and organising this theme proved how integrated the themes really are. Many of the issues elaborated on now have been mentioned earlier when discussing the other themes, since they affect all organisational levels.*

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♥ From the researcher's diary.





**Figure 4.6: 21<sup>st</sup> Century team challenges**

Before the sub-themes will be discussed, the 21<sup>st</sup> century organisational context and evolution of organisations will be highlighted.

#### **4.6.1 The 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation in context**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation should be discussed in context and not in isolation. This type of organisation does indeed operate in a certain period and is characterised by specific economic, social, global and other issues. To enhance understanding of these issues, the goals set by the United Nations (2007) were examined. This report forms a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. The participating countries identified the eight issues as mutual goals to be reached within a specific time frame. The goals are to:

- eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- achieve universal primary education;
- promote gender equality and empower women;
- reduce child mortality;
- improve maternal health;
- combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases;

- ensure environmental sustainability; and
- develop a global partnership for development.

It is thus important to realise that, just as the world around us is physically changing, individual, team and organisational behaviour is influenced by this environment and might also change.

#### **4.6.2 Evolution of organisations: From past to present – 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations**

Modern organisational behaviour theories and their application in organisations have evolved over a period of approximately 100 years (Kreitner & Kinicki 2001:5). Finding answers and insight comes from understanding past practices and theories, so a historic review might just sharpen our vision for the future. Carrel, Jennings and Heavrin (1997:3-5) use a model that guides understanding of the evolution of behavioural and management theories. Their model was used as a baseline to develop my own understanding. The model is set out in Figure 4.7 (overleaf).

## Theory Period Beliefs

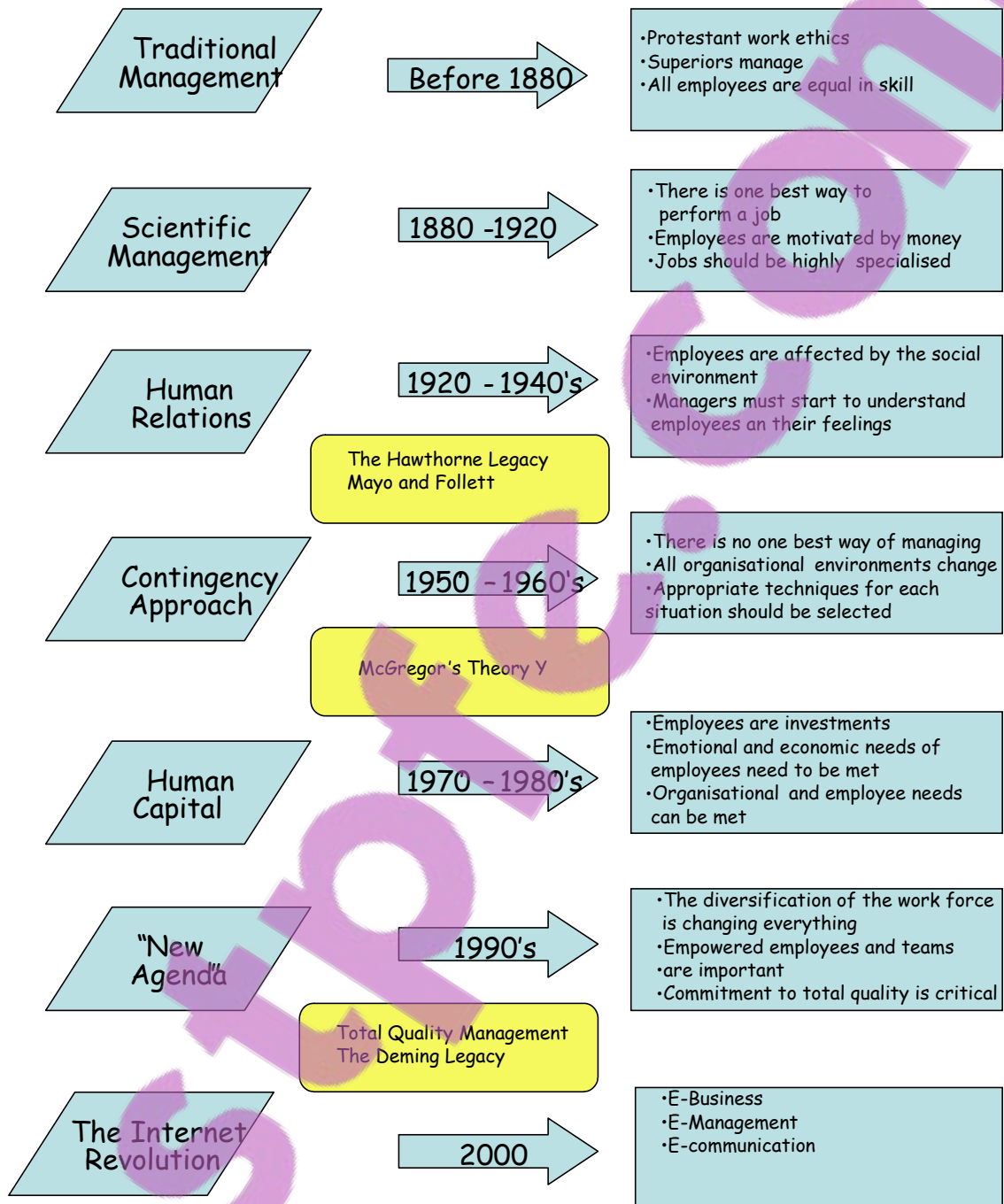


Figure 4.7: Evolution of behavioural practices (adapted from Carrel, Jennings and Heavrin 1997)

Leadership practices in the 1980s were mostly characterised by people working harder and longer to achieve goals, and this was often referred to as the "enterprise culture" (Cooper, 2005:1). Globalisation, re-engineering,

mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and many other interventions transformed workplaces into so-called free-market environments.

Since the beginning of the 1990s (this falls within my own experience) major re-structuring occurred as companies started to “flatten” or “down-size”; and numerous changes were experienced in the workplace. Throughout this redesigning of organisations, individuals were expected to be “open to continual change and life-long learning” (Cooper, 2005:2). The question is now what 21<sup>st</sup> century teams and organisations expect of team work?.

For the purposes of this study, it was important to explore the trends of changes in contemporary organisations by asking 21<sup>st</sup> century employees what they have experienced and what the impacts of these experiences were. Lathmand and McCaley (in Cooper, 2005: 203) write about the “yesterday vs. the tomorrow” of organisations. They summarise the concept as set out in Table 4.3 (below).

**Table 4.3: Yesterday vs. tomorrow**

<b>Yesterday</b>	<b>Tomorrow</b>
<b>Selection of employees</b>	
Tests and equal opportunity legislation	Selecting and developing employees for global organisations
<b>Employee involvement</b>	
Participation in decisions	Shared responsibility and accountability
<b>Public Sector as a model</b>	
Private sector economy	Mosaic economy
<b>Science and technology</b>	
Who could have predicted	No predictability, but be optimistic! A virtual community
<b>Leadership</b>	
Individual Activity	Collective Activity
<b>Teams</b>	
Followers waiting for guidance	Self-motivated, well-educated individuals with high expectations
Decisions within clear boundaries	Shared sense-making Diverse social identity groups Cross-discipline decision-making

Source: Adapted from Lathmand and McCaley (in Cooper:2005)



These findings are in line with research done by Geoff Armstrong (in Cooper: 2005:290). He identified what he calls “four management legacies”. As I transcribed the interviews, I recognised these legacies (I illustrate them by relevant verbatim quotes from my interviewees):

- Management is only about top management.

♪ Some senior managers are not approachable although they say they are. I further feel that in this organisation your rank determines the value of your input. “Top management” decides many things and the rest are not asked for inputs. Decisions are made by managers and the rest just have to follow.

- Management is about ownership and power

♪ Auditors feel threatened by trainees and use their power instead of knowledge to “handle” them.

- Management is about controlling.

**Interview 1:**

*“It is a little bit of a challenge because how do you manage them, how do you actually know that they are working and not running around with the kids and taking them to school and going shopping.”*

- Management is only about business decisions.

**Interview 11:**

*“ I think we do not necessarily do everything that we can do to get teams to work together in the correct way. A lot of, like I say, a lot of 15 emphasis is placed on structures and standards and systems but not necessarily the softer side of team work’.*

### 4.6.3 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges: sub-themes

#### 4.6.3.1 *Loss of identity*

In 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations, teams struggle to find and demonstrate their identity. Diversity complicates this further.

**Interviewee 14:**

*“20 years ago in South African organisations, when I started to work, we all at least looked more or less the same – now everyone looks different, has different cultures and even come from different continents.”*

Wynn and Katz (1997:97) argue that identity is created and experienced through the “negotiation and co-construction over meaning and manners among team members interacting in a specific context”. Cheney and Chriarwnawn (2000:246) refer to “congruent identity” as reflecting a sense of oneness among members, irrespective of their own personal biographies or geographical locations. Such an identity allows team members to “perceive themselves as part of a whole, autonomous and anthropomorphic team”.

The notion of a third space has entered the academic circle since Homi Bhabha’s (1994) work on third space in cultural studies. To address the notion of identity, Bhabha (1994:5) defines the “third space” as “the constructing and reconstructing of identity which is fluid, not static”. He also views third spaces as “discursive sites or conditions that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity – that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated and rehistoricised ‘anew’” (Bhabha 1994:37). According to Bhabha, a third space is a place where we negotiate identity and become neither this nor that, but our own. The third space is that place where negotiations take place and where identity is constructed.

It seems to me that creating this third “space” is a problematic issue in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. It also seems as if there is a strong need for a personalised approach that stems from this feeling of being “lost”.



### On “feeling lost”

#### Interviewee 11:

*“Yes, I feel a bit lost, but I must say I don't feel too uncomfortable with that, so ... but I can, even for me, it is difficult so I can imagine for someone that has a very structured approach to life like ..., it must be extremely difficult to be dumped into a situation like that.”*

This theme has already been discussed as an individual need, but it seems to be a growing need in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. Gooding (in Cooper, 2005:350) argues that employees today are expecting a more personal approach from management. They demand a “one-on-one relationship with managers” and often see this as their right.

### On the relationship with managers

#### Interviewee 2:

Interviewer: “Do you think team members want to be known? Do you think they want the managers to know what their passions are and stuff like that?”

*Interviewee: “I think definitely. Well, me thinking of myself [unclear] as a team member I want my manager to know what my aspirations are. But I think if you work for somebody that knows what my passions are, what my motivators are, who I am, that person can manage you better. That person ... you might have people in your team that are, for instance, like me, on some issues I am very sensitive; on other issues I am not sensitive, so in order to manage your team members you must know how can I give this person criticism without breaking him down as a person.”*

#### Interviewee 2:

*“A lot of people are just de-motivated and you become ... you think you are a number in an organisation. You are no longer a person, you no longer have a personality, you are just a number and you must get the*



*job done and you have those feelings that our manager doesn't care about me, doesn't care about what happened, even if I do my work well I don't, you don't get rewarded for it...."*

#### **4.6.3.2 Virtual teams**

Virtual teams include members who must work together from separated physical locations across different time zones. We have always worked with virtual teams in some or other form, but in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations, virtual teaming is becoming an integral part of most small group work, mainly because technology has evolved and today includes far more than merely teleconferencing (Katzenbach & Smith, 2001:23). In both organisations, small groups are expected to use intranets, internet, fax and the various types of software that support project management, and knowledge and information sharing.

Technology is making communication amongst virtual team members so fast and easy that even non-virtual teams are starting to work in a virtual manner. I found that even team members sitting next to each other would use technology to communicate rather than personal interventions. In both companies, e-mails are used to a great extent. However, in many cases, e-mails are used for the wrong reasons, for example, to act as proof of or portfolios of evidence. Katzenbach and Smith (2001:31) warn that an e-mail is a poor substitute for "threaded" discussions or personal contact.

#### **Interviewee 11:**

Interviewer: "Do you think that teams need to physically sit together geographically in order to be successful?"

*Interviewee: "My brain says ... my rational brain says no, but in my opinion I think proximity to each other is an advantage. Look, I think I can make a team work very successfully being in even different countries for that matter, but it does make it a lot easier if you can physically stand up and look the person in the eye and say this is what I want and this is what I am thinking, so ja [yes]..."*





**Interviewee 13:**

Interviewer: “What are the advantages / disadvantages of virtual teaming?”

*Interviewee: “...a lot of the people that ... sometimes even I do that ... you tend to work from home, if you are working on projects you know, they allow you to work from home which can work really well ... I mean I have seen it even with myself. You are a lot **more productive** but what does happen is that ... will walk in one morning and say where is everybody? And then everybody is working at home and then all of a sudden there is a crisis, you can't get hold of this person or the e-mail is down and things like that so there can be **communication problems** like that.”*

**Interviewee 10:**

Interviewer: “Do you think it is important that a team should sit close together or can a team sit all over the country and still be a great team?”

*Interviewee: “I think they can [sit all over the country], but then you have to be a strong team, or a strong person with strong personal skills and stuff otherwise they have to sit together.”*

♪ Interviewer: “What do you mean with strong?”

*Interviewee: “Focused, self-driven, self-managed, able to work even when no other team members are around and not go shopping.”*

**4.6.3.3 “New path” creation / new ways of doing “old” things**

People in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations need to be led to creativity (Richard in Cooper, 2005:299). Interviewees expressed the need for new ways of doing business, new ways of communication, new ways of serving the customer and new ways of learning in contemporary organisations.



**Focus Interview 2:**

*“In your centre, in your small team, I think they have accomplished things and what I also found is that people are not scared to try out new things to those people because they are protected in a team and that is the whole idea of the team. You are protected, you make errors but you are protected in a team. That is actually the benefit of having a team.”*

**4.6.3.3.1 New ways of working in teams**

In both organisations, I found strong “small” teams but weaker “bigger” teams. In many cases, team development interventions are focused on individual teams only, and the bigger team or organisation does not benefit from the smaller team’s synergy.

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“I cannot afford, I cannot, I cannot work without the outputs of ... or anyone of the development teams. I can do a certain part of my revenue, say 40% of my total revenue of my budget of R12 Million a year, I can do without [name], the rest of it I am absolutely dependent on the success of his team. I am looking at the development teams to be successful in order for me to create work for myself, but having said that, that is not the way that we at GijimaAST look at this whole thing. We look at this whole thing as silos where every silo has got his target and if he does that, he will be successful.”*

*“I think the strong teams reach out to other teams, whether the other teams like it or not because that makes them a strong team, they need other teams to be able to deliver on their KRA’s [key result areas], they need other teams, they need integration with other teams.”*

Teams thus need to break out of their “little silos” to add maximum value to organisational growth.

#### 4.6.3.3.2 *New ways of communicating*

Communication is and probably always will be a strategic issue in organisational development. Interviewees noted that new ways of communication in modern organisations needed to be devised, especially since e-mails often prove not to be as effective as managers would like to believe they are.

♪ “Let us think of another way to communicate than e-mails. E-mails need to be filtered. We get numerous e-mails about in-house issues that do not concern us and waste our time – for example, Mr X will be on leave and Mr Y will stand in for him. Have the right people on the address list. 80% of the communication we receive is irrelevant. We suffer from an e-mail ‘overload’.”

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

Interviewee: *“Can you have a virtual drink? Really I am thinking [over speaking].”*

Interviewee: *“Well, those things, now it is the 21st Century, I mean it is possible to do that.”*

#### 4.6.3.3.3 *New ways of serving the customer – client-centricity*

“Client-centricity” is one of the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century companies (Galbraith, 2005). It implies a strong focus on what the client wants, and this is a strong trend in modern business. “Not only does client centricity make business sense, it is also predicted that in the current client economy, investors will value companies based on the sum of the values of their client relationships” (Galbraith, 2005:101). Interviewees from both companies interviewed defined client focus as one of their values, and both strive to be viewed as “world-class” providers of services.

Jackson (2000:99) notes that information about the needs of customers and how well the organisation is doing in meeting those needs “permeates the whole organisation”. He argues that truly dynamic organisations “monitor



results for customer satisfaction and retention and spend time with customers – with the people who buy and use the company's products and services”.

### **On client service**

#### **Interviewee 5:**

*“Which is also I think is something totally new for that environment in the sense that consultation and the client is becoming far more important. Again I think it is something that we actually understand, it is not very comfortable in doing as we are supposed to.”*

#### **Interviewee 11:**

*“...but I experienced it in Gijima, we were a small team, but real synergy is what I experienced. It is on a very low level, I won't say that we change the world in our team but we did make the client happy which is very important.”*

#### **Focus Interview 2:**

*“Service excellence, that is the secret. Service excellence and that encompasses everything, anything whether it is a relationship, whether it is a product-service excellence as a whole. The whole thing is about excellence. If you are not excellent you are going to fall behind.”*

#### **Interviewee 12:**

*“No, they [the coders] are not client centric at all. They focus on their programme and they think of their programmes as delivery programmes. Not Gijima's programmes, not the customer's programme, their programme and there is nothing wrong with that. Ownership is nine tenths of the law and they are sitting in front of the programme and they are changing it and I would say that is more than nine tenths and therefore they own the programme. Have a nice day. ... you can just go and choreograph whatever the customer asks for, but that is not adding value. Any idiot can take the customer's Excel spreadsheet and recode it so it is into the system [unclear] the guy is even criticizing it; that is not adding value. Adding value is analysing it,*



*understanding it, critiquing it, bettering it, improving it, making it something that really works for the customer.”*

Leadership teams in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations need to adopt an approach of “serving the client at all times” if they want to ensure that customers will return to the organisation.

#### 4.6.3.3.4 A new approach toward learning

A “new” approach toward training and learning should be based on the paradigm of whole brain development and outcomes based learning. Higher education plays a pivotal role in the social, cultural and education system to serve a new social order in our country. This should be noted by South African organisations.

According to the White Paper on Higher Education, as published by the Department of Education on 24 July 1997 (South Africa, Department of Education, 2007), higher education needs to redress past inequalities, transform, meet national training needs and respond to new realities and opportunities. Aspects that are emphasised by adult learning providers and that speak of a new and fresh approach include the following:

- a movement towards a whole brained learning approach;
- outcomes based training interventions; and
- team learning approaches.

Dyer (1983:127) suggests that contemporary organisations should concentrate on the need of its employees to get relevant “skills, knowledge or attributes needed to move ahead in the organization”. He identifies coaching and on-the-job training as a priority that should be met by modern organisations.

Interviewees expressed the view that a “whole brain” learning approach be implemented in all organisations.

Up to ten years ago, most South African training interventions catered for left-brained learners. Ned Herman (1996) and Kobus Neethling (2005) can be

seen as pioneers in popularising the concept of “whole brain” learning. According to them, a person has definite preferences when learning, and a successful trainer focused on techniques in all four quadrants, namely left 1, left 2, right 1 and right 2, will get the most out of the trainee. The preferences of learners in terms of their brain orientation are stated in the figure below:

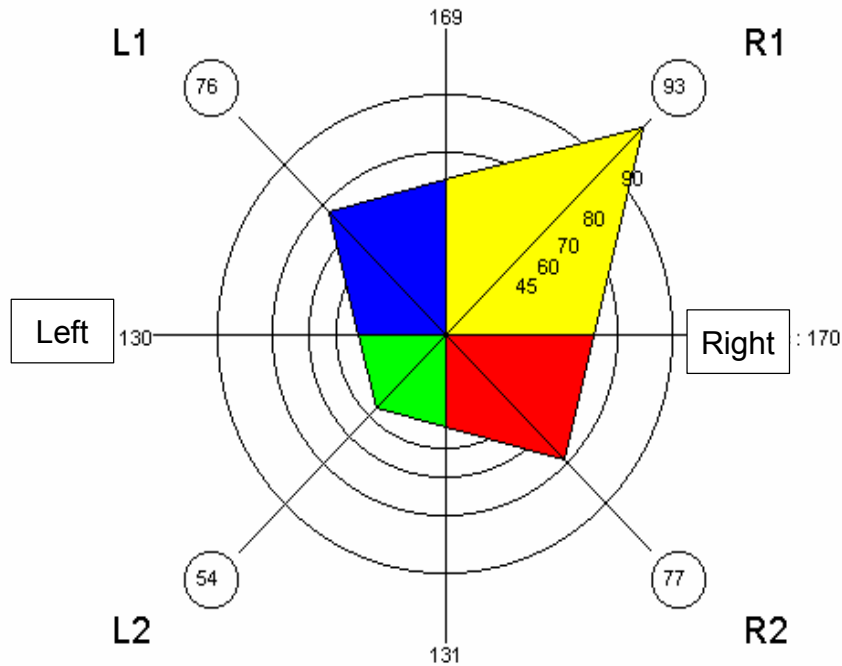
**Table 4.4: The four brain quadrants**

Left 1 Preferences	Right 1 Preferences
Analytical	Conceptualising
Technical	Integration
Problem solving	Innovation
Financial Aspects	Creative aspects
Left 2 Preferences	Right 2 Preferences
Administrative	Expressing Ideas
Implementation	Writing
Planning	Interpersonal Aspects
Organising	Teaching / Training

**Source: Adapted from Neethling (2005) & Herman (1996)**

André Vermeulen, MD of a South African Company called Neurolink, is a great advocate of so-called brain-based training (Neurolink, 2007). According to him, more and more South African companies are following this approach to ensure that both left- and right-brained learners can benefit from training interventions. Annie Coetzee (2000) adds that, in the past, many learners fell behind because of their distinctive right-brain orientation. Contemporary organisations should take note of the “era of the brain”, and thus training solutions offered in the “new” South African organisation should be more integrated and holistic in terms of whole brain use.

The following Figure 4.8 is a typical example of a Kobus Neethling brain profile, and this interviewee’s profile clearly reflects the interviewee’s preference to utilise the right brain when filtering information.



**Figure 4.8: Neethling Brain Profile** (Neethling, 2007)

#### ***4.6.3.4 Speed of change / change management***

Change is inevitable. What works today may not work tomorrow. However, change is uncomfortable for most people. They seek consistency and familiarity instead of uncertainty. The reality is that change is likely to accelerate and the importance of managing change is going to increase. The effective implementation of change is necessary for the survival and growth of organisations.

Alvin Toffler (1983:1) describes the effects of change as follows: “The acceleration of change in our time is an elemental force. The accelerative thrust has personal and psychological, as well as sociological, consequences. Unless man quickly learns to control the rate of change in his personal affairs as well as in society at large, we are doomed to a massive adaptational breakdown.”

The 1990s have already presented individuals and organisations with some very complex problems and challenges, and change will continue to bulldoze its way through organisations. It seems that employees are often



overwhelmed by all these changes and do not get the necessary support to cope.

### **On change**

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“Let me clarify the statement of not having the time to do it. We tend to take things for granted that we have a lot of intelligent individuals and we tend to do a lot of new things and start a lot of new things and then we drop the penny [bomb] at the Mancom meeting and we expect the line managers, the business managers to implement all of those changes. It is just not possible, I mean we [are] currently running about six or seven internal projects ... which makes a hell of difference to your time lines and what you are capable of and now you sit with a dispersed staff complement who sits all over the world and you must bring them together and you must enforce those changes, because in the end they want to use the integrated project offers for their forecasting...”*

#### **Interviewee 1:**

*“I think we have been thrown around so many times, that we don't exactly know what is going to happen tomorrow.”*

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“[Our leader] is getting tied up in restructuring and strategies and budgets and all of that so he ... when last did he have time to spend with ... over a cup coffee and just talk maybe rugby. You don't get the chance anymore, but it used to be like that. It is not there anymore.”*

### **4.6.3.5 Stress management / wellness**

The need for a work-life balance in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations is well documented and has been discussed in detail under Theme 1. The reality is that stress is a phenomenon that has a negative impact on organisational productivity, and thus has to be acknowledged and managed.





Groups are often called upon to perform under highly stressful conditions. Brown and Millar (2000) and Hollenbeck *et al.* (1997) argue that, within limits, teams seem to be able to adapt to higher levels of work stress. However, if such stress grows sufficiently high, team performance will eventually be influenced negatively (Adelman *et al.* 2003). Interviewees all expressed the view that the pace of living is affecting their functioning in the organisation and thus also have an effect on the success of their respective teams.

### **On the pace of living**

#### **Interviewee 8:**

*“... especially in the IT industry because traditionally there it seems a bit ... socially the people in the IT industry are very self-centred and working with a computer and looking at their [unclear] and doing their thing so, in our industry yes and also life is becoming so hectically fast-paced especially in Jo'burg and more so in Sunninghill so the traffic is ... you just come to work early and you leave early and you do this because you just have your own life as well so, ja [yes], there are a lot of pressures in terms of that as well and that is also contributing towards people being a bit more self-centred and wanting to do their own thing.”*

#### **Focus Interview 3:**

*“I think that there are a lot of challenges... changes that really it is difficult to keep up with”.*

#### **Interviewee 1:**

*“Ten years ago the pace wasn't as fast as today. We had ... we worked hard still, but it wasn't that crucial that you have to do ten things at a time, you tend more to be not as pressed as today.”*

Interviewer: “You said earlier that the pace has changed. Do you get any support from top management to help you to adapt better in this fast environment as a team?”



Interviewee: *“Yes, I think we do, we get systems. We have our technology is good. We are up to date. We have proximas, we basically have everything we need technology wise to get our work done, it is just the training sometimes, you get the programmes but training doesn't happen because they see it as costly and time-consuming and I don't think it is such a problem. If you can take some time and teach the people well at the long end you will benefit.”*

Interviewee 11:

*“I think also the fact that a lot more is expected of a team maybe than 40 years ago has an impact. Ag, ja [yes], now I am making a very big assumption that people, like I do think the pace of change is immensely different from 40 years back, so a team needs to cope with a lot more changes in their environment than 40 years ago and I think that is a big pressure on teams.”*

Interviewee 14:

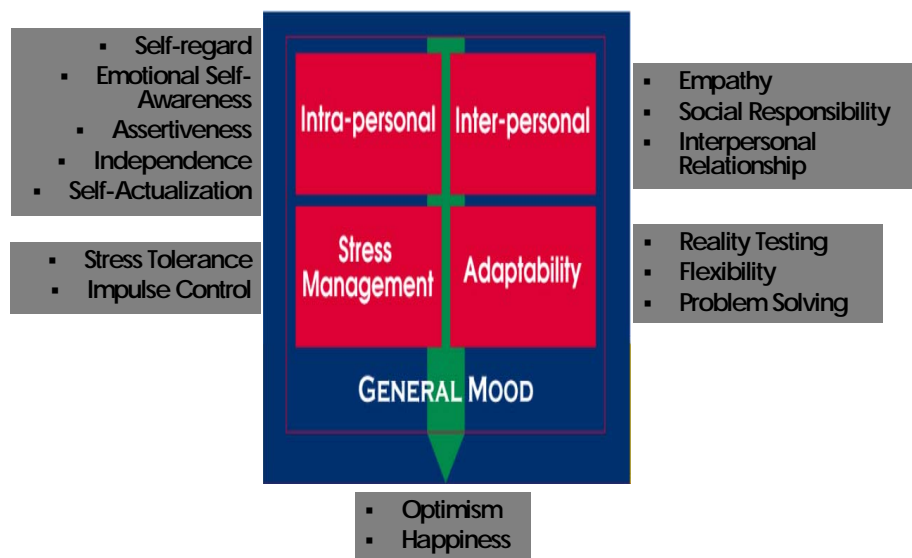
*“There is always pressure, always, always, always.”*

**Emotional Intelligence** is seen as part of the overall ability of organisations to “manage stress” amongst its employees. In *The new leaders, transforming the art of leadership into the science of results*, Daniel Goleman (2003:18) says: “We are by no means the first to suggest that the main tasks of a leader are to generate excitement, optimism, and passion for the job ahead, as well as to cultivate an atmosphere of cooperation and trust. But we wish to take that wisdom one step further and demonstrate how emotional intelligence – self awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management – adds a crucial set of skills for resonant leadership.”

Emotional intelligence can best be defined as an array of non-cognitive abilities, skills and competencies that influence an individual's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and environmental pressures

(BarOn, 1988). The BarOn EQ instrument (see Figure 4.9) measures emotionally and socially intelligent behaviour in five key areas, namely intra-personal, inter-personal, stress management, adaptability and general mood.

## The BarOn EQ-i Facet scales



**Figure 4.9: EQ Facet Scales** (Van Rooyen, 2007:s.p.)

BarOn developed his tool based on 19 years of research and tests on more than 48 000 individuals worldwide. The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory is designed to measure a number of constructs related to emotional intelligence. A growing body of research suggests that emotional intelligence is a far better predictor of “success” than the more traditional measures of cognitive intelligence (IQ).

Both organisations in the study have embarked on a number of “emotional intelligence” interventions, thus agreeing that the whole concept of emotional intelligence is a huge challenge in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations.

### On emotional intelligence and maturity

#### Focus Interview 3:

*Interviewee: “It goes with the maturity; unfortunately team work has got to do with maturity. I would love if you were sent to Mauritius. I would love it. I would congratulate you. I won’t be jealous, but I don’t see*



*twenty other people will get that. I will work even harder. The next time I go to Bok Park. I will work even harder, but unfortunately you sit with those various people.”*

*Interviewee: “That will hate you, ja [yes].”*

**Interviewee 5:**

*“I think you need to acknowledge some of the things that have gone wrong and when we talk about being vulnerable and admit that there's something wrong and everybody will need to be part of the solution and really make it an impressive process. But I think there has got to be a point when the debate ends ...that is emotionally intelligent.”*

Hughes and Bradford (2007) argue that teams that function with healthy emotional and social intelligence experience a multitude of benefits. They identify seven skills of a team's emotionally and social intelligence, namely team identity, motivation, emotional awareness, communication, stress tolerance, conflict resolution and a positive mood. The interviewees confirmed that they saw a great need for teams to act in a more mature manner. They also remarked that teams should physically demonstrate both emotional and social intelligence when working together as a team.

#### **4.6.3.7 Diversity management**

Workforce diversity and the management thereof is a burning leadership issue in modern organisations. “Workforce diversity is more than a euphemism for cultural and racial differences” (Cummings & Worley, 2005:105). The danger is to define diversity too narrowly and to miss the broad range of issues that a diverse workforce faces. Diversity lies in many things, in character, personality, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, culture, values, etc. Strong diversity management presents an opportunity for businesses to harvest a diversity dividend from their human resources.

Cox (1993) argues that diversity that is not strategically valued and managed has an adverse impact on organisational outcomes at two levels:



- organisational effectiveness (diversity-related problems can have a negative impact on organisations in terms of attendance, turnover, quality of work, problem-solving, team cohesiveness, innovation and communication); and
- organisational performance (diversity-related problems can also have a negative impact on the achievement of organisational strategies; aspects such as market share and profitability will be seriously hampered by a lack of diversity management).

According to McGrath, Berdahl and Arrow (1996), there are five clusters of diversity:

- demographics (age, race, ethnicity, religion, education, etc.);
- task-related knowledge, skills and abilities (due to the historically differential education of black people in our country, South Africa as a whole is a reasonably low in task-competence);
- values, beliefs and attitudes (values in our country are to an extent influenced by African humanism);
- personality and cognitive behavioural styles (these aspects have been researched in Africa, but publications on this are not recognised in the Euro-centric parts of the continent); and
- status in the work group (based on past discrimination, black people enjoy the least recognition and status in organisations).

#### **On understanding diversity**

##### **Interviewee 5:**

Interviewer: "Is diversity an issue in teams in the Auditor General?"

*Interviewee: "I would love to believe that it is not such a big issue but I think it is. Perhaps in a very negative way, I think the requirements of employment equity are misunderstood. I think we are so obsessive about being consistent that we lose the ability to actually appreciate balance or ... and that is the other part of diversity that you have got to respect."*

##### **Focus Interview 1:**



*“I think as well in the 21st Century this whole thing about diversity is going to explode in our faces one time or the other because it is just not working, it is a very artificial thing at this stage, we tend to tolerate one another but it is going to explode definitely.”*

♪ **What do you mean with this remark?**

*“We talk about diversity being black, white or coloured, but it is far more than that. Gender everything, the full monty.”*

*“ ... if you can get the diversity thing right you can get the team thing right as well. And it is very definite, you are not only black and white. ... Diversity lies in sort of character and to be able to manage diversity you must know the other person, know what makes them tick and we don't [over speaking] and we don't have that.”*

**Age and diversity**

**Interviewee 2:**

*“... I think that diversity is, it doesn't matter what colour your skin is, it doesn't matter what religion you are, it doesn't matter, diversity even comes in different age brackets. Our office is especially on your teams who actually do the work, it is generally young people because that is just the way it works, that is how you come here, you train and then you get qualified. So we have very young people in our teams and that to me is diversity and the biggest thing for me is to just get to know that person. Everybody ... there will be a link between ... it doesn't matter if you come from a different culture, if you have a different colour skin, a different religion, there will be links that you are the same as the other people around you.”*

**Interviewee 1:**

Interviewer: “Do you think that makes it easier for people in an organisation to work together if you are younger?”



Interviewee: *"I don't think it makes it easier but because we are all basically the same age and we can more you know, I don't know how to say it ... our experience is basically the same when it comes to culture, diversity issues than to sit with people who are fifty or sixty, to work with a guy who is 20 or 30 that definitely makes a big difference."*

Interviewee 9:

*"...we work in a team where we have got two Afrikaans people, one Indian, one Black person, one Polish person and I mean it we are lucky to have an interesting team."*

The interview process was enriching and highly challenging. Individuals and teams, employees and managers shared their team expectations with me and openly expressed their concerns about working in teams. After numerous hours of interviewing, processing, and interpreting research material, I had to reflect back on my research questions:

What are the expectations of teamwork in 21<sup>st</sup> century, South African companies on multiple levels?

How do South African **employees** experience teams and team work?

What do **teams** regard as critical success factors in terms of teamwork?

In the team development processes?

As already mentioned, I focused my research on team expectations on the various organisational levels. Some expectations were verbalised on all the levels, and some proved to be relevant on only one level. I refrained from trying to quantify by, for example, stating that 5 out of 31 interviewees had the same expectation. That was never my purpose nor my intention. As qualitative researcher, I was interested in understanding at deeper levels instead of putting numbers to my findings. In conclusion, I can share the expectations that interviewees shared with me, the researcher, and indicate on which level these expectations were expressed. The fact that the same expectation was



expressed on all levels does not make that expectation more significant – it merely means that more than one interviewee group shares that expectation.

**Table 4.5: Expectations on multiple levels**

<b>Expectation</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Organi- sation</b>
A need for experiencing a culture of support	X	X	
Fun and humour in the workplace	X	X	
The need to be empowered and trusted	X	X	X
Work-life balance	X	X	
Clear Roles and responsibilities	X	X	X
A need for guidance and strong leadership	X	X	
Clear goals	X	X	X
To be rewarded and recognised for good performance		X	
To be understood and to understand others	X	X	
Sound communication	X	X	X
A culture of synergy and a understanding of dependency		X	
Team skills in order to understand the working of teams better	X	X	X
To make profit and reach financial targets			X
Quality and efficiency			X
Strong individuals and strong teams			X



These expectations should lastly be interpreted in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century or contemporary organisation, where I found the following to be the greatest challenges:

- The loss and constant search for identity
- The virtual nature of the team environment
- A growing environment of diversity
- The need for “new” ways of doing “old” things
- The enormous speed of change or “flux”
- Growing stress levels and a search for work-life balance

The expectations of teamwork as expressed by the interviewees seem to become the critical success factors. Each theme and sub-theme proved to be critical to the successful implementation of teamwork in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations.

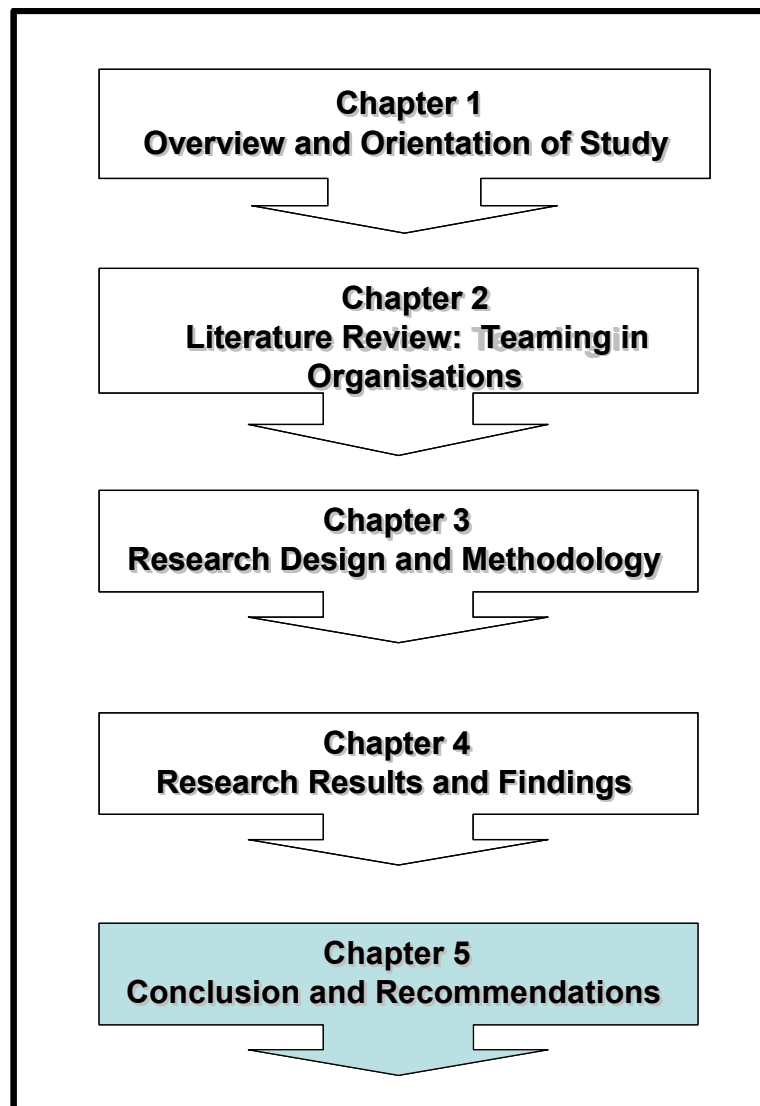
**In conclusion**, it can be said that modern organisational behaviour theories and their application in organisations have evolved over a period of approximately 60 years (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001:5). It is indeed challenging to be part of searching for answers in order to sharpen our vision for the future. So-called 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations are unique and trying to understand them and specifically the expectations of teamwork prove to be a challenging and vigorous study. The results and findings revealed themes and sub-themes on expectations of teamwork in the 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation that can be confirmed by previous researchers. However, no previous research documentation has indicated the totality as in this study.

My interviews indicated that there are many challenges in contemporary organisations. The truth is that there are still many “truths” to be found. As researchers, we are faced with many significant human problems in organisations, and the challenge would be to continuously find solutions to these problems.



## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

A Douglas Adams character jokingly commented: “I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I have ended up where I intended to be.” In this final chapter, I look back at the research journey, highlight some important ideas and thoughts, make some recommendations and attempt to provide a logical closure to the research process.

*“At this point, I need to reflect on the fact that some of my references might be seen as rather “commercial”. I once again want to state that the purpose of this study was to understand expectations of teamwork in contemporary organisations, thus leaving me no choice than to refer to sound academic but also more contemporary views of both teams and teamwork.*

In **Chapter 1**, I formulated the main research question, namely: “What are the expectations of teamwork on multiple levels in selected 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations?” I also shared my intention to investigate the following sub-questions:

- How do South African employees experience teams and teamwork?
- What do teams regard as critical success factors in the team development processes?

I indicated the rationale for and value of the study. I also explained that a qualitative, interpretivist approach was best suited to answer my research question.

Konyana-Bam and Imenda (2000:2) remarked:

The world of research, especially in the developing world, continues to be dominated by research traditions and paradigms that emphasize quantitative methods. While recognizing the need for and importance of such methods, researchers in many parts of the world are practicing and developing other approaches qualitative, ethnographic and anthropological in nature. Such research is based on quite different

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▼ From the researcher’s diary.

traditions, paradigms and definitions of knowledge and is quite different in its characteristics, small in scale, but set within a broad contextual framework, intimate and intensive in method, and richly descriptive in outcome.

The above principles were taken into account in this study.

I also positioned my study within the context of Organisational Behaviour as a field of study. I laid down specific ethical guidelines and noted my personal regard for confidentiality, informed consent, emotional safety, privacy, and academic objectivity.

**Chapter 2** was devoted to a review of relevant literature in the field of teams and teamwork. I reviewed definitions of teams, looked at team roles, team development, and team building, but clearly indicated that – since teams have been studied for so long – it was impossible to cover all academic points of view.

In **Chapter 3**, my selection of a qualitative approach was justified, and the role I as the researcher played in this process was clarified. The sampling method and how it evolved from typical case sampling to snowball or chain sampling was discussed. The data collection methods were then introduced: personal, in-depth interviews on the one hand, and focus group interviews on the other. The recording of the interviews, the management of the data and the coding process were discussed in detail.

In **Chapter 4**, I analysed the four main themes that emerged from the personal and focus group interviews and deduced some answers to my research questions. As already indicated, the themes were constructed by means of an inductive analysis. I used Weft QDA and Participlan to manage the themes and interpreted them against an organisational behaviour background.

In this final chapter, I can now explore the relationship between the various themes and indicate its significance in terms of teamwork in contemporary organisations. I examine what I call “team paradoxes”. The implications of

qualitative studies in the field of Organisational Behaviour are discussed and the strengths and limitations of this study are identified. Some new lines of inquiry are suggested and research questions, which could add value in the ongoing research process, are proposed.

## 5.2 THE FOUR EVOLVING THEMES

I concluded Chapter 4 by summarising the four evolving themes, thus answering my main research question: **“What are the expectations of employees of teamwork on multiple levels in selected 21<sup>st</sup> century South African organisations?”**

I found that these themes could also be expressed as critical team success factors, and Table 4.5 then forms my answer to the sub-research question **“What do teams regard as critical success factors in terms of teamwork in the team development processes?”**

**Theme 1** related to *individuals and their expectations of teamwork*. The theme represents a broad sense of being part of an organisation and enjoying it. A great huge need for enjoyment and fun was expressed in most cases. Individuals in modern organisations also experience a strong need to belong and to be both accepted and respected in their teams. They experience instances of “detachment”, where they feel alone and isolated, and problems like work overload, burnout and stress magnify these feelings. They need and ask for more power, and openly express their willingness to be held accountable. I detected strong emotional undertones of frustration and irritation regarding an organisation that says one thing (vision), but does the opposite.

My inquiry revealed that 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations demand a lot from their employees. This was evident in the responses reflecting exhaustion, work overload and high stress levels. There is a growing need for people to enjoy work more and have more fun in the workplace. Although many demands are made on both individuals and teams in organisations, they often feel that they are not offered enough support to help them meet these demands. Amongst

the interviewees, there was almost a cry for more understanding, support, trust and empowerment.

**Theme 2** dealt with *teams and their expectations of working together*. The need for understanding and acceptance was once again expressed, especially against the background of the 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation with its diversity and global focus. Teams expressed a feeling of often “feeling lost”, thus focusing on the value of goal setting and of having a clear idea of their roles and responsibilities. Team leadership was indicated as a crucial tool for creating a culture for teamwork. Teams defined leadership in broad terms and noted that the leader of a team determined the atmosphere in that team. Their concern was that their respective organisations offered no leadership framework and that teams were as strong as their respective leaders. An obvious paradox came to the fore: organisations say they support teams, but no team skills are provided. Teams felt that they were expected to “miraculously” turn into high performance teams overnight, without being given any skills.

**Theme 3** explored *organisational or leadership expectations in terms of team work*. Team members regarded leadership behaviours as highly influential in terms of team success. Organisations need to reach financial targets and need to make money in order to stay in business, and they use teams as the vehicles to reach their goals. Leaders thus expect teams to be effective, to produce synergy and to deliver quality products on time and within budget. Many leaders are seduced by the “romance of teams” (Allen, 2004:1), meaning that they expect teams to enhance the organisation’s performance, even if teams are not necessarily the answer to a given business problem.

**Theme 4** deals with *21<sup>st</sup> century team challenges*. It seems as if the pace of change is becoming almost unmanageable for both individuals and teams. Their reflection on exhaustion, being overwhelmed, and becoming apathetic and deteriorating communication is indicative of this. Employees are becoming more diverse and defined by numerous cultural norms – this makes it very difficult to establish a sound organisational culture. Virtual teaming is becoming the norm, yet teams are given no extra skills to manage these

virtual processes. The struggle to balance work and life is a complex challenge, and interviewees cried out for “new” ways of doing business, since the “old” ways clearly do not work any longer.

This summary of themes indicated the four main themes and numerous sub-themes. However, these themes should not be interpreted separately. They are integrated, intrinsically interwoven and their inter-relatedness offers a nuanced understanding of teamwork from an Organisational Behaviour perspective. This in itself poses many paradoxes on teamwork, which have to be dealt with in the 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation. These are discussed below, in Section 5.4.

### 5.3 EXPERIENCING TEAMS AND TEAMWORK

In order to answer my second sub-question, “**How do South African employees experience teams and team work?**”, I had to interpret the interview findings by comparing actual experiences with desired experiences.

*Based on a remark by Interviewee 2, when he was asked to validate the interview information, I was forced to look at the true meaning of the word “expectation” in my main research question, since there proved to be a clear link between expectations of teamwork and the actual experience thereof. Before making my key observations, I thus had to consider the relevance of expectancy theories in teamwork.*

Many interviewees in this study expressed their lack of motivation because of inconsistent leadership behaviour and the many “paradoxes” that I have identified. This made me reflect on motivation, and especially on Vroom’s well-known **expectancy theory**. This theory has been adapted over the years, but I am interested mainly in the concepts that might influence teamwork.

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▼ From the researcher’s diary.

The expectancy theory asserts that people are motivated to work if they expect to achieve the things they want from their jobs. Vroom (1964) argues that motivation is a combination of the following:

- **Valence** – the value of the perceived outcome, in other words, “what is in it for me?”;
- **Instrumentality** – the belief that if an individual or team completes certain actions then the person or team will achieve a specific outcome; and
- **Expectancy** – the belief that an individual or team is able to complete the actions and have the capability to do so.

Vroom expressed his expectancy theory as the following formula:

$$\text{Valence} \times \text{Expectancy} \times \text{Instrumentality} = \text{Motivation}$$

Greenberg and Baron (1993:131) argue that expectancy theory looks at the role of motivation in the overall environment instead of only in terms of the individual. Nelson and Quick (2006:168) contend that “a person’s motivation increases along with his or her belief that effort would lead to better performance and that better performance would lead to merit pay increases and other rewards”.

My interviewees made it clear that different things motivate different teams and individuals, and those expectations regarding rewards differ. McShane and Glinow (2003:142) add that people naturally direct their effort towards those outcomes that will help them to fulfil their needs – whatever those needs are.

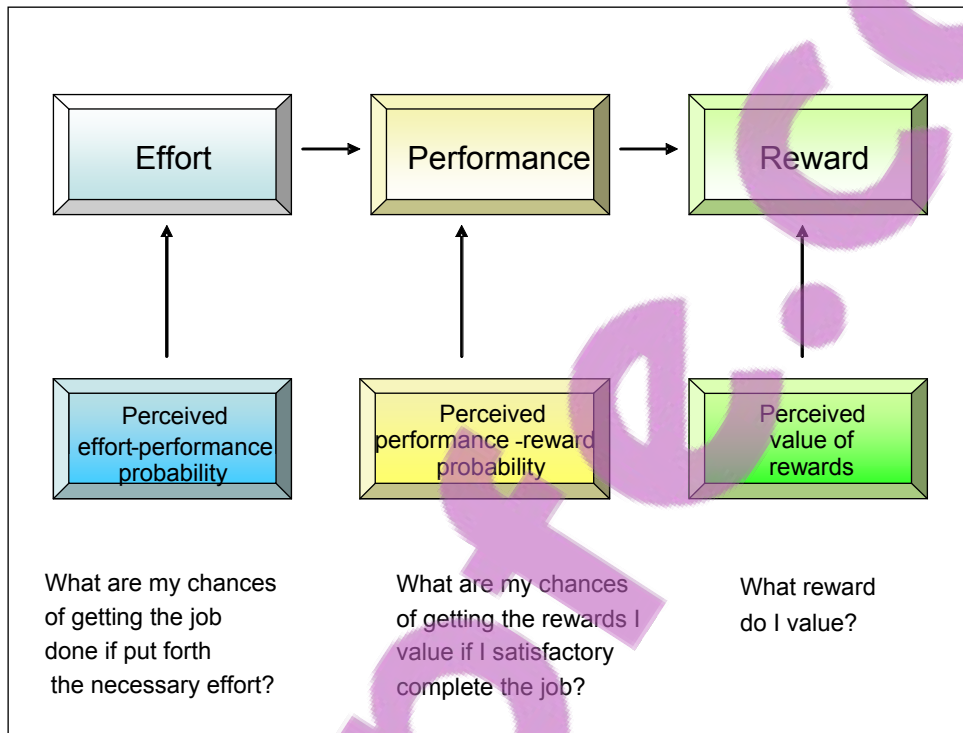
Scholl (2002:2) argues that many variables affect the individual’s expectancy perception:

- self-efficacy, in other words, a person’s belief in his or her ability to perform a task;
- goal-difficulty, meaning that setting goals that are too high might lower motivation because the team might feel the goals are beyond their ability to achieve; and



- perceived control over performance, in other words, for expectancy to be high, individuals or teams must believe that they can influence an outcome in some way.

Figure 5.1, an expectancy model for motivation by Nelson & Quick, (2006:167), is a good explanation of how expectations can motivate teams and individuals.



**Figure 5.1: An expectancy model for motivation**  
(Nelson & Quick, 2006:167)

Based on the expectancy theory argument, it became clear that many interviewees regard teamwork as non-value adding because they do not see the real value of working together instead of as individuals. The organisational culture and leadership also do not support teamwork and many organisational “paradoxes” contribute to team difficulties.

The qualitative research process used in this study has proved that teaming in 21<sup>st</sup> organisations is more complex than it seems at first glance. In answering the sub-question “**How do South African employees experience teams and teamwork?**” I identified a number of what I call “paradoxes” that could add

value to both researchers and practitioners working with and exploring team dynamics. These are now explored briefly. Resolving some of these paradoxes may assist organisations in strengthening their teams.

## **5.4 KEY OBSERVATIONS: THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TEAM PARADOX**

### **5.4.1 Be a strong individual but also be part of a strong team**

Organisations do not realise that a multitude of behavioural and other changes must occur for teams to succeed. Most of us grew up in an environment where individual performance and competition were stressed. Our school grades were determined by our own performance and we obtained employment based on our individual skills and personality. Moving from a “solo” to a “team” paradigm does not happen overnight. Individuals may never have seen the advantages of working in teams, yet they are expected to be part of these teams and produce immediate results. Hence, 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations need to facilitate this transition if teamwork is ever to succeed.

I interviewed dynamic individuals and found that they often wondered what the team possibly had to offer them. Hyman (1993) points out that, underlying every other responsibility in the team, is the implied responsibility of each individual in that team not to jeopardise the team’s goals. That means that there have to be team goals, that these goals need to be respected and that team members need to share these goals. However, if there is not a culture of trust, support and general empowerment, this cannot be done and individuals will continue to act as individuals instead of as part of a team.

### **5.4.2 Teams need freedom and creativity but also clear guidelines**

Interviewees expressed the need for empowerment and to be allowed to generate new ideas. Kazanjian (2007:21) observes, “opportunity is pure oxygen” for teams. Teams need a chance to try something new, to put their combined skills to work and to generate their own successes. At the same time, however, they want clear guidelines and well-defined team roles and responsibilities. This means that a 21<sup>st</sup> century team leader has to guide



without taking over the team and has to empower teams without giving them too much freedom. Aspects like the nature of the work, the skills levels and the emotional maturity of the team should be the guiding principles.

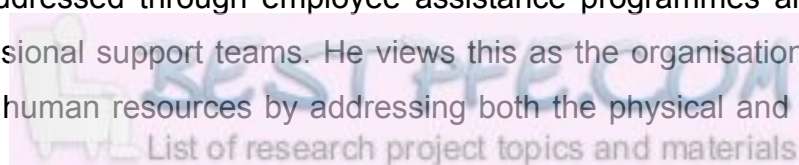
### **5.4.3 Teams suffer from an information overload but do not communicate enough**

Teams in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations often feel overwhelmed by all the information they receive. It adds to the work overload they experience and, instead of empowering them, it threatens them. The need is clearly for communication as opposed to information. Teams want to be acknowledged, understood and communicated to. E-mails are not a preferred way of communication, and especially virtual teams expressed a need for regular contact and short, focused communication sessions. Katzenbach and Smith (2001:31) argue that teams should be given the opportunity to choose to express them by speaking or in writing, “an option that often produces both richer discussions and input and dialogues with fewer interruptions”.

### **5.4.4 We need to work harder and smarter but also need to maintain a work-life balance**

Smith (2007:105) jokingly comments that, leaders “need to demonstrate work-life balance (No problem; work is their life!)” This quote might be meant tongue in the cheek, but I found that many leaders tend to believe and live Smith’s quotation. Thus, 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations expect teams to be highly successful and, in many cases, to take on greater workloads than before. Quite often vacant positions are not filled immediately since the expectation is that the team is strong enough to take on the challenge. Targets are often increased without consulting team members, which adds to the expectation that teams should just work harder and smarter in order to reach those goals.

Amid this job stress, teams are expected to live a balanced life, be healthy, have energy at all times and be living examples of overall “wellness”. Christie (2004:25) suggests that risks and problems in the workplace can be successfully addressed through employee assistance programmes and well as multi-professional support teams. He views this as the organisation’s way of maintaining human resources by addressing both the physical and mental



needs of teams. However, a programme in isolation cannot make a difference. All the leadership practices in the organisations should reflect the focus on human capital and the respect for human resources.

#### **5.4.5 Teams are important, yet our systems do not support teamwork**

Leadership openly expresses support of teamwork and collaboration in contemporary organisations. Quite often, when this team approach toward business problems is implemented, the performance management and other systems are still geared towards the individual. This is an obvious misalignment and adds to the fact that employees are unsure about what is expected of teams. The ideal is to ensure that all systems, be it leadership, performance management or communication systems, are designed to manage and support team efforts.

I also listened carefully how the people in the interviews in this study expressed themselves. The fact that there are many references to “me” and “I” when I asked questions about the team suggests that the overall culture is still individualistic rather than team-driven. Reward systems are also highly individualistic and do not support team work in any way. Organisations should hold teams mutually accountable, but the recognition and reward systems should be aligned to this. The biggest problem is that “compensation systems are designed to reward individuals, and gain sharing programmes are designed to reward large groups. Small group achievements seldom fit into these programmes” (Katzenbach & Smith, 2001:137).

#### **5.4.6 Team development and continuous learning is our priority but there is no time or budget for these interventions**

Both employees and teams in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations have a strong need to develop and be visibly supported by the organisation. Dutton (2003:142) observes that “when a commitment to affirming people and fostering their development is part of an organisation’s way of life, high quality relationship flourish, as people are engaged by their hearts as well as their heads. The valuing of development encourages the expression of what each individual

cares about and needs, at the same time that it implies that [an] effort will be made to enable people at work to satisfy their needs”. This means that organisations have to allow teams the time and budget to develop those teams. Organisations should demonstrate their strategic intent of continuous learning by creating learning interventions, supporting it and rewarding teams that actually do invest in team learning.

#### **5.4.7 We need to have fun but make lots of money**

Many organisations still believe that fun and business results are two separate entities on a business continuum. However, employees expressed a strong need to feel that their work is fun and that they are allowed to enjoy it. In his study of Enterprise, America’s number one car rental company, Kazanjian (2007:204) points out that one of the secrets to Enterprise’s success is the fact that a culture has been created where individuals and teams can have fun. He notes that this sense of enjoyment spills over to the client and “builds camaraderie and strengthens individuals’ ability to effectively work together as members of a unified team”.

#### **5.4.8 We need high quality connections between people but our motto is “show me the money”**

Dutton (2003:8) argues that good relations in organisations are crucial in that “high quality connections are marked by mutual positive regard, trust and active engagement on both sides. Corrosive connections, on the other hand, make it more difficult for employees to do their work ...low-quality connections cause distractions that make it difficult for people to engage fully in their tasks”.

Even though relationships are important, it takes time, and, in many cases, money, especially where special team interventions are involved. Leaders seem to expect teams to operate optimally, without allowing for any special “team time”. They soft-soap teams with “an annual team-building if the budget allows it” and hope that mutual respect and collaboration will follow automatically.

#### **5.4.9 We introduce virtual teams but fail to re-define team work**

Virtual teams have their own complexities owing to issues such as cultural and spatial separation. These affect trust levels in these teams, communication, socialisation and collaboration. Knoll and Jarvenpaa (1998), Warkentin, Sayeed and Hightower (1999) and Jackson (1999), make clear distinctions between “face-to-face” teams and virtual teams. Organisations should follow their advice. Virtual teams cannot merely be expected to operate optimally without the correct skills and leadership.

“As virtual teamwork becomes an integral aspect of contemporary organisational life, and as work arrangements become more complex owing to the variety of task, technologies and cultures involved, there is a strong need to develop novel approaches that can provide insights beyond those generated and validated using the traditional theoretical and methodological perspectives” (Sarker & Sahay, 2003:32). Virtual teams need a specific discipline, application and features software. Their manner of interacting and communicating differs from that of other teams, and the organisation should support these virtual teams in terms of continuous development, systems and leadership style.

#### **5.4.10 We hire for skills or IQ but expect emotional intelligence**

Organisations that have flatter structures and that operate on a virtual basis place very high demands on the emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) of their employees (De Vries & Ketz, 2005:62). In this 21<sup>st</sup> century culture, coaching and commitment should replace the “old” culture of command and control. However, this seems to be missing. Although the organisation expects independent and dynamic behaviour from teams, they do little to support employees at a non-technical level. Many interviewees expressed the need to “be able to speak to someone” or the feeling of “being lonely”, even though they are nominally part of a team. Since the relevant industries are highly specialised, the greatest criterion for hiring and assessing remain technical

skills. Yet, when it comes to managing teams, leaders expect employees to be emotionally mature and have the ability to be assertive in difficult situations.

#### **5.4.11 We implement team activities but fail to create a team culture**

When interviewees were asked why they work in teams, more than once, the answer was “because that is the way we are structured”. Only one individual admitted to ever experiencing synergy in a team. Some teams I interviewed never actually fully engaged in teamwork, and in many cases, they merely shared information. Nadler (1992) calls this “synthetic teamwork”, and I found that especially the specialist groups tended to act as synthetic groups rather than as teams. In many cases, groups of specialists expressed a level of superiority, and used their focused skills as an excuse for not being part of the team. Thus, Interviewee 12 said: *“Any idiot can take the customer’s Excel spread sheet and recode... but not everybody can code.”*

It seems as if 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations are often so set on becoming team-based organisations that they often do not define teamwork or consider what it means in their environment. Katzenbach and Smith (2001:43) further note that, in contemporary organisations, “change initiatives (often) stress the number of teams created as the measure for success – more is better”. This leads to the implementation of teams and teamwork without a clear link to strategic goals and organisational challenges.

#### **5.4.12 We say we embrace change but we do not comprehend “flux”**

I found that companies claim to understand change and its impact on individuals and teams. Both companies I reviewed implement change programmes and have continuous innovation as part of their vision statements. However, change is often not fully understood.

**Flux**, according to Steger, Amann and Maznevski (2007:5) is “change that has a changing nature”. Today’s solutions for business problems may be outdated tomorrow and change can occur in all directions at one, and at “faster and faster rates”. Teams are faced with growing diversity where

nothing is stable anymore. “The future is no longer the prolongation of the past – industry breakpoints that fundamentally alter the value proposition in industries occur more rapidly (Steger *et al.*, 2007:6). Contemporary organisations need to empower themselves more in order to facilitate this flux and guide individuals and teams through these ever-changing times.

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Like all other studies, this study also has some potential limitations. These are set out below.

- There is a voluminous amount of information on teams, and all this available literature is a tremendous challenge for those who seek to remain updated in their understanding of the literature. This is a qualitative study, which in itself may be a limitation in academic circles. In US academic circles, contributions that do not include a quantifiable verification are often less valued (Gherardi & Turner, 1998). Davenport and Markus (1999:19) refer to the fact that studies with a qualitative focus are often discounted, and they call this phenomenon “institutional pressures toward irrelevance”.
- Findings can, and should not, be generalised. Many interpretations were made based on the personal experiences of specific participants, which will also make transferability difficult. However, to generalise was never the intention. This qualitative study was undertaken to create a new meaning and to reach a nuanced understanding of team expectations.
- This research project has an interpretative character, aimed at discovering the meaning that events have for specific individuals. These experiences are interpreted by myself (as the researcher), which might raise the question of objectivity.
- The relatively small sample might be a limitation, although the depth could facilitate further studies in this field. My particular findings are not representative of all teams in all organisations, and the identified themes are not necessarily typical of all teams.





- A further limitation is the lack of focus on the differences in the individual characteristics and personalities of participants, for example, their team roles, cognitive styles etc.
- Lastly, I do not claim to have identified all possible and relevant themes regarding the expectations of teamwork. However, the data I gathered (interview transcripts) are saved on CD and could be used by future researchers for possible alternative interpretations and research initiatives.

## **5.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

### **5.6.1 Implications for organisations**

Teamwork can no longer be viewed from a single dimension construct. Organisations should start thinking strategically about developing teams, and they should do so from a multi-dimensional construct – which includes the individual, the team and the organisation. If organisations are to develop and maintain effective teams, conditions in each dimension should be optimised.

The context in which teams are to operate should be considered before applying team strategies to every organisational problem. Organisations simply can no longer implement teams and teamwork without providing the necessary systems to support those teams. The importance of team-organisation alignment is well known and documented (Allen, 1996; Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). To make teams work, entire support systems must be in place and often structures must be reorganised and relevant sources need to be allocated. Tilleria, Little and MacBryde (2002) remark that many organisations are still experiencing many problems in introducing integrated performance management systems that effectively measure team performance and, simultaneously, are aligned to the company's strategy.

### **5.6.2 Implications for teams**

Teams can only benefit from research that enables them to develop a sound team culture, where the focus is on empowerment, participation, continuous learning, trust and creativity. This culture should be aligned to the organisational vision and should be supported by the relevant systems. The

more teams understand the needs of other individuals and other teams, the greater the opportunity to benefit from this knowledge.

### **5.6.3 Implications for the individual**

Anything that affects how an organisation uses teams in its day-to-day work will obviously affect the employee – be it directly or indirectly.

## **5.7 RESEARCHER PERSPECTIVES**

I feel strongly that there is no one single truth and that different people give different meanings to similar experiences. I chose an area of research that could be described as “well researched”, and yet I discovered new ways of viewing teamwork.

In order to ensure the credibility of this research project, I tried to submerge myself in the data and actively sought themes and their link to each other. No interviewee comment or remark was merely discarded or ignored, and interpretations were only made after careful consideration.

As a researcher, I was both detached and involved. Modern interpretive researchers argue that it is not necessary to deny the interdependence or the consequences of interdependence between the researcher and what is researched (Patton, 1990). A researcher is no longer seen as a “passive bystander who generates representational products, but as one who partly constitutes reality and forges generative communicative relationships” (Gergen & Gergen, 2000:1039). The researcher’s participation in the situation is thus no longer a barrier but rather ensures an increased degree of understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied. Patton (1990) thus advises researchers to simultaneously maintain detachment and personal involvement and to take responsibility for the result of their interventions.

The past year was intense, academically challenging and a continuous learning experience. By working with teams on a daily basis, I had the opportunity to really meet them and ask them face-to-face about their experiences and expectations.



As Angela Brew (2001:132) contends, a research project is a journey and an all-encompassing learning experience:

...in the journey ... research questions go beyond the intellectual issues and are carried over to all aspects of life. Content, issues and processes are viewed as all contributing to the process of critical reflection. In this variation, there is frequently the idea of a personal journey and an emphasis on the assimilation of research into the researcher's life and understanding.

## 5.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Traditionally, organisational behaviour theories were rooted in core humanistic values (Burke, 1982). However, as this field develops, efforts are increasingly being tied to business goals and organisational effectiveness (Fagenson & Burke, 1990). That naturally opens up the terrain for relevant research. Church and Burke (1995) suggest that organisational behaviour will also have humanistic roots, but the emphasis has shifted towards business outcomes and that researchers should take advantage of this development.

In a study by Offerman and Spiros (2001:389), the surveyed organisational behaviour practitioners suggested that the best way researchers could improve practices was to include more of an applied practice focus in research.

Based on these views as well as my own experience, some team development issues were identified as being in need of further research:

- reward systems: how to reward the individual and the team;
- diversity and cross-cultural issues in teams; and
- teams within teams in organisations.

Future research could also be specifically concerned with the role of individual traits in team expectations, and could explore some of the issues relating to the limitations of this study (as set out above).

*I definitely suggest more applied research.*

Team research should also be focused towards practice in context, meaning that researchers should use real team situations to do their research and should “write reports in plain language that includes ‘how’s’”, and practical examples (Offerman & Spiros, 2001:389). Offerman and Spiros (2001) also found that the majority of published research on teams is not read, not appreciated and not used to guide organisations. Their solution is more field studies, more applied research and greater on-site contact with teams. I gladly add my vote to this suggestion.

To conclude, it can be said that teaming makes business sense in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. If they are implemented correctly, teams can save time, make money and assist organisations in reaching organisational goals. However, contemporary organisations who want to use this approach need to understand teams, invest time in their development, reward them appropriately and ultimately support them.



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