

When Teams Work Best by Frank LaFasto & Carl Larson, Thousand Oaks, California : Sage Publications, 2001; pp. 221; price Rs. 320/-

When Teams Work Best is a very good book. The book is based on the series of studies conducted by the authors over a period of 20 years. It is very meticulously written. The authors have studied 600 teams and 6,000 team members and tried to understand why teams succeed or fail and what can be done to improve the ability of a team to work productively together.

Five basic questions guided the efforts of the authors to arrive at the dynamics of working together. To put them,

1. What are the attributes or behaviours of individual team members, as seen by their fellow members, that help the team succeed or interfere with the team's success ?
2. What are the dimensions, strength, and weaknesses of working relationships in teams ?
3. What are the behaviours of teams, as seen by their leaders and members that make some teams more successful than others as problem solving ?
4. What are the behaviours of team leaders, as seen by members of the team, that help lead the team to success or failure ?
5. What are the organizational processes and practices that increase or decrease the likelihood of teams succeeding ?

The book unfolds itself through five chapters, which highlights five dynamics of teamwork and collaboration :

- (a) Team Member
- (b) Team Relationships
- (c) Team Problem Solving
- (d) Team Leadership
- (e) Organization Environment

Each chapter starts with a **Snapshot**, which basically captures the contents discussed in the chapter very briefly. At the end of each chapter there is a sub-section "**Putting it To Work**" where the authors provide specific suggestions and tools for its application in one's own context.

Chapter I talks about what makes a good **team member** and discusses the factors that distinguish effective and ineffective team members.

Chapter II discusses about **team relationships**, "... Although the qualities of each team member form the basic building blocks of team success, how well members work together plays a major role in determining how effective the team will be". This is the central theme of this chapter.

Chapter III deals with **team problem solving** and focuses on good problem solving teams. The authors have presented a Model of the Problem-Solving dynamics in Teams and suggest steps for effective problem solving.

The **team leader** is discussed in **Chapter IV**. This chapter explains six dimensions of team leadership for team effectiveness.

Chapter V emphasizes the issues related to the **organization's environment** to promote collaboration in teamwork. Three main organizational dimensions are discussed, i.e., management practices, structure and processes and systems. The chapter explores each of these dimensions, underscoring the message that a collaborative environment combines the three to maximize clarity, encourage confidence and instill a commitment toward delivering results.

The book is well written. However, it does not talk about the cultural influences on the employees' behaviour while working in a team. In fact, the socio-cultural milieu influences the values, beliefs and practices of the people.

The book is useful for executives and managers who are responsible for the overall functioning of the teams, the team leaders and team members who

can find practical tools and suggestions for implementing it in one's own context and the research scholars interested in the area of team building.

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Environmental Economics : An Indian Perspective, edited by Rabindra N Bhattacharya, Oxford University Press, Rs. 550.00

Environmental Economics is a discipline that uses the ideas and tools developed in other branches of economics such as the study of consumer and firm behaviour, market structure, efficiency and equity concepts, design of taxes and subsidies, public good and externalities, optimal control theory, game theory, econometrics etc., to study and model the current state of the biosphere. It is a relatively new area in Economics, especially in India, and is one of the fastest growing branches of economics (Sankar, 2001). ***Environmental Economics : An Indian Perspective*** fulfils a long standing need for simplifying and introducing this subject for a large and heterogeneous set of Indian readers in a manner that they can relate to. The book brings together the rich teaching experience of seven practising economists, with each of them contributing a chapter related to their area of research and interest. The editor has done a commendable job in bringing these contributions together keeping the distinctive nature of each chapter intact, while maintaining continuity and avoiding excessive repetition of similar ideas.

In his capacity as editor, R. N. Bhattacharya provides a comprehensive overview of Environmental Economics and provides an introduction to the issues covered in the seven chapters of this book. He starts with a discussion of the issues that motivated the evolution of environmental economics as a sub-discipline of economics, touching upon the Brundtland Commission report, Earth summit at Rio, evolution of environment interest groups and environmental laws. He defines environmental economics as a way of examining the various tradeoffs involved in almost all environmental issues