Workgroup, Team, or Agile Team?

Several people doing related work can operate as a workgroup, team, or Agile team – distinct setups with different interaction patterns and leadership dynamics.

Workgroup	Team	Agile Team
• members have individual goals and little interdependence • members are usually specialists • work assignment is centralized	• shares goals and ownership • members are interdependent • members have complementary skills and abilities • members feel committed to each other, and exhibit helpfulness and cooperation	Team + certain distinctions and characteristics: • oriented to delivering customer/business value • has greater autonomy, self-organization and collaboration • some of the members are specializing generalists • doesn't experience delays due to members having outside assignments • operates with the Agile mindset

Benefits of having a team rather than a workgroup

Teams focus on a mission: creating great products/solutions that make a meaningful difference. By contrast, groups tend to focus on individual output, which may not combine to create the best whole. In a team, members feel committed to each other, so they lift others up or catch teammates if they fall, which creates resilience and adaptability. Teams have a wider array of options for dividing and managing work and dependencies, so they incur shorter process delays and are likelier to succeed when facing tight constraints or a close deadline. Real teamwork has many personal benefits for the people who experience it, which results in greater engagement and often amplifies the above effects.

The more teamwork takes place in the system, the freer the managers are to manage the system.

Supplementary resource for the book *Deliver Better Results*. More at DeliverBetterResultsBook.com

Thought exercise: Is a specific team in your organization really a team?

Your organization probably wants to reap the benefits of teamwork and refers to groups of people as "teams" (or by an equivalent word, such as "squad" or "pod"). If a certain team doesn't perform as well as hoped, a potential but often invisible reason is that they're not really a team. The following thought exercise will help you establish that, so you can address the issues more effectively. *Note: this exercise assumes the team uses Scrum, but if that's not the case, translate the process and roles to your setup.*

Imagine that all team meetings went away. Instead, members send the Product Owner (PO) their individual questions and estimates about backlog items. The PO and the Scrum Master (SM) determine the sprint plan, assign tasks, and answer questions all in the backlog management software. Instead of a daily Scrum (standup) and a sprint retrospective, members send their input to the SM, who then distributes a summary and action items. The PO/SM give demos to stakeholders and subsequently update the backlog.

Now ask yourself: Would this *significantly compromise* the outcomes that the team's work produces?

If your honest answer is "no," you have a workgroup, not a team.