

# EVALUATING TEAM DYNAMICS: ARE THEY IMPEDING YOUR PRACTICE'S GROWTH?



Create a high-output team with clear accountabilities.

BY ROD SOLAR AND LAURA LIVESEY

The question of whether team dynamics are hindering practice growth often plagues physicians. This article provides guidance.

## ADDRESSING UNCERTAINTY REGARDING TEAM PERFORMANCE

If you are unsure if your team dynamics are a problem, discerning the precise impediment or constraint is crucial.<sup>1</sup> The most significant limiting factor within your practice must be identified and refined so that weak links may be systematically eliminated.

## STREAMLINING PRACTICE OPERATIONS

Consider what is expected of your team. Practices that excel delineate two critical drivers: growth and fulfillment. Growth involves the patient engagement continuum, from the initial contact to booking an appointment, whereas fulfillment deals with the delivery of patient care. Successful practices not only chart these pathways but also highlight and document key phases.

## DIFFERENTIATING TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY

Teams with high output have clear accountabilities. The term *accountability* implies ownership of results, wherein specific outcomes

are designated to specific individuals. The term *responsibility*, in contrast, pertains to the execution of tasks that contribute to these outcomes. The clarification helps the team provide comprehensive oversight and prevent tasks from being overlooked.

In a team, many can share responsibilities, but typically only one person is accountable for the final result.

## BALANCING TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY

When a team member or members are overwhelmed with accountability, the practice must act to redistribute duties equitably. This process often includes documented training that aids in transitioning responsibilities. Repeated failure to attain proficiency, despite thorough training, may suggest misalignment between the employee and the role.

## ACKNOWLEDGING TEAM LIMITATIONS

If team dynamics are the root of performance issues, the situation must be acknowledged, and tough but necessary conversations must be initiated. High-performance teams do not shy away from these challenges. Both efficiency and proper fit are essential for the practice and the individual.

## CONCLUSION

If your team must be restructured, take decisive action. High-output teams strive for excellence, whether that entails enhancing processes or making tough staffing decisions. The success of your practice is not driven solely by your surgical expertise. It also depends on your team's ability to provide exceptional patient care.

Building and maintaining a high-output team is a deliberate and ongoing process. By emulating practices that have achieved this balance, you pave the way for your practice's success. ■

1. Goldratt EM. *The Goal: a Process of Ongoing Improvement*. North River Press; 1984.

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