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# Management Counsel

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## Efficient Teams: Fact or Fantasy

There is a new emphasis on teams in organizations.

While teams can be wonderful, it should not be assumed that forming teams will equate with efficiency as a matter of course.

Efficient teams demand a disciplined and practical approach, focused on outcomes that add to the value of the organization.

In my opinion many organizations do not focus enough on this outcomes oriented approach. They instead tend to **focus on the process of team building, assuming that efficiency and required outcomes from teams will materialize.**

### **Teams Can Be Efficient**

There is really no excuse for teams being any less efficient than a traditional "accountability hierarchy" or structure.

Efficiency comes with:

- Setting clear goals for the team.
- Ensuring team members see themselves as jointly accountable for meeting the team's goals.
- Skilled use of team techniques such as agenda management,

conflict resolution, and work plan and control.

- Strict adherence to follow up on commitments [the "to do list"].

### ***A Common Failing: We Have a Team and So We Do Everything Together***

One habit in a team environment that causes significant efficiency losses is the tendency to have meetings amongst all the team to discuss and decide on too many of the issues. Work allocation still needs to be done in a team environment.

### ***Accountability MUST Flow with AUTHORITY***

Inefficiency occurs when teams are not assigned accountability and authority in equal measures. Some organizations see teams as "agents for doing work for management approval". If management cannot let the team decide anything, why have the team?

Similarly, one cannot have an "empowered" team if it has no ability to act. What constitutes empowerment, and how one achieves this, is explored in the interesting book "ZAPP! The

Lightning of Empowerment" by William Byham.

## Empowered by ZAPP!

An inexpensive (less than \$15.00) book, ZAPP! has been on the business book best seller list for a few years. It explores, through a fable, the process of empowerment.

**When you get zapped you get empowered, and when you get sapped you are disempowered.** The tale demonstrates the impacts on an organization in each case.

ZAPP! is quick to read and provides "Joe Mode's Notebook" pages throughout the book to summarize key learning points.

To empower someone you must:

1. maintain their self-esteem
2. listen to them and respond with empathy
3. ask for their help in solving problems.

And, very importantly, you must offer help without taking responsibility away from them.

The book also examines the factors that determine what influences how

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empowered a person will be:

- the person's immediate boss
- the other people who affect the person's job
- higher management
- the organization and systems.

In addition, in my view, **empowerment must also begin with the individual's own beliefs and attitudes.**

## Intellectual Property Management

**O**rganizations of all sizes and purposes are finding that they have an interest in managing intellectual property.

Intellectual Property (IP) includes trade marks, copyrights, computer software and hardware, trade marks, patents, industrial designs and **trade secrets**.

Laws exist in Canada and most other jurisdictions e.g. U.S., Europe, that set out an organization's IP rights and obligations. It is important to **understand and take advantage** of the protection offered and to **avoid** costs from related conflicts.

### **Intellectual Property Management Services**

We work with the law firm Ogilvie and Company, and with other professionals in areas ranging from engineering to accounting, to provide intellectual property management services. We help:

- identify what IP exists
- establish what preventive steps can be taken to protect the IP from inadvertent loss to another party's actions (accidental or deliberate), including:

- non disclosure and confidentiality agreements
- non-competition agreements
- licensed rights
- physical, operational, administrative controls
- employment contracts, including ownership over IP now and in the future
- licensing relationships and approaches, including:
  - negotiations
  - contracting
  - performance monitoring

### **Managing Trade Secrets**

An important area that can be overlooked by many organizations is **trade secrets**.

Trade secrets represent the knowledge of how an organization competes, how it works. Trade secrets can mean the difference between operating loss or profit: if everyone knows what we do and how, we can lose our advantage.

**Employment practices, file management, contractual relationships and physical controls** are elements to be managed to protect trade secrets.

### **Intellectual Property Affects All Organizations**

Not only are the makers and owners of IP affected by IP issues: the users of IP must also be in touch with IP matters. For example, when your organization "buys" software, it is normally only buying a license to use the software in the **way and within the terms specified by the license**.

Inappropriate use of IP is not only a matter of contractual obligations: there may be consequences as far as the courts are concerned as well, e.g. copyright infringement, as reflected by unauthorized copying of a software program, can result in significant penalties.

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As a beginning strategy in **intellectual property management** ask yourself:

1. What intellectual property do you have in your possession?
2. Is it yours?
3. How do you protect it?
4. Can you make additional returns through leverage of the intellectual property, perhaps through licensing?
5. Do you need to protect your IP from employee exploitation? from contractors or suppliers?
6. If you are using others' IP, what rights do you have?
7. Are you respecting the rights of the others' IP?
8. For new IP that is likely to emerge, what procedure do you use to capture its value?

Page & Associates - Management Counsel would be pleased to advise you on your approach to intellectual property management.

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**Planning - Organization - Strategy  
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Intellectual Property Management**

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