

lenging, interpreting, supporting, and summarizing. These roles help to promote the mutual trust and constructive conflict necessary to the team's success and tend to evolve over time.

Mutual Accountability

No group can ever become a team until it can hold itself accountable as a team. By committing to hold themselves accountable to the team's goals, each individual earns the right to express his or her own views about all aspects of the team's effort and to have these views receive a fair and constructive hearing. Mutual accountability cannot be coerced any more than people can be forced to trust one another; however, mutual accountability does tend to grow as a counterpart to the development of team purpose, performance goals, and approach. Accountability arises from and reinforces the time, energy, and action invested in figuring out what the team is trying to accomplish and how to get it done. When people do real work together toward a common objective, trust and commitment follow. Teams that outperform other similar teams and exceed their own performance goals are rare—we call these teams *high-performing or extraordinary teams*. Such teams are differentiated by a high degree of personal commitment from all team members. This level of commitment is almost impossible to generate on purpose without high risk, because it is invariably a function of overcoming an “impossible obstacle.”

Design team members should be aware that others may feel accountable to different parties—the lighting specialist to the general contractor, the general contractor to the architect, the architect to the client-side manager, the client-side manager to the client sponsor. Only by understanding and recognizing these sometimes conflicting accountabilities can mutual accountability be achieved.

BECOMING A TEAM

In many instances the choice to become a team is neither recognized nor consciously made. Often a structured *single-leader working group* will make more sense for the performance goal and situation at hand. A working group relies on its formal leader for direction, and on the individual contributions of its members—working largely on their own—for performance results. This is in

marked contrast to a team, which strives for magnified impact that is greater than the sum of each individual's role. The choice between a team and a working group depends largely on whether the individual achievements can deliver the group's performance aspirations, or whether *shifting (multiple) leadership, collective work-products*, complementary skills, and mutual accountability are needed. By knowing the strengths and weaknesses of both teams and working groups, we are in a better position to choose which model to apply to a situation. Applying a rigorous discipline can enhance both real team and working group success.

Working Groups

Working groups thrive in hierarchical structures where individual accountability counts the most. The best working groups tend to come together to share information, perspectives, and best practices, to make decisions that help each person carry out his or her job better, and to reinforce each other's individual performance standards. The focus of a working group is always on single leadership control, individual performance goals, and individual accountabilities. As with a team, the working group will obviously benefit from a clear purpose and a common understanding of how performance will be evaluated. But unlike teams, the single-leader unit (or working group) uses its purpose only to delineate individual roles, tasks, and responsibilities. The working group roles will typically match formal organizational positions. Often, to get their work done, a senior team member will delegate to a junior colleague outside the group. Members may compete constructively with one another as they pursue individual performance targets and may also provide support and counsel to a member having difficulties. However, members do not take responsibility for results other than their own and will not try to develop additional, incremental performance requiring the combined, real work of two or more group members.

Although a team promises greater performance than a working group, there is considerably more risk involved with teams. To begin with, achieving team performance is just plain hard work. Moreover, a leap of faith is required to overcome values of individualism and the reluctance to trust one's fate to others. "Faking" this leap of faith will lead to a failing team, which will divert members from their individual goals and result in a group performance less than the sum of individual performances. Working groups are less risky and do not need to invest time shaping their purpose, objectives, and approach,