X Teams: The external route to team performance

Professor Deborah Ancona

CISR
November 2005
What Do **YOU** Think Accounts for Strong Team Performance?
Good Internal Process is Only Half the Story and If You Have Only Half the Story Right---You Fail
Principles of X-Teams

#1--High-Performing X-Teams Combine Extreme Execution Inside with External Activity Outside

Example: Microsoft Netgen Team
What do teams do across their boundaries?

- ambassadorial activity → power structure
- task coordination → workflow structure
- scouting → information structure
What predicted high performance?

High performing teams combined all three activities:

• ambassadorial
• task coordination
• scouting -- early on
#2 High-Performing X-Teams Shift Their Activities Over the Lifetime of the Team

PHASES

- EXPLORATION
- EXPLOITATION
- EXPORTATION
How does one structure a team to engage in external activity?

- Extensive Ties
- Expandable Tiers
- Flexible membership
- Extreme Execution
Why consider X-Teams in Your Organization?

- #1: We want to innovate but everyone is already overworked with day-to-day activities?
- #2: Top management has a vision and strategy but sometimes implementation lags behind?
- #3: Local line managers know the problems, the customers, the technology, the competition, and have ideas for change, but feel powerless to act.
- #4: Teams need information and expertise that lie outside their boundaries, but they cannot always access what they need.
- #5: The world is rapidly changing, problems are complex, and we need to find a way to adapt and work under these conditions.
Conditions for Effective X-Team Programs

- Commitment from the Top
- Launch—Content, Who Are We, Brainstorm Ideas, Plan of Action
- Stringent Structure
- Support and Feedback
- Ending in Style
What Do You Get?

- Individual Growth in Leadership and Teamwork
- Team Success
- Infrastructure for Innovation in the Firm
QUESTIONS ???