

Team working at Toyota Manufacturing UK

At Toyota Manufacturing UK, the customer comes first. We continually seek to provide products with outstanding quality at a reasonable price to satisfy our customers' needs.

We recognise that people are the foundation of the Company and highly competent, motivated and respected Members commit to work towards fulfilling the objectives of the Company. We strive to provide to the individual both growth opportunity and stable employment through the achievement of the long-term prosperity of the Company.

The Company's primary objective is to grow and prosper. Since the catalyst for this progress is the Members, we recognise our obligation to maintain stable employment and, through the Company's prosperity, to offer financial and long-term advancement.

An objective is to improve the quality of working life for Members by ensuring that they are treated with dignity and fairness, and that they are provided with economic security and opportunities for advancement, in recognition of their contribution to the Company. We appreciate that these are benefits from employment with the Company and can only result from increasing productivity, and the best use of all resources.

We have a fairly flat organisation, which allows for ease of communications and flexibility. Within departments the organisation divides into groups and teams, this team structure is a key element of the Company's effectiveness.

Maximum flexibility and mobility of Members between work roles is essential for the most effective utilisation of Company facilities and people resources. Training is therefore directed to developing skills to meet job requirements. Through on-the-job training, Members are encouraged to learn many tasks so that movement and rotation within job responsibilities is possible.

Simply training and developing individuals is not enough; each Member needs to understand how their contribution fits into the whole group. To be aware of other Members' skills and knowledge and to cooperate to work together to achieve objectives. The Group Leader has a key role within the team, regularly assessing how well each Member works within the team, what their skill and motivation levels are and developing people as required.

Teamwork can only be achieved in a positive work environment where Members feel comfortable. To promote teamwork, Members need to be treated equally and fairly to avoid dissatisfaction. Members also need to feel able to express their views and opinions and understand the views of others in the team.

We believe that the six most important factors for effective teamwork are as follows: effective leadership, good system of operating, sufficient and consistent control, friendly and trusting environment, effective communication and common purpose & vision.

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Traditionally, when we talk about teams, we are looking at people who work together with shared roles, much like a football team. They play into each other's positions and have shared skills. At Toyota Manufacturing UK, our team behaviour is more like rowing a boat. Each person has their own role, and they become skilled at operating within it, but if any Member of the team is missing, or cannot cope, it upsets the balance of the boat, and its ability to achieve maximum success.

Teamwork is essential at Toyota Manufacturing UK. It means: Working together towards shared goals and understanding, share commitment to hard work, being creative and resourceful, sharing views and opinions openly, continuously learning about your job and those of your fellow Members and Being flexible to support the Company and other team Members.

Teams share the same purpose, whether it is to build x number of cars or record ways to save money or improve efficiency. All Members must be clear about the task. Each Member of the team needs to understand what needs to be done and when it needs to be complete. Each Member must understand and agree on flexibility/need for continuous improvement. They need to have shared commitment to support others, this ensures that the results of the team measure up to the standards and customer expectations.

So, success depends not just on individual skills but on the way those individuals support and work with each other – there is no one way to develop teams. Communication is key to achieving this.

One way in which the team environment lends itself to a more effective method of working is the review process. When a team discusses an issue, the conclusions tend to be more considered, and even if there is a correct answer, a team is more likely to get it. Individuals tend to have hidden agendas/prejudices, which cloud decisions. Brainstorming is a more creative way of solving problems. By bouncing ideas off one another, teams are more likely to reach an effective answer. Finally, it means a decision is reached through consensus so if all support it, no one can complain.

Coming to a team decision is not always easy. The team needs to listen to and consider all ideas so as not to alienate any of the Members. Learning to co-operate effectively can be difficult. One needs to urge people to respect each other's knowledge/abilities, putting team success ahead of individual goals.

At Toyota Manufacturing UK we realise that both short and long term success depends on the continuous commitment of Members. Total involvement, training, multi-skilling, job rotation and good communication play a part, as do good terms and conditions, a regular salary appraisal system, Company support for education and an opportunity to discuss work issues with the Company through the Toyota Members Advisory Board.

The Company is committed to providing fair and equitable treatment for all Members. The establishment of a single union agreement has helped to support this philosophy. In all, this motivational approach helps to provide an environment in which individuals feel they can play an active role and grow as the Company grows.

In summary Toyota Manufacturing UK offers shared success in return for shared responsibility.