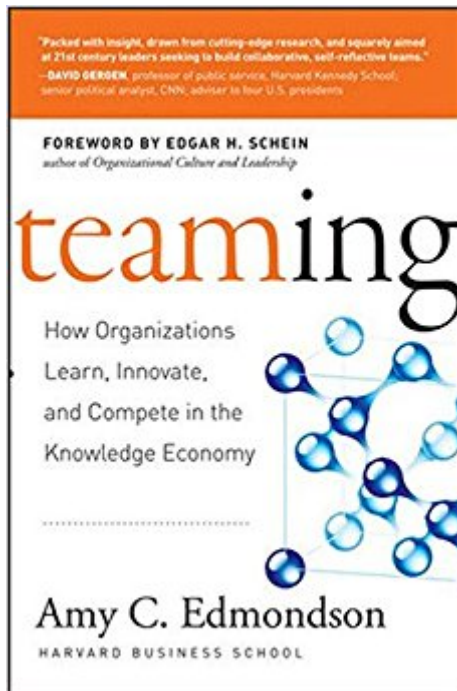


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# Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, And Compete In The Knowledge Economy



## Synopsis

New breakthrough thinking in organizational learning, leadership, and changeContinuous improvement, understanding complex systems, and promoting innovation are all part of the landscape of learning challenges today's companies face. Amy Edmondson shows that organizations thrive, or fail to thrive, based on how well the small groups within those organizations work. In most organizations, the work that produces value for customers is carried out by teams, and increasingly, by flexible team-like entities. The pace of change and the fluidity of most work structures means that it's not really about creating effective teams anymore, but instead about leading effective teaming. Teaming shows that organizations learn when the flexible, fluid collaborations they encompass are able to learn. The problem is teams, and other dynamic groups, don't learn naturally. Edmondson outlines the factors that prevent them from doing so, such as interpersonal fear, irrational beliefs about failure, groupthink, problematic power dynamics, and information hoarding. With Teaming, leaders can shape these factors by encouraging reflection, creating psychological safety, and overcoming defensive interpersonal dynamics that inhibit the sharing of ideas. Further, they can use practical management strategies to help organizations realize the benefits inherent in both success and failure.Presents a clear explanation of practical management concepts for increasing learning capability for business resultsIntroduces a framework that clarifies how learning processes must be altered for different kinds of workExplains how Collaborative Learning works, and gives tips for how to do it wellIncludes case-study research on Intermountain healthcare, Prudential, GM, Toyota, IDEO, the IRS, and both Cincinnati and Minneapolis Children's Hospitals, among othersBased on years of research, this book shows how leaders can make organizational learning happen by building teams that learn.

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

Professor Amy Edmondson of Harvard Business school has crafted a practical evidenced based book on how leaders and organizations must approach the increasing complexity of problems they face. Unlike the mindset of execution, which was successful in the past, Professor Edmondson demonstrates that in an increasingly competitive global economy a different approach is needed. Organizations must learn by teaming. She provides leaders a clear understanding of how individual and organizational psychology, the reality of hierarchical status, cultural differences, and distance can and do separate team members which can prevent successful teaming. Leaders can close these gaps by understanding the existence of these obstacles and by adapting their leadership style to support and facilitate teaming successfully. She demonstrates the challenges as well as the solutions where teaming has gone well and not so well (the "impossible" rescue of miners in Chile and space shuttle Columbia tragedy) with numerous case studies and insights. Professor Edmondson also notes that leaders must also thoughtfully identify where the challenges they face fit on the Process Knowledge Spectrum (routine, complex, or innovation). Routine operations could be a car manufacturing plant where outcomes and certainty are known. At the other extreme, innovation operations, like an academic research lab, the outcomes and certainty are quite unknown. Although the teaming framework applies, the leader's specific behaviors and actions change. Having excellent outcomes and teaming necessitates matching the right approach to the correct operation. Interestingly to maximize learning, conflict and failure are necessary for teaming to be successful.

Amy Edmondson characterizes "teaming" as "teamwork on the fly." It could also be termed "informal collaboration on steroids." Whatever, the fact remains that human beings have been exchanging information at least since the discovery of caves as shelters. Edmondson observes, "Though teaming refers to a dynamic activity rather than to a traditional, bounded group structure, many of its purposes and benefits are grounded in basic principles of teams and teamwork. Among the benefits of teams is their ability to integrate diverse expertise as needed to accomplish many important tasks." In what Peter Senge characterizes as the "total learning organization," everyone is both a teacher and a student, depending on the given information exchange. The extent to which teaming

is spontaneous is determined by the extent to which it is allowed to be. (The same is true of innovative thinking.) Edmonson explains how to achieve major strategic objectives, such as these discussed in the first chapter:

- o Formulating a new way of thinking about new ways to team (viewed as a verb)
- o Organizing to execute
- o Learning to team and teaming to learn
- o Establishing the process knowledge spectrum
- o Formulating new ways of thinking about new ways to lead

Edmonson's approach in each of the eight chapters is to identify, briefly, the "what" of some dimension or component of teaming and then devote most of her (and her reader's) attention to "how" to make it happen. She also makes skillful use of two reader-friendly devices at the conclusion of each chapter: "Leadership Summary" and "Lessons and Actions."

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