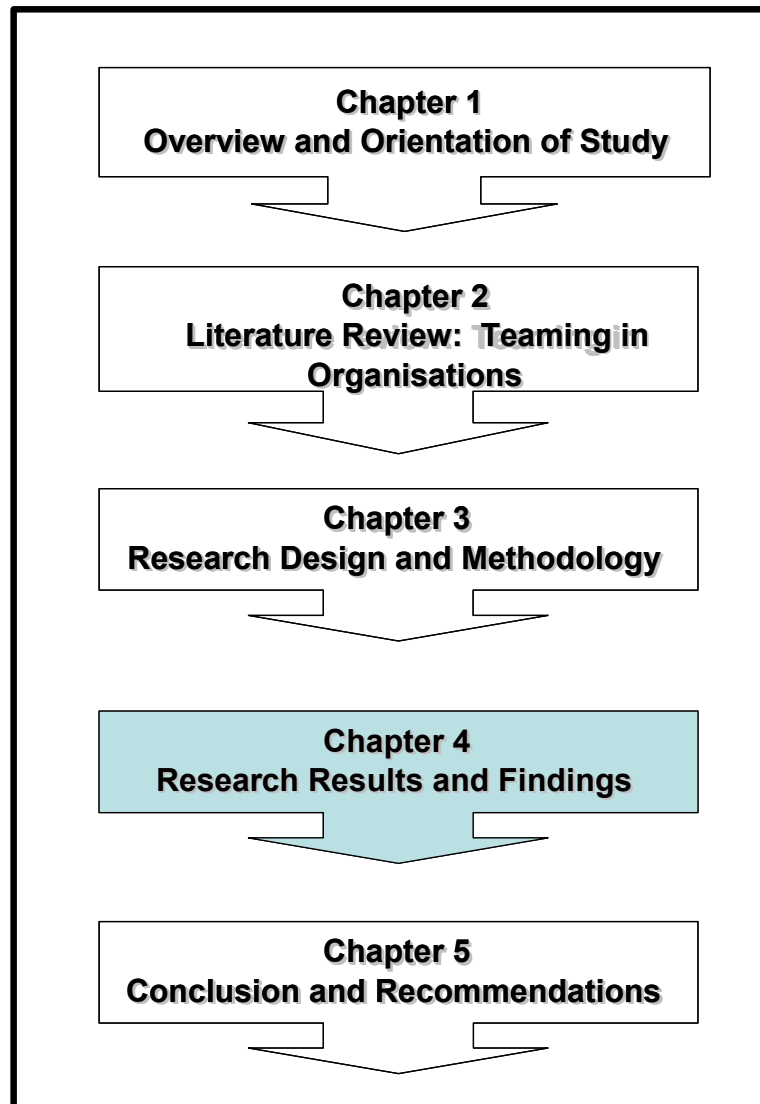




## CHAPTER 4:

# RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I justified the selected methodology in the context of the research problem and the literature review. I described the processes used to gather, interpret and analyse the data. I hope that future researchers will benefit from the process so far and that they too will embark on a further journey in the quest to understand teams better.

In this chapter, the patterns of themes elicited from the gathered data are discussed. In many cases, the interviewees were quoted verbatim, and readers should note that these quotes are presented in blue, italic type. Where I insert my own remarks as the researcher's remarks or comments, this is done in a boxed, black, non-italic (regular) style. Diary insertions continue to be presented in italics, in shaded boxes.

*♥Interpreting the interviews based on the typed script was difficult since I conducted the interviews, made eye contact, observed the behaviour and, when reading the text, these dynamics did not surface. I often concentrated so much during interviews that I did not ask obvious follow-up questions. The luxury of a transcribed text in front of me empowers me to make this remark in hindsight. However, in the interview room, it is difficult and challenging to focus and ask the right questions. In many cases, while I was working with the transcript, I thus had to conduct short telephonic interviews to follow up detail with the relevant interviewees. These follow-ups were done to check meaning with the participants, to ask for more clarification and clearer examples and to ensure that my interpretation stayed true to the original intentions of the participants. The telephonic interpretations are indicated by this symbol: ♪.*

In Table 4.1, a summary of the number of interviews, the level of participants and the duration of the personal and focus interviews is presented.

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♥ From the researcher's diary.



**Table 4.1: Summary of interviews conducted**

Company	Type of interview	Employee level	Middle management level	Top management level	Duration of transcripts
<b>Auditor-General</b>	Focus	1 (Team size 4)	0	1 (Team size: 4)	4 hours
	Individual	4	4	2	7.5 hours
<b>GijimaAst</b>	Focus	0	1 (Team size 3)	1 (Team size: 5)	2 hours
	Individual	5	3	2	8 hours

The process discussed in earlier chapters was followed, and the data were interpreted with the main research question, ‘**what are the expectations of employees of teamwork on multiple levels in selected 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations?**’ in mind.

The sub-questions were the following:

- How do South African **employees** experience teams and team work?
- What do **teams** regard as critical success factors in the team development processes?

*“These questions cannot be answered in isolation. In attempting to interpret the interviews in context, it became clear that the questions largely formed part of an integrated whole.*

From the analysis of the main research question, ‘What are the expectations of teamwork on multiple levels in selected 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations?’, **four main themes** emerged. As a researcher, I interpreted the responses in respect of these four themes regarding the expectations of teamwork in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. Sub-themes were developed under each of the following four main themes, which are:

- Theme 1: The “I” or “me” in the team (*individual level expectations*)
- Theme 2: The “us” or “we” in the organisation (*team level expectations*)

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▼ From the researcher’s diary.



- Theme 3: Organisational / leadership expectations of team work (*organisational level expectations*)
- Theme 4: 21<sup>st</sup> century team challenges (*environmental level phenomena*)

These four main themes also fit directly into the construct of Organisational Behaviour as indicated in italics above and as depicted in Figure 1.1 (see Chapter 1).

*Although some of the themes that emerged were anticipated based on the literature review set out in Chapter 2, some interesting issues arose. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the particular themes in their context – not to do a thorough literature study about the origin and meaning of that specific theme.*

*The thematic process proved to be complicated since many issues are so integrated that they can hardly be “grouped”. The reader should bear this integrated nature of the research findings in mind. If, for example, I discuss the need for respect as an individual expectation that does not mean it is a non-expectation at other levels. Most of the expectations are mutual and affect all levels. Once again, as a researcher, I realised that people cannot be “boxed” or neatly categorised. They are all unique.*

## 4.2 CODING AND IDENTIFICATION OF THEMES

Identifying the themes, coding and reviewing the coding of the material proved much harder than it seemed at first. Almost 400 pages of transcribed interview material made this task even more challenging.

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▼ From the researcher's diary.



♥A technique that really helped, since it is a visualising tool, is a system called Participlan, where I literally pasted the themes / clusters on my study wall. As the ideas evolved, I could visually “build” a story on the wall and ensure that themes were clustered in a manner that made sense and that was logical. Participlan also enabled me to unpack themes, generate ideas and cluster relevant ideas together. With the help of Weft QDA and Participlan, I used all the technology and other methods I could. Now it was up to me, the researcher, to interpret and express the ideas in front of me.

♥Another lifeline – and this functioned more at an emotional level – was my constant contact with two individuals who had successfully embarked on their PhD qualitative research journeys. I used them as both mentors and as my psychologists, and it was very enlightening to know that what I often experienced – fatigue, loss of focus, hopelessness, apathy etc. – was pretty “normal” in qualitative studies. It took many hours of thought, debate, sleepless evenings and consulting!

The themes that emerged are discussed below. They are put in the context of literature reviews and are to be read in direct quotations from the individuals who participated in this study. I trust that the reader will benefit as much as I did from what the interviewees had to share throughout more than 20 hours of combined personal interviewing.

The main themes and sub-themes can be summarised as depicted in Figure 4.1 (next page).

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♥ From the researcher’s diary.

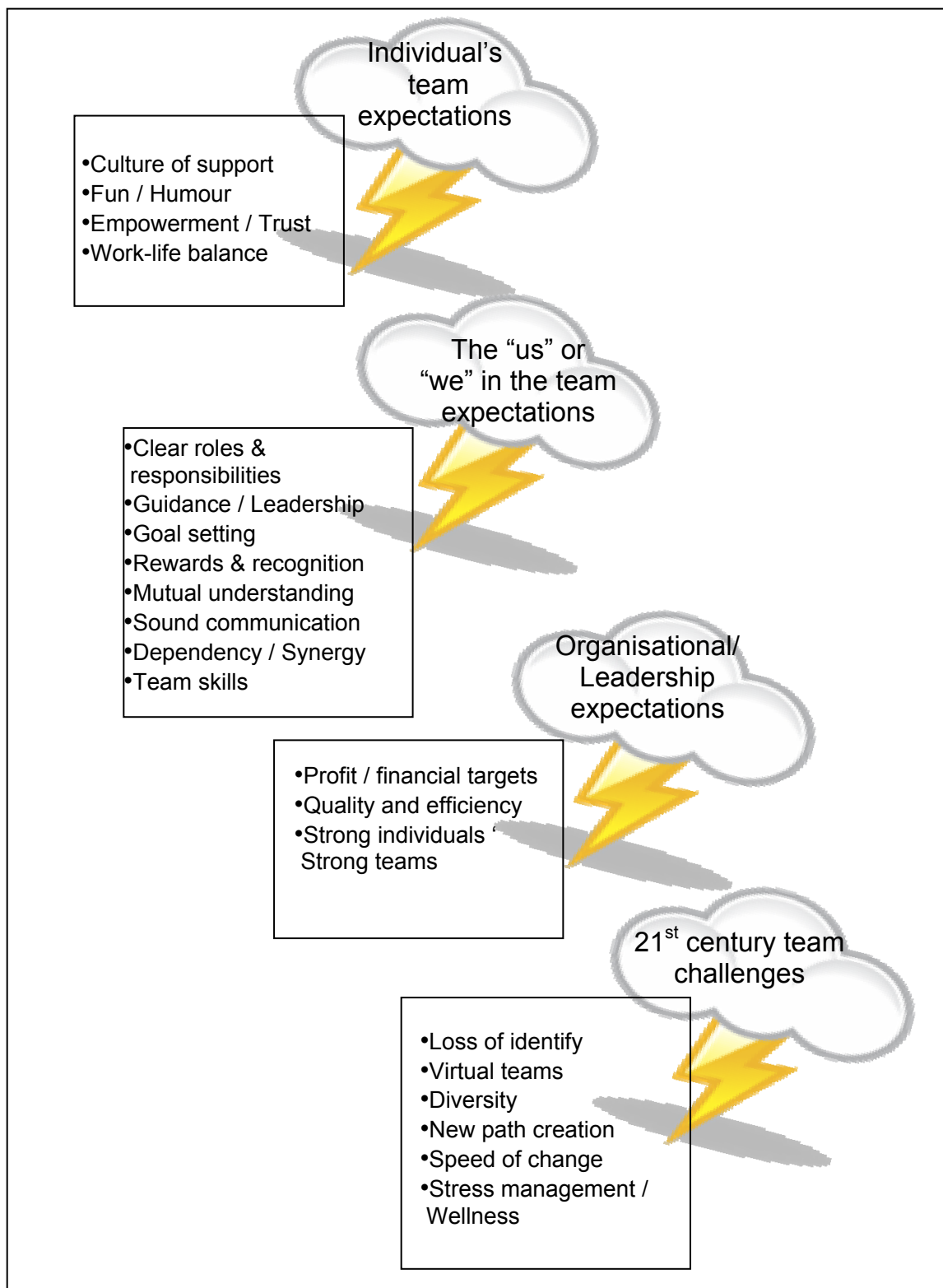


Figure 4.1: Summary of emerging themes and sub-themes



### 4.3 THEME 1: INDIVIDUAL LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

The first main theme elicited from the interview transcriptions is the various needs and expectations individuals foster regarding teams and teamwork in an organisation. In each team, there is an “I” or a “me”, and these individuals expressed certain expectations regarding 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations as their workplaces.

♥ I once again realised that the researcher remains the most important analysis tool in the integrated qualitative research process. I had to follow the principles developed by Tesch (1990: 95-97) when analysing and interpreting the collected data:

- Analysis is not the last phase of the research process; it is concurrent with data collection or cyclic. Analysis and data collection inform each other.
- The analysis process is systematic but not rigid. The analysis ends when new data no longer generate new insights.
- Attending to data includes a reflective activity that results in a set of analytical notes that guide the process.
- Data are “segmented”, i.e. divided into relevant meaning “units”, yet the connection to the whole is maintained. The analysis always begins with reading all data to provide context for smaller pieces.
- The data segments are categorised according to an organisational system that is predominantly derived from the data themselves. The main intellectual tool is comparison. The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories and to discover patterns.
- Categories for sorting segments are tentative and preliminary in the beginning; they remain flexible. Manipulating qualitative data during analysis is an eclectic activity; there is no one right way. The procedures are neither “scientific” nor “mechanistic”; qualitative analysis is “intellectual craftsmanship”.
- The result of analysis is some type of higher-level synthesis.

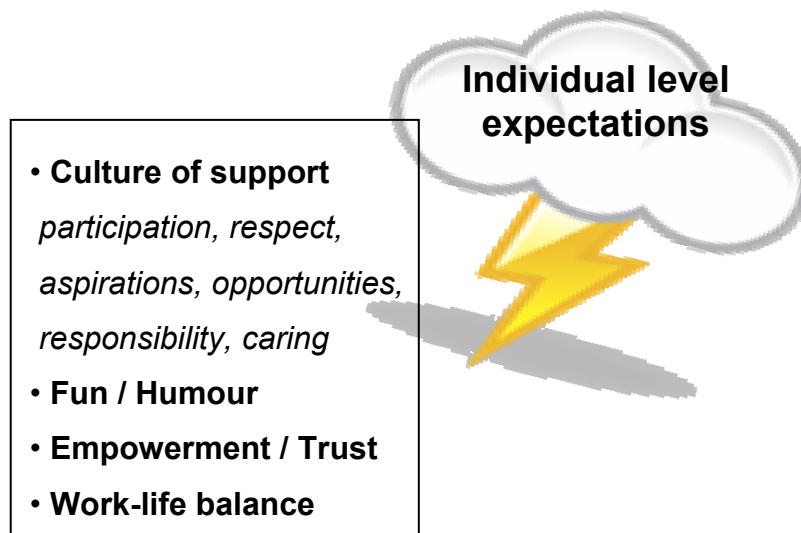
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♥ From the researcher’s diary.

Numerous research projects have been conducted about the individual and his or her experiences in organisations. Greenberg and Baron (1993), Kreitner and Kinicki (2001), Newstrom and Davis (2002), Cummings and Worley (2005), and many more have looked at the individual from an organisational perspective.

The purpose of the interpretation of the themes, however, was not to conduct more literature studies on the theme itself, but rather to understand the expectations of individuals regarding teamwork in a contemporary organisation at a deeper level. It was therefore not my intention to generalise but to focus on the participants' perspectives and thicker descriptions. In many cases, I did telephonic follow-up interviews to clarify my interpretation of the data. As already mentioned, such telephonic responses are indicated by a ♪.

Individual expectations are summarised in Figure 4.2 and further discussed in the chapter.



**Figure 4.2: Individual expectations**



### 4.3.1 A need for a supporting culture

The need to be involved, to “belong” and to experience support from others is a growing need amongst employees in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. One interviewee said: *“In order to perform I need to feel safe and experience that I belong.”* Throughout the interviews, many participants mentioned this need as an individual need in terms of teamwork.

The North-West University is doing groundbreaking South African research regarding people, policy and performance in the workplace. The Workwell Research Unit (Auditor General, 2007a) has identified a range of factors that affect the level of organisational support experienced by individuals (see Table 4.2, below).

**Table 4.2: Factors that indicate organisational support**

<b>Factors that indicate organisational support</b>	<b>Short definition</b>
<b><i>Supervisory relations</i></b>	The perceived relationship between the individual and the supervisor.
<b><i>Role clarity</i></b>	Clarity in terms of the job that needs to be executed: job profiles, specifications, competency profiles and performance agreements.
<b><i>Information received</i></b>	Information pertaining to the purpose of the work, as well as the results achieved: performance management and feedback regarding performance and work outcomes.
<b><i>Communication</i></b>	Clarity pertaining to the decision-making process in the organisation, the reporting structure, etc.
<b><i>Participation in decision-making</i></b>	The level of direct influence an employee has in the making of decisions in the workplace.
<b><i>Growth opportunities in the job</i></b>	The experiences of the individual relating to the intrinsic nature of the job.
<b><i>Variety</i></b>	The array or assortment of tasks that need to be performed, as well as the level of innovation necessary to perform these tasks.
<b><i>Opportunity to learn</i></b>	The level of challenges associated with the job, for example, personal and professional growth.
<b><i>Independence / Autonomy</i></b>	The level of respect for an employee’s expertise and the room for independent thought and action.



<b>Social support in the job</b>	Support from colleagues and contact possibilities with co-workers during work hours.
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**Source: Source: Adapted from Auditor General (2007:3)**

Jones (1992:17) argues that “the more people participate in dialogue and the decision making process, the more they are motivated to work and learn”. The new paradigm in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations is to encourage participation rather than to give orders. Interestingly, the interviewees in this study expressed precisely this need – to be part of the organisation and the team, to be given responsibility and to be trusted to carry out their responsibilities, and to be accepted and respected as individuals.

In the interviews, the participants in this study expressed very specific ideas on what they expected as individuals in the broader context of teamwork.

#### **4.3.1.1 A need to participate**

##### **On the need to participate**

###### **Interviewee 2:**

*“I am more like just the manager and I don’t ... I can’t really participate in what the team is doing.”*

Interviewer: “Why not?”

*“It is just because of the way the organisation is structured. It is the way the Auditor General have quite clear cut bands.”*

###### **Focus Interview 3:**

*“I think for a team to work in my current environment, I can’t say it will work for the whole office, but you need to see where the managers are also part of the team and they are not only the people giving instructions.”*

The comments above illustrate the fact that managers often feel detached from the team since managers are expected to “drive” the team and oversee the performance of tasks. Moreover, employees are aware of this detachment and some need a more cohesive team.



When asked to explain participation, these interviewees (one was at the managerial level) commented that, although they believe in teamwork, “managers” are often not part of team interventions since they are “busy with meetings”, etc. Managers are often also called out of team meetings. This sends a message that not all the team members are equally empowered to participate in teamwork.

#### **4.3.1.2 A need to be respected**

Respect is an integral part of the core values of both the companies participating in this study. It is broadly defined as an appreciation of individual differences and a strong consideration for others. Czerniawska (2007:18) suggests that “the recognition that no one is perfect but [that everyone] has something distinctive to add creates mutual respect”.

##### **On respect**

###### **Interviewee 8:**

*“... and also respect the others and know how to communicate and how to respect other people....there are some really brilliant people out there who might not be sharing the same background as myself so how to work with them and respect them is quite important.”*

###### **Focus Interview 3:**

*Interviewee 1: “I think the main ingredient for a team is their respectability. You need to be respectful to people.”*

*Interviewee 2: “Absolutely. That time when you see ... [someone] crying you just come in and say ‘what is wrong, my dear. Can I offer you a hand?’ Tomorrow she will go that extra mile.”*

###### **Interviewee 2:**

*“I think that if you manage or are a team leader and you are with your team, that team will work better and will have more respect for you. You will get to know your team on a more personal level and if challenges or obstacles come up you can immediately deal with them, it won’t be this go back and forth, find solutions etc.*



*... If I have a problem with somebody, I might have the freedom, even though I am the manager, I have the freedom to know that my teams should respect me – we should respect each other in our teams ...if I can be honest with my team member [then] vice versa, they can be honest with me.”*

Although respect is a central individual expectation, several interviewees mentioned that respect is not a generic principle that is interpreted in the same way by everyone. They suggested communication and “value” sessions during which respect and what it stands for is defined, discussed and interpreted by the team. Only then will individuals know what “respectful” behaviour implies in their team and in their organisation.

**More on respect**

**Interviewee 2:**

*“I think from there then you would have to offer, you have to have at least some guidelines about how ... like almost ... team rules ... for respecting each other. Within that team, you would have to ask: respecting each other means what in this team? Maybe in your team it means not chewing chewing gum, but in another team, they don’t have a problem with that. Maybe in my team it means don’t answer the cell phone unless it is a tea break or a lunch break or whatever it is that you and that team can show for each other to respect each other.”*

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“We need to say ‘guys, what are your ground rules? How do you do things around here? What are your rituals? How do we show respect?’*

**4.3.1.3 An expectation to reach one’s aspirations and be given opportunities**

A culture of support also means that the individual has the freedom to grow and accomplish his or her ambition and fulfil his or her aspirations. Interviewees expressed the expectations that the organisation will become a partner in their growth, that they will be exposed to a great job variety and that they will be offered many opportunities to grow.



### **On aspirations**

#### **Interviewee 1:**

*“...I want my manager to know what my aspirations are. But I think if you work for somebody that knows what my passions are, what my motivators are, who I am, that person can manage me better.*

*... What are their aspirations? Because a lot of people, I mean, especially in our career, where you are now is the stepping stone to where you want to be. The CAs are usually very ambitious people and everybody whose studying to be a CA is often... usually ... a very ambitious person, so where they are now is not where they want to be when they retire.”*

### **On opportunities**

#### **Interviewee 3:**

*“But I also think that they [leaders] need to give us the opportunity to get answers for ourselves as well, with guidance from them as well, not just make all the decisions themselves. I think everyone needs to be involved, not just management.”*

#### **Interviewee 8:**

*“.. What is very good is they are being helped and they are being given the opportunity to grow in that role ... although I would like more opportunities since we are a learning organisation.”*

Individuals at all organisational levels expressed the need for opportunities to learn and grow. Some argued that, although giving many opportunities to employees is part of the expressed organisational culture, this rarely happens in practice. Trust levels are in many cases too low and the lack of a training budget is often used as an excuse not to empower employees further.



#### 4.3.1.4 *The need to be held accountable / responsible*

##### **On responsibility**

##### **Interviewee 5:**

*“... we have spectacular leaders if they believe that they are allowed to do it and you can convince them to take up that challenge even if they are unsure....”*

##### **Interviewee 2:**

*“I think the office is [unclear] I think the office is actually at my level individual-driven, individual because you as an individual are responsible. You are the one who has to explain or you are the one who takes the responsibility for what is going on with your team. The team doesn't ever take that responsibility as a team and as well as that, when it goes well, you as an individual are not rewarded and ...”*

“It is well established that people who participate in making a decision and are given responsibilities tend to be more committed to the outcomes of the decision than are those who are not involved” (Greenberg & Baron, 1993:641).The interview feedback confirmed this statement and that individuals truly want to be responsible for assignments.

Employees in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations also expect to be involved and made to feel involved in setting goals and verbalising those goals.

Cummings and Worley (2005:307) refer to employee involvement as “seeking to increase member’s input into decisions that affect organization performance and employee well-being”. They add that employees can only be involved if they are given enough power, information; if they have the relevant knowledge and skills, and if they are given appropriate rewards.



### **On accountability**

#### **Focus Interview 2:**

*“...I think the crucial answer here is accountability. There needs to be in every team, whether it is a small team or a big team, there needs to be individual accountability.”*

#### **Focus Interview 3:**

*“...there has to be a clear understanding of accountability because if we allow the situation and funds mentioned where some people say how do you do it because someone else is doing it or I refuse to do it, then we are not going to move forward at all.”*

High-performing teams encourage high-performance standards, and in these teams, members hold each other accountable for performance (Dyer, Dyer & Dyer, 2007). Each team member thus takes responsibility for fulfilling his or her function in the team, not only the team leader. Throughout my interviews I found a very interesting pattern: managers seem to think that employees do not want to be held accountable, whereas employees felt that managers did not want to hold them accountable and perhaps did not trust them enough in this regard.

#### **4.3.1.6 An expectation to be “cared for”**

When I asked one of the interviewees what she meant when she verbalised her need to be “cared for”, her answer was the following: *“Ek wil weet ander gee om en maak bemoeienis met my as persoon. Dis nie net my behoefte nie – ek glo dis ‘n spanbehoefte” [I want to know others care and am concerned with me as a person. It is not merely a personal need – I believe it is a team need]* This is very difficult to translate, but the broad meaning is that individuals have a need to know that others are concerned about and interested in them. This interviewee was clear that she can only function in a team if she knows that others in the group are sincere and truthful.



### On “being cared for”

#### Interviewee 13:

*“... when somebody is working on a project, for example, everybody will chip in to try and help even though it is not in their job description that they have to help, so within the team people sort of care about each other. If people are just working in their little silos and say I am the CEO and I am not going to help you or they give you the sort of minimum information... [then you cannot be successful]”*

#### Interviewee 2:

*“You are no longer a person, you no longer have a personality, you are just a number and you must get the job done and you have those feelings that my manager doesn’t care about me, doesn’t care about what happened, even if I do my work well.”*

#### Interviewee 10:

*“You know when you are on your own and you struggle with something for example, then you are on your own, but... it would be nice then to take a break and drink coffee with someone or just chat.”*

Interviewees, both employees and managers, stated that they had a major individual need to feel that the people around them cared. They stressed, however, that the need to be cared for is not merely an individual need, it becomes a critical success factor for teams. Their biggest concern was that employees in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations no longer had time or energy for each other or the teams they worked in. In both organisations, a culture of “we do not greet each other or ask how you are” is starting to develop.





### More about caring

#### Interviewee 2:

*“[in an ideal scenario]...there would be that respect for each other, that support for each other, there would be that ... my team member’s down or my team member didn’t get the work finished but don’t worry we as a team are going to sit here and we are going to work together but in the Auditor General it is not like that ..it is about individuals.”*

*“I don’t worry [care] about my team member. As long as my work is done, as long as I am not in trouble, it is fine.”*

During telephonic follow-up conversations, I asked for examples by means of which companies could demonstrate this “care” to its employees and their work teams. I received the following responses:

♪ “Be **more family friendly** and organise functions for employees and their families. I am not only a number put part of a family – I do have a husband and children. Arrange more functions where teams are introduced to each other’s families”

♪ “Support to those teams who **travel** often – just a telephone call or mail to show you care, or a CD to play in the car while driving. My colleagues think it is fun to stay in hotels and live out of suitcases – I assure you it is not. I often get angry that the office does not appreciate what I sacrifice from my side.”

♪ “Many employees are studying. Send them a flower, organise a **study** support group etc. What I find is that we say we are a learning organisation, but when we take study leave we are made to feel guilty that we “drop” the team. Rather support us to pass than blame us for not being there.” I also suggest that all of us studying should be allowed to learn / grow in our teams.”

### 4.3.2 Fun, humour and energy in the workplace

Andy Taylor, the CEO of Enterprise, makes the following comment: “I do believe that people do their work better if they enjoy it and are having fun. If they are having fun they will go home happier and they are going to wake up in the morning and say, ‘I like going to work’” (quoted in Kazanjian 2007:204)

Employees need to enjoy themselves, be spontaneous and have fun in the workplace. This view is supported by Stephen Lundin (2002) in his best selling work *Fish*. However, Kazanjian (2007:204) points out that Enterprise, America’s #1 car rental company, sets out to employ only enthusiastic people who work and compete hard. Having fun at work is crucial, but “one needs to keep fun and forged friendships in check by never forgetting that business comes first”.

**Interviewee 1:**

*“We need more joy and enjoyment, you know!”*

Interviewees expressed a concern that work is becoming too serious and that contemporary organisations are losing their sense of humour. Since everything is deadline driven, there is no time for enjoyment; and, since stress levels are very high, nobody is really in the mood or has time to have fun anymore. Although the participants acknowledged the importance of fun in the workplace, they typically blamed factors like time constraints, stress and tough targets for what one interviewee called “a stern and unfriendly workplace”.

**On fun**

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“ I think fun makes it better, especially the role in getting everyone to focus on the same goal.”*

**Interviewee 10:**



*“I think it is a rule – they call it rules – to have fun. They are trying to bring back some fun in the work environment. Because it is so stressed, you need to laugh a bit and joke a bit and do some stuff together that is not work related.”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“I mean, in the wonderful world out there you would like to see teams more interacting with one another, having more fun.”*

**Interviewee 8:**

*“We spend a lot of time at work and if you spend it with people that you can relate to a bit and have a bit of a laugh about this or that, ... you will better be able to work towards a common goal.”*

**Interviewee 9:**

*“We are a great team – we share jokes. Most of the time if everyone... if someone gets a joke we share it and we end up discussing the joke. We laugh a lot, ja [yes].”*

### **4.3.3 Empowerment and trust**

Interviewees expressed the view that empowerment in teams is crucial for team effectiveness. Liden and Arad (1996) argue that, over the past two decades, two complementary perspectives on empowerment in the workplace have emerged. The first is more macro and focuses on contextual conditions that enable workplace empowerment. The second is more micro and the focus is on the psychological experience of empowerment at work. The essence of the contextual or social-structural perspective is the idea of sharing power between superiors and subordinates in order to cascade decision-making power to lower levels in the organisation. Psychological empowerment refers and focuses on how employees experience their work.

“Empower” means power-sharing, the delegation of power or authority to subordinates in the organisation” (Daft, 1999:251). Harrington-Mackin (1996)



suggests that to empower employees implies that there is a willing and open transfer of resources and power from one level of an organisation to another.

Empowering literally means, “giving power”. It is a process of enabling others. It means driving down decision-making, sharing information, giving people control of their work, and thereby generating commitment. It shows that the leaders believe in and trust team members.

Charlton (1992:33) argues that empowerment is a process that is implemented to develop individuals who are able, competent, or motivated, and this process allows individuals as well as teams to use their optimum potential at work. Kirkpatrick (2001:20) urges managers to ensure a “free and open flow of up-and-down communication and information”. He sees empowerment as the organisation’s ability to ensure that teams are “well trained, highly motivated and have the tools to do their work”.

#### **On trust**

##### **Interviewee 7:**

*“... a team should have certain values and we must respect that. Teamwork should be part of it, integrity should be part of it, loyalty should be part of it and those things should be there and we should trust each other. When those things are together then I think we should ... we will talk the same language and we will walk the same direction.”*

##### **Interviewee 8:**

*“With relationships comes trust so you must trust your partner or your colleagues to be able to reach a common goal. So I think a relationship is important and for me personally [it is] quite important to be able to trust and work with each other so that when one person says one thing it is not too sensitive, the other person can relate to that.”*

##### **Interviewee 5:**

*“... we get to know people in a much broader context, understand what they are about. It is partly a function of time and it is partly a function of trust and again I think the research set up is quite unique in the sense that ... probably*



*one of the key driving factors for any research type person is the fact that you need to respect the people that work with you.”*

Interviewees felt that empowerment was not possible if the parties concerned did not trust each other and demonstrated that trust in their behaviour. This is consistent with research done by Ergeneli *et al.* (2007), who found that trust has an important relationship to experienced empowerment. Especially trust in a leader was found to be particularly potent for empowerment. Moye *et al.* (2004) also found that teachers with a higher interpersonal trust with their principals reported that they found their work more meaningful and had significant self-determination and impact. It is clear from research findings that a trusting relationship with one's boss and with team members is important for individuals to experience empowerment at work. "Relationships matter for empowerment" (Spreitzer, 2007:16).

The impact of a lack of trust seems to be that managers or individuals end up doing the work and carrying the responsibilities of unwilling individuals in the team. In the end, as one interviewee rightly pointed out, "it often ends in aggression, conflict, an ulcer or all three".

#### **On empowerment**

##### **Interviewee 2:**

*"The culture is if somebody is not pulling their weight, you know they are not pulling their weight and you end up giving them easy sections to do because you don't trust that person, you don't trust that they are going to contribute towards the team so you give them whatever the lowest risk of that team and the rest of the team carries on working."*

#### **4.3.4 Work-life balance**

Both companies researched have a so-called "wellness" service provider to assist individuals with any stress- or health-related issues. The mere existence of these programmes suggests that there is a need for them. According to the *Workwell Research Unit* of the North West University

(Auditor General, 2007a), South African companies are investing more and more in the health and wellness of their employees. The members of the research unit identify exhaustion, a lack of vitality, mental distance, poor psychological well-being and deteriorating physical health levels as some of the greatest challenges in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations.

In a recent pilot study (Auditor General, 2007) in one of the companies researched, a survey amongst 71 respondents revealed the following:

- 54 employees reported serious eye strain;
- 41 complained about backaches;
- 45 suffered from stress;
- 23 reported sleeping disorders;
- 34 said they felt exhausted most of the day;
- 10 reported that they believed their work interfered with their personal lives;
- only 21 exercised on a regular basis; and
- 34 respondents had not taken leave during the past two years.

The effect on organisational effectiveness is enormous. “Unwell” employees or unwell teams do not have the energy to participate; they experience job overload; and – although they are physically present – they have “checked-out” at an emotional and spiritual level. According to Rothman (2007:48), “research has found that disengagement results in higher turnover, reduced discretionary effort, reduced productivity, reduced service delivery and reduced organisational commitment”.

#### **On work-life balance**

##### **Interviewee 10:**

*“It is important ... to relax because work is so stressful and you really sometimes just need to do something else and not think about work and not talk about work – people don't know how to. People do not know how to alleviate stress so they take it out on other people. As work teams we need to relax more”.*



**Focus Interview 1:**

*“The other main thing I think is the family versus work. I think your family thing is more and more important.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“[people]... are always under stress, there is always that stress factor, that pressure coming in and ... with stress and with that pressure you always seem to bring out the worst in people and everybody perceives that is how that person is ...”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“It is a very, very stressful, financial view that you have and you either do that or you don't make it. It takes me a while to let go when I get home. I am not dad for three hours after having come home.”*

In conclusion, it can be stated that both individuals and teams in a 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation expect a more personal approach from their managers. “Where once, people accepted being ‘led’, as one of a large body of people, all being treated the same, all directed in the same way, a model based on the military, now they expect to be treated as an individual” (Cooper, 2005:350).

The implication is that organisational leadership needs to show an interest in the lifestyle and the external issues in an employee's life, as well as in job and career needs. Cooper (2005:350) argues that this is going to be a great challenge in organisations where the “old expectation that people should not bring their problems to work” is disappearing.

There is no longer a “one size fits all” solution to problems in contemporary organisations. As clearly proven by the interview findings, individuals expect organisations to provide a culture of support, to allow fun and humour, to empower them and trust them and to facilitate and support a work-life balance culture in the organisation.

#### 4.4 THEME 2: TEAM LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

Kriek and Viljoen (2003:7) contend, “the most distinguishing feature of a team is that its members all share, as highest priority, their desire to accomplish a common goal or goals. They describe the following as the five commonly recognised characteristics of teams:

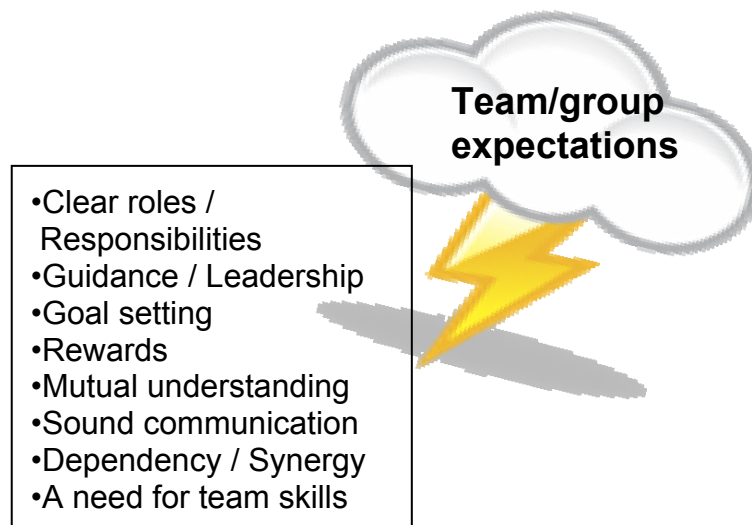
- “team exist to achieve a shared goal
- teams are bounded and stable over time
- team members have the authority to manage their own work and internal process
- team members are interdependent regarding some common goal
- teams operate in a social system context”.

“Teams are the essential building block of the organization of the future” (Bryrne in Katzenbach & Smith, 2001). This organisation of the future is now the organisation of today, and teams are playing a critical role in contemporary organisations. Katzenbach and Smith (2001:x) argue that, “despite the rapid spread of teaming in organisations..., too many people still think of [a] *team* as a name for an organizational unit or a set of companionable feelings”.

Group theory became prominent in the 1930s and 1940s and was based on the idea that people act and react differently in groups than they do as individuals. Many researchers have since communicated various views as to how and why teams succeed and fail, and the debate continues. The tactic followed in this study was to approach team members, spend some quality time with them, and obtain their assistance in understanding the expectations of teams in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations.

Each time a “new” interview was conducted, it became more apparent that team members had specific expectations in terms of teamwork and that they placed a high premium on the overall effectiveness of the team, as opposed to individual behaviour. Team or group expectations are set out in Figure 4.3 and further discussed below.





**Figure 4.3: Team/group expectations**

#### **4.4.1 Clear roles and responsibilities**

Interviewees expressed definite needs in terms of defined roles and responsibilities. This finding is in line with the findings reported in the literature, as exemplified by the following remark: “High-performing teams have a clearly defined purpose with specified outcomes, and they begin to care deeply about individual team members so that if one fails, all fail” (Staroba, 1996:65). Kriek and Viljoen (2003:21) add that teams have formal and informal roles, and that these roles are “prerequisites for any team to function”. They argue that clear roles direct the team’s effort, channel the creative effort of the team and set the team climate.

Robbins *et al.* (2004) point out that effective teams are characterised by members that are committed to a common purpose and share specific team goals. He adds that, in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations, employees should be part of the process of defining roles, to ensure ownership and eventual commitment to organisational goals.



Throughout the interviews, it seemed as if teams are often unsure of the extent to which each member understands his or her role as well as the degrees of authority and freedom that accompanies those roles. Moxon (1993:23) observes that team members often utter remarks like “I thought you were doing that” or “that is my job!” simply because roles and responsibilities were not explained and clarified in a formal way. Teams should also be empowered by being clear on what the assessment criteria is by which they will be judged in terms of whether they reach their objectives or fail (Belbin, 1996:39).

### **On role clarity**

#### **Interviewee 7:**

*“It is important that each and everyone within a team must understand his roles and responsibilities and that is vital and this is how I prefer teams to operate. We have ... we are working together as a team with certain rules that you have to abide by ....”*

#### **Interviewee 13:**

*“It is important for teams to have roles and responsibilities, yes, but it can also change, you know, depending on the situation, but it is good to have specific roles for each situation.”*

#### **Interviewee 8:**

*“... we have got special challenges in that regard, but in general I think we are now bonding as a team and getting together; and there are certain roles and responsibilities that each of us fulfils to enable the others to do their work better. ... For this project our roles and responsibilities for this specific project might not be the same as for another project so our business manager takes this project and says ... and he says: ‘All right, this is the project, this is our goal, there are two or three people available to you for this specific project’, and then we put out the roles and responsibilities for them. If we want to succeed we have to....”*

“The most powerful force for effective teaming arises from a common performance purpose, common team goals and a commonly agreed upon work approach” (Katzenbach & Smith, 2001:111). Team members must know what drives the team, what inspires them and what their vision is. They must also know what tasks need to be performed for the team to reach its goal. Team members must feel that they participate in setting the goals, as well as in measuring how well these goals are reached, and in the process will be more committed to those goals.

#### **4.4.2 Guidance and leadership**

During the 1930s and 1940s, leadership became prominent and was explored on the basis that leaders do not lead individuals but actually lead groups. Researchers discovered that people act differently in groups than they do as individuals. Ever since that movement, organisations and researchers have been trying to understand leadership – they have defined the characteristics, tried to identify behaviours and traits, observed so-called great leaders, embarked on various research projects, etc.

Smith (2007:16) argues that today, in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations, we rely on group theory and theories on team dynamics whenever we talk about how to lead teams, one of the “buzzier buzz phrases” of the past ten years. The role of the leader in the team seems to be prominent, and all the interviewees in the current study mentioned that they had definite expectations of a team leader.

Mintzberg (1973), often described as an expert in the field of power and politics in organisations, argues that the organisation and the teams within that organisation look to its formal head for guidance and motivation. In his or her leadership role, the manager defines the atmosphere in which the team will work. Leadership thus involves interpersonal relationships between the leader and the led; and the leader determines the atmosphere in a team. During the interviews, it became clear that the atmosphere in the team is most certainly determined by the team leader in that team.



### **On team leadership**

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“Your team awareness depends on the leader of that team and if the manager of that team says we do it as a team, that determines the whole culture of that little team because there is no overall culture.”*

#### **Focus Interview 3:**

*“The strong teams have their leaders that recognise the importance of people and team development, so it depends on the leadership or on the management in that team. But there is no culture to say when you are in a team in the Auditor General, this is what we do.”*

#### **Interviewee 1:**

*“It depends on who is the group leader in a business unit. Some business units tend to focus on people, other business units tend to focus on our technical [aspects]. So overall I don't think we can say the Auditor General only focuses on technical, it depends on what business unit you are in.”*

During telephonic follow-up interviews, I specifically asked interviewees for suggestions and examples as to how leadership in teams could be enhanced. The replies were impressive – not because of their high strategic and original value – but because of the simplicity and practical application of the recommendations.

♪ “Leaders need to be more visible. They need to see their teams more often and need to visit clients more. Our leaders are mostly in meetings and in their offices and never speak to us – the employees.”

♪ “Positive leadership behaviour needs to be acknowledged. There must be a forum where we share leadership successes. We must



also know about the “bad” leadership behaviours and learn from that. As long as be look at the behaviour and not the person.”

♪ “Our culture must become more ‘friendly’. We do not smile enough. It seems to me the higher your rank, the sterner you are. In some business units managers do not even greet their team members.”

♪ “We should empower our teams and also reward their good performance. We should not reward “bad” behaviour by doing nothing. We must have a process in place to keep people on track and take corrective action if necessary. Our leaders must drive this and insist that good teams be rewarded.”

♪ “We should have a reward / recognition programme for truly great leaders, for example, “person / leader of the year”. This should not be done on a structural basis – any leader on ANY level should be acknowledged.”

♪ “We should create a leadership culture by going back to basics: have regular ‘tea sessions’, have a regular ‘leadership article published’, etc. We need to see that our leaders are people and part of the team.

Good leaders have the ability to motivate and truly lead diverse teams. Silzer (2002:31) argues that good business leaders recognise the power of caring about employees as people. He adds the following seven attributes or traits of 21<sup>st</sup> century business leaders:

- business acumen – good leaders must recognise that business is a science as well as an art and data is balanced with common sense;
- customer orientation – good leaders must be focused on service, quality and satisfaction;
- results orientation – good leaders do not confuse effort with results;
- strategic thinking – good leaders anticipate future trends and directional shifts in the marketplace;



- innovation and risk-taking – good leaders are willing to explore new possibilities and approach issues differently;
- integrity – good leaders have an uncompromising and uncomplicated understanding of right and wrong, and have the courage and conviction for personal beliefs; and
- interpersonal maturity – good leaders are not focused on the self, but are rather other-oriented instead, and they follow a collaborative approach.

Other interesting remarks about leadership and the role it plays in team development are reflected in the interviewees' comments below.

#### **On leadership style**

##### **Interviewee 7:**

*"...there are different leadership styles and it definitely has an impact on certain people, there's a case of one or two people that's been in our area for a while and when they were in a different team they just did not ... when they were in another team and had another name they were just not happy and [they were] unproductive and the perception that everybody had was that this person was a poor performer, but suddenly now in our team this person is doing brilliant work and so [on] and so [on]. Leadership definitely has an impact on individuals that just can't work with certain people".*

#### **On empowered leaders**

##### **Interviewee 5:**

Interviewer: "Are your leaders empowered?"

*Interviewee: "No, but we have spectacular leaders if they believe that they are allowed to do it and you can convince them to take up that challenge."*

#### **On determining the team atmosphere**

##### **Interviewee 10:**



*“He [the leader] must help in terms of technical stuff, Ja [Yes] and friendly and he has to try and bring the people together and create a nice environment. I think the leader must set standards so ... and we must look up to him. He shouldn't be like one of the moody guys or whatever, so we can look up to him.”*

### **On challenges faced by leaders**

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“... none of them would want my job quite honestly because it is full of ... there is a whole lot of crap that comes with it.”*

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

Interviewer: “What do teams expect from their managers”?

Interviewee: *“Well as ....I said, just to get the shit (sic), the stuff that comes from the top, just kick that away. Give them direction.”*

### **On leadership skills**

#### **Interviewee 1:**

Interviewer: “What do you regard as the most important factor in team work?”

Interviewee: *“ to be a leader, it would definitely to be a leader because at this stage we have problems with the leader and also our leaders supposedly don't always have the skills or the backgrounds or the knowledge, sorry to say, technical and people skills.”*

### **On mentorship**

#### **Focus Interview 1**

*“If I'm looking at... going back to my guys, they look at me as a mentor whether I am or not I don't know. I believe I require that and I don't get that. ... I believe in executive coaching and stuff like that ... and I am saying that I don't have it with my current leadership ... the biggest, biggest, biggest lack in leadership development is that we don't see our current leaders as mentors ....”*

Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) argue that leaders have the capacity to make things better in teams, but often they make things much worse. They summarise the importance of leadership in teams when they share their short checklist to help leaders be as effective as possible. They assert that good leaders should:

- act as if they are in control, project confidence and talk about the future, even while recognising organisational limitations as well as their own limitations
- avoid to fall in the trap of losing their behavioural inhibitions and behaving in destructive ways. They need to maintain an attitude of wisdom and a healthy dose of modesty.
- learn when and how to get out of the way and let others make contributions. Sometimes the best leadership is no leadership at all.
- architect organisational systems, teams and cultures, and establish the conditions and preconditions for others to succeed.

#### **4.4.3 Goal-setting**

Goal setting is a very important indicator of effectiveness in teams (Kinlaw, 1991). Teams need to know why they exist and where they are going. Huszcsó (1996) argues that clear goals in teams define the team purpose, as well as the team direction.

Clear goals have a strong motivational component. If individuals are to be motivated, they need to have goals – “something to strive for, something they can achieve” (White, 1995:201).





## On motivation

### Interviewee 5:

*“We are very close, we do understand the dependency, we all work toward the same goals. If you look at 80% of our day, we tend to be on our own and work independently. So it is a very defined team but at the same time it is quite a strong team.”*

### Focus Interview 1:

*“... it (the goal) is purely financial and we know what that goal is, we know what that number is and that, particularly in my team, that is what we work towards.”*

Interviewer: Financial goals?

*Interviewee: “Financial goals. Because that is what is being demanded from us right now.”*

### Focus Interview 2:

*“You have to have goals ...and we need clear communication for those goals because if you know what your goals and responsibilities are... if you clearly communicate on expectations... then we can hold people accountable throughout the firm.”*

### Interviewee 3:

*“You must have goals, you must have targets, not just goals, not just I want to get there, you must know specific goals and specific targets and know that if you are exceeding it.”*

### Interviewee 11:

Interviewer: What would you do if you were the team leader?

*Interviewee: “I will make sure that they understand, we are not going for the individuals and that people are expected to work in teams and then set their team goals and make sure that everyone understands*



*this and they have to make sure that they work towards these with other teams. Measure, measure, measure!”*

**Interviewee 12:**

*“As business unit manager at present in my own sense, that is where I come into play. I will tell the developers to kindly code in the same direction, not to butt heads over some innocuous concept. So in a way I get to run the team as a dictator. So let's develop the individual so that they can contribute to the organisation. If you are a colonel and an infantry all you want is lots of guys who run in the same direction and hopefully they shoot in the same direction.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“ I mean at the end of the day the product, there are certain things that it has to meet, there are certain requirements, that you can't be inconsistent about, but how you get there, you can be inconsistent. As long as people understand the goal, it is communicated even to your team and to other teams and people understand it. Everybody works differently.”*

**Interviewee 11:**

*“Everyone must know what is expected of them as a team; I will expect of them to measure themselves on a frequent basis, and that is basically, it now sounds strange, measuring, measuring, measuring, but if they understand what they should work towards, like I said in the beginning, it is a lot of people that work towards one goal, if they understand that and they come together on a frequent basis to see how far they are to getting to that goal, it will facilitate team work within the organisation. So I will, like I say, just maybe summarise, I will make sure that they understand, we are not going for the individuals and that people are expected to work in teams and then set their team goals and make sure that everyone understands this and they have to make sure that they work towards these other teams.”*

#### 4.4.4 Rewards and recognition

Team excellence should be celebrated regularly. Blacklock and Jacks (2007:150) observe that, in contemporary organisations, “remarkably, people can be slow to recognize achievement or give positive feedback, even to those with whom they are close. Pride in being part of a winning team should be encouraged and demonstrates as a valued principle”.

The interviewees regarded rewards and recognition as important factors in team effectiveness. The problem seems that performance is mainly measured on an individual level, which cultivates an atmosphere of individual performance rather than team performance. “We know we have done a good job but we still get an enormous sense of pride when that is recognised” (Jackson, 2000:72). Jackson argues that employees need recognition to provide them with a sense of status and to feel like a star. Throughout my interviews, I found that very few managers or teams understood the power of something as simple as a “thank you”.

**Interviewee 5**

*Measuring mostly individual performance is a severe barrier in team development.*

The **VOICE** model is a practice that was developed after examining 50 high-performance business enterprises (Rucci, Ulrich & Gavina, 2000 in Silzer, 2002). These practices have been shown to affect employee attitudes that are directly predictive of improved satisfaction levels and shareholder return. The aspect of interest in this case is the fact that team members need to be rewarded for results and should be allowed to share in team success.

<b>V</b>	<b>Vision</b>	Have a purpose and create a clear line of sight
<b>O</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>	Evaluate and develop people obsessively
<b>I</b>	<b>Incentive</b>	Reward results and let employees share in success
<b>C</b>	<b>Communication</b>	Share information widely and listen
<b>E</b>	<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	Promote innovation And risk taking

**Figure 4.4: VOICE: Key practices of 21<sup>st</sup> century business leaders**  
(adapted from Rucci *et al.* 2000 in Silzer, 2002)

The dilemma in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations seems to be that team loyalty is seriously dwindling. One of the reasons could be that teams are often asked to work harder and smarter, “typically ... without praise, without rewards commensurate with gains in productivity, or without any real say in how their organisation is structured and managed” (Saul, 1991:27). The interviewees in this study were clear in their statements that money is not what they expect at all times, they rather crave a sincere thank you and other forms of recognition.

The literature refers to recognition as a variety of ways in which the organisation can let employees know that they are doing the right things in the right manner (Beck & Yeager, 1994).

#### **On rewards**

##### **Interviewee 2:**

*“...If something is going well you must reward it, don’t just look past those accomplishments that you make. If you have set goals for yourself and you have accomplished those goals before the deadline or whatever, then reward the team members.”*



**Focus Interview 1:**

*“Show me the money.”*

**Interviewee 9:**

Interviewer: “What do they do to support you as a team to get to that result?”

*Interviewee: “Our manger said that if we get our calls below fifty he would buy us all breakfast.”*

Interviewer: “Did you get that breakfast?”

*Interviewee: “Well, we got our calls below fifty but we are still waiting for our breakfast.”*

**Interviewee 10:**

*“... if you give people more money then they will be more focused.”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“I want to be allowed to work from home.”*

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“Give us an award ... you get something like this, a cultural trophy with a little rhino on or so ....”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“We do reward success in our own team, like for instance one can be given the afternoon off or maybe buying cake, the rest of the team will donate money and then we go and buy a cake for the person that has done well or ... it is small things, but I think at the end of the day it is the thought that counts; it is not exactly what you do for them.”*

**Interviewee 6:**

*“...so for me having nice equipment that is working without a problem is a reward, it is not personal because not always do I want personal*



*rewards, but to have nice equipment, to have a nice mouse, maybe if you are really doing well personally, why not buy the person a special mouse, something that is nice and cordless, it is a reward, you are not taking it home but it is for you, you work for eight or nine hours a day, you are using it, it is a pleasure and I think that would be sort of a reward for me.”*

If organisations do reward teams or exceptional behaviour, it should be done fairly and consistently. Gooding (in Cooper, 2005:351) argues that rewards and incentives will play an increasingly important role in 21<sup>st</sup> century management. Whatever the form of the reward, however, managing a reward culture is “more complex”. The contemporary organisation needs to ensure that the incentive system is fair, that it is relevant to the team, and that it is generally motivational. She concludes by observing: “A failed incentive scheme is worse than no scheme at all.”

Interviewees made several remarks that support this view, and they added two areas that should be considered by organisations: rewards should be given immediately after the “good behaviour”; and, if a reward is promised, that reward should be given – irrespective of the circumstances.

#### **More on rewards and recognition**

##### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“...but the funny thing about that is, if you look at the criteria for those rewards, our team were **excluded** from eight of the nine rewards, we couldn't participate in this, it was completely out of our playing field.”*

##### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“Deloitte used to have what they call accolades, it is awards and they don't wait for a year... . Why can't we do that? We had spot rewards. Why aren't we rewarded [right away], because I don't want to be rewarded anyway two years later. I want it **now**.”*

##### **Focus Interview 2:**



*“What has this office done? Guess what, the reports were finalised within the deadline. If you look at the rewards signed last year, if you perform you get an increase. If you don't perform, you also get an increase. I have been ‘more than comply’ for four years, **so what!**”*

*“..and **don't say** you are going to give me something **and then don't** because then I lose it and that is what we do.”*

Hackman (1987), Shea and Guzzo (1987) and Gladstein (1984) all discuss the criticality of a team-based reward system. Lawler further argues that recognition is the managerial acknowledgement of employee team achievement. Katzenbach and Smith (1993:26) add that positive reinforcement “helps to shape new behaviors critical to team performance”. They state that, when teams are recognised for their work, they are more likely to continue the behaviour that was recognised in the first place. Recognition in teams will thus enhance member’s motivation to continue working as a team.

#### **4.4.5 Mutual understanding / knowing each other**

Interviewees expressed a need to know others and to be known by them, not just their own team members but also other employees in other regions. They also indicated the strong correlation between “knowing” each other and this leading to “understanding” each other.

**Interviewee 11:**

*“...Ja [Yes], I don't think the **people know each other** so they don't **understand each other.**”*

The following interview illustrates the high premium that participants in this study place on mutual understanding in teams.



## On mutual understanding

### Interviewee 6:

Interviewer: “How important is understanding if you had to work in a team?”

Interviewee: *“I think it is very important because if ... we sometimes have very **unrealistic expectations** towards other people if we don't know what they do.”*

Interviewer: “Do you think people in the teams understand one another?”

Interviewee: *“I definitely see that they don't really understand each other.”*

♪ Interviewer: How do you see that? Could you give me examples?

Interviewee: *“I observe things they do – they, for example, make jokes about things when they know someone is sensitive about that issue, they don't greet when they know that person needs to feel “wanted”. In general they just behave according to their own guidelines, not considering the other person – no wonder teams have problems.”*

### Interviewee 8:

Interviewer: “How can we get to mutual understanding?”

Interviewee: *“There are two things. The one is formal and the other is informal. Formally I think you need to go on the session that we have been on just to understand how this person is and that will help you to treat that person accordingly, so I think formally it is important. Secondly informally or socially I think is important just to ... I mean, sometimes you don't even know the guy sitting next to you, his kid is ill and in hospital or something like that, so for me personally that is also quite important to just have that bit of interaction between members of the team as well. We spend a lot of time at work and if you spend it with people that you can relate to a bit and have bit of a laugh about this or that, I think that is important, so there's the two ways and I think both should work.”*





**Focus Interview 2:**

*“...especially where there is a crisis, where you have a lot of stress on your team, when something is not ‘lekker’ in that team, then you need something and you say: let’s understand each other. Some intervention to say let us make sure I am an eagle, you are a dove, let’s meet each other.’*

♪ Interviewer: “Have you ever had such interventions / sessions?”

Interviewee: *“Yes, we have, but they don’t mean much since we do not implement it. Belbin taught me a lot about different team roles, but some members did not even look at their report and do not know what their roles are – so sessions can only work if all decide to utilise the tool given. We were also exposed to Meyer and Briggs and brain profiles, but this will not work if we do not use it to understand differences.”*

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“...for me it doesn't matter what kind of form it is, but we just need to create a space for us or create opportunities to understand each other ...and for me the team building is really more about how would you like to change your world. I think it is... it is more of a team understanding. A team dynamics, so that I know why she does certain things in a certain way because she has circumstances or she has a personality that is in line with that, so that I can just follow that.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“We deal with different individuals with different interests, different personalities, different backgrounds, so team building is that process where you come together to learn to understand each other, learn to recognise each other’s weaknesses and strengths because when you do that and on a more of a social level or more a relaxed level, not on now we have got a deadline, now we have to get the work done. On that level it is more ... you will learn to or you understand each other*



*better, you learn more about each other and from that experience you take that team building exercise and you can put it back into the work and your team becomes more efficient.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“We need to get to know each other on a more informal setting other than just we have got to do the work now and I have got to get the deadline, pressure, pressure, pressure all the time. I think then we will learn to understand those people and you have to understand your team members. If you don’t understand them, if you don’t understand what their triggers are, what motivates them, what de-motivates them, how do they work... Some people work well in the morning, other people work well in the evenings, some people if they have got coffee all day with them then they can work, other people they don’t want to drink anything all day so you have got to understand, you have just got to understand your team dynamics.”*

**Interviewee 8:**

*“I do try and tend to have a braai at my place every now and then or make sure that the people know each other and be comfortable with each other, and so on.... If you get to know people not just in their specific area, but we get to know people in a much broader context, you will understand them. I also believe that people that know each other work together more productively”.*

These observations are consistent with research findings. Goodman and Leyden (1991) examined the productivity of various coal-mining crews and found that crews that knew each other better and were more familiar with each other, were more productive. Watson *et al.* (1991) also found that group-decision making became more effective as familiarity increased in teams amongst members. Dubnicki and Limburg (1991) also found that health care teams working together for

a while, and could be classified as “old” teams, tended to be more effective than very new teams.

The following remarks emphasise the importance that interviewees placed on familiarity in teamwork.

**On familiarity**

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“...particularly my team, my consulting guys, we are very close, and that is part of our success. We’re friends as much as we are as it appears at work. We spend a lot of time on weekends together, all our families know each other, we have our own pub three floors down, so to me it is small enough to be that.”*

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“...create space whether it is a team building method that we use or just having a bloody lunch somewhere. Ja [Yes], just coffee together, something. Just to talk. Just to know each other better. That is what make mediocre teams great teams! “*

As indicated in Chapter 2, teams and team members need to understand each other to be able to operate optimally. The value of this insight and understanding lies in the fact that it helps team members to understand their own behaviour better and ultimately to adjust according to the demands being made by the external situation (Blanchard 1988; Belbin, 2000; Allesandra 1992).

#### **4.4.6 Sound communication**

“A high-performing team, much like a good relationship, requires communication, commitment, behaviour change and continuous feedback” (Glacel & Robert, 1996:xvii).

The trouble with organisational communication is that most of us, especially management, think we are rather good at it. However, the ever-expanding



graveyard of misunderstanding, apathy, failed presentations, non-delegation, unsuccessful efforts and splintered images suggests otherwise.

All the interviewees supported the view that organisational communication skills are crucial in business. A study of executives and management teams in 130 Fortune 500 companies indicated that communication, or rather the lack thereof, is the number one problem in organisations today (Lawler, Mohrman & Ledford, 1995).

♪ “English is the business language – in our teams we often do not adhere to it and this is often a problem in terms of understanding.”

♪ “Teams – even virtual teams, should not rely on e-mails only. Follow it up with individual discussions or meetings or personal communication.”

♪ “Team members often do not know what decisions entail – leaders need to explain the decision-making process to all.”

♪ “Communication and feedback in teams should be on-the-spot and not weeks after the event.”

### **On communication**

#### **Interviewee 11:**

Interviewer: “Okay, tell me what else great teams do?”

Interviewee: *“They communicate well, they are I would say friends within the team, and therefore most probably also communicate well because they talk to each other in terms of friends and in terms of work. ...From my team members, it all comes down to open communication again, if you can talk to each other and say what is needed and if you don't like that person or he does something that you don't like, you must have the openness to go to this person and say I don't like this or I don't understand....”*



**Interviewee 14:**

*“I think it is easier to communicate today than it was 50 years ago, and I am not talking about e-mail and everything and those things, I think because you can be a lot more relaxed with your superior and it is easier to communicate, I find it okay so that's good. I communicate easily with the people I work with and to my superiors, I actually don't see a problem with it, I don't have a problem with communication. So I think it makes it difficult to see communication problems that other people could have.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“... a lot of the time I do communicate things by e-mail but I know that is not a very effective way. If it is something important then I will find the person, if I can't have a face to face meeting but even that I don't think is always the best, I...write a letter and give it to the team and say when you get there let us just go through this with the team it is also another personal way of doing things which is better than just sending e-mails.”*

**Interviewee 9:**

*“...in a big company it is not going to be... it is easier not to forgive because it is easier to avoid that person firstly and it is easier to be professional because you could e-mail over the communication. Communication is making the effort of standing up and having a verbal conversation rather than e-mail.”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“Communication, especially with IT people – we are not the biggest communicators in the world – so getting the cross-functional things working, you cannot just put us in a room full of biscuits and stuff, we are not going to talk to the other team's people – and we do talk with your own team. So that is definitely one of the challenges, IT people, maybe with the sales people it is different but for us this cross-functional communication thing is going to be hard.”*



#### 4.4.7 Dependency and synergy

Synergy is “a phenomenon in which people generates more and better solutions by working together and sharing ideas than if these people worked alone” (McShane & Von Glinow, 2003:277). Interviewees acknowledged the promise of synergy in theory, but admitted that they found it hard to “live” this synergy at times. They also admitted the need to depend on other teams and team members, but expressed frustration since not all team members realised the full impact of dependency in the workplace.

##### **On dependency and synergy**

###### **Interviewee 13:**

*“...So I need other people and they might not like doing the programming or whatever, so we need each other to be more than ... what's that thing about? Synergy. That is exactly what I am saying now. One plus one equals ten. So one will 'buy' the whole team thing when it is just implemented correctly.”*

###### **Focus Interview 3:**

*“... I can't make my targets. I can't make the deadlines and let me tell you: what is creating that synergy of having a team – we need each other.”*

###### **Interviewee 2:**

*“The team needs to be better as an individual so they ... it's almost that principle of one plus one equals three. ...In a team you are a team and you are made up of different individuals but you are like one body and you work together for the same goal. You help each other, you improve each other's work, your people complement each other? If you have a team full of people who all have the same strengths you are not necessarily going to have a good team, that team is not necessarily going to have synergy because you have put people all the same together, so you would need to balance it out.”*



**Interviewee 11:**

Interviewer: "Have you ever been part of a 'wow' team?"

*Interviewee: "Yes, I experienced it in Gijima, we were a small team but with real synergy. It was on a very low level, I won't say that we change the world in our team but we did make the client happy which is very important."*

#### **4.4.8 A need for team skills**

Throughout my interviews, it became apparent that there is a critical need to find and develop employees with team skills. In both organisations researched, employees are encouraged to work individually – they are even measured as individuals – and yet they are expected to “miraculously” operate as effective teams as well. They also do not get enough training in the area of teamwork, since most of the training is concerned with the so-called core business, which is ICT and auditing.

**On team skills**

**Interviewee 11:**

*"I think we do not necessarily do everything that we can do to get teams to work together in the correct way. A lot of, like I say, a lot of emphasis is placed on structures and standards and systems but not necessarily the softer side of team work. We need team skills."*

**Interviewee 8:**

*"It is important to send, to expose people to team training so that they understand how teams work; I believe it is important because of the specific industry we are in, the IT industry is quite individualistic."*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*"Yes, we can do team training but we will have to do it cross-functionally."*



**Interviewee 4:**

*“Definitely, yes, we could benefit from team training. I think we should educate and train and that would put us at a level where we will be ok ...”*

**Interviewee 1:**

*“Team training is definitely, definitely important, Adri. I am busy working in teams every week and believe me it brings out a different perspective on your view of what is a team. Because I was normally working as an individual and doing such courses makes you aware of such lovely things that you can do ... that can happen in a team. But because there is money involved the manager always needs to approve and it tends to not happen sometimes.”*

In conclusion, it can be said that the business environment is changing and that these changes are rapid and ongoing. In this context of turbulent changes, companies need to maintain their competitive edge to survive, and leadership has to ensure that all the necessary competencies and skills are available in this game of survival.

Teams play a vital role in this survival game, and if their unique expectations in contemporary organisations can be understood and teams can be effectively managed, Lundy’s prediction (1992:xi) below will come true:

**Together**

**Each**

**Achieves**

**More**

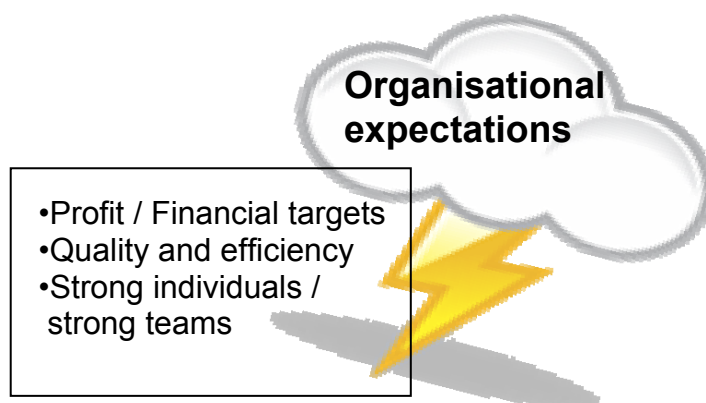
**Success**



## 4.5 THEME 3: ORGANISATIONAL / LEADERSHIP LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

Teams operate in a specific corporate environment, and this environment consists of both followers and leaders. Greenberg (1993:455) argues that teams might be seen in the category of the follower, but “followers are the essence of leadership. Without followers no leader can lead...without followers even John Wayne becomes a solitary hero, or, given the right script, a comic figure, posturing on an empty state”.

Interviewees expressed very specific expectations with regard to the leadership and management team of the organisation in terms of creating a team culture. They also shared the (perceived) expectations that this leadership team might have of them (the employees). Throughout the interviews it became apparent that this is a two-way relationship and that both the leaders and the employees had specific expectations of teams and team work. These expectations are set out in Figure 4.5.



**Figure 4.5: Organisational expectation**

One of my main questions, posed in many situations and throughout the interview process, during both individual and focus interviews, was “What is your perception, what does the organisation expect from teams?” The responses are reported below.

#### **4.5.1 Meet financial targets / make a profit**

All the interviewees responded that their organisations mainly expected teams and individuals within the organisation to “make money”. They added that profit making per se was not a problem, but that contemporary companies tended to focus only on money and forget that their employees are actually their biggest asset.

##### **On Money**

**Interviewee 11:**

*“To make money.” [Laughter].*

**Interviewee 13:**

*“To meet targets – to meet financial targets!”*

**Interview 9:**

*“The expectancy of Mancom is one, financial.”*

##### **On delivery on time within budget**

**Interviewee 14:**

*“This sounds like a textbook answer now, but they expect quality products, ja [yes], like I say, on time ... within the budget.”*

#### **4.5.2 Quality and efficiency**

Teams and individuals remarked that the organisation expected them to deliver quality products and be efficient in that delivery.



### **On delivery**

#### **Interviewee 2:**

*“I think that the organisation expects the team to basically just deliver a project, a product, so in our case it is the audit reports, to deliver that product of a high quality and for you to work well together but I don't ... I think it is just more, be effective, be efficient in your team work and deliver the product that you need to deliver.”*

#### **Interviewee 12:**

*“...we must just do it. It is pointless in getting into another paralysis, you want something that will work, you must focus on making it work, you must focus on providing a quality product.”*

### **4.5.3 Strong teams / strong individuals**

Interviewees expressed the view that 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations often expect strong individuals to become strong teams, without giving them the necessary support.

### **On “to make things work”**

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“...you have a goal and I have a goal financially or whatever the case may be. However bringing it back to one, say right, as a Mancom, this is the number we need, how you guys get to it is entirely up to you.”*

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“We tend to take things for granted that we have a lot of intelligent individuals and we tend to do a lot of new things and start a lot of new things and then we drop the penny [bomb] at the Mancom meeting and we expect the line managers, the business managers to implement all of those changes. It is just not possible, I mean we currently running about six or seven internal projects ...”*



Jerry Harvey (1988) wrote a rather controversial chapter with the title “Encouraging future managers to cheat” in *The Abeline Paradox and other meditations on management*. . He argues that the emphasis on doing one’s own work often has a negative impact on the spirit of cooperation that we need in modern organisations.

I found interviewees confused as to what the typical cultures of their organisations were – team-based or individual-based. The following are examples of the obvious “paradoxes” contained in their responses:

### **On culture**

#### **Interviewee 5:**

Interviewer: “What type of culture do we have, a team culture or an individual culture?”

*Interviewee: “I think we are supposed to have a team culture, it depends on the environment. If you look at my own environment, it is supposed to be a team, but it depends on how you define a team.”*

#### **Focus Interview 2:**

*Interviewee: “As manager I need to have a say in the team members that I have in my team.”*

Interviewer: “Do you currently have a say?”

*Interviewee: “No”.*

#### **Focus Interview 3: (Top Management)**

*“... we have come from a culture – and I am generalising of course, and you and I look at it from different levels – but we have come from a culture where team work was not a high priority. It was focused more on recognising individual performance. And in fact that in itself was lending itself to people trampling on each other to get to where they want to go. But again we are now at a place, at a juncture where at*



*least a concept of team work has become more recognised and accepted.”*

*“What is quite clear though is that it is a strategy saying that it is more prevalent at certain levels. For example, at the business ship level we are actually seeing very good examples of team effort... and in other cases it is very, very poor. So it is very diverse within the whole of the jungle. I don't think we will be able to say categorically there is a culture.”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“I don't think our performance management processes is aligned to what is conducive to put out to a team. Ja[ yes], everything is more individually focused.”*

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“... that is why I made the statement that the whole way in which we manage performance is not conducive to team work. It is actually breaking it down and saying listen, we are looking at the individuals and it is not healthy because we look at the way the profits are going down and our teams are going down, I mean it's ... the red flags are up.”*

I asked participants what the organisation could do to support team work in a visible and active way.

**On providing a team culture**

Interviewer: “What does the organisation do or what should the organisation / leadership do to support teams?”

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“They have to sit and say, do we want teams in our culture, do we want a team approach and if I want to, how can we support people to*



*be better teams, or do we purely want individuals that push targets? Because strategy at this point drives behaviour.”*

**Interviewee 2:**

*“We need to establish a culture of teams. I see groups and I will tell you why – because if there were teams, there would be that knowledge sharing, there would be that respect for each other, that support for each other, there would be that ...”*

### **On the Facilitation of employee wellness**

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“...an employee wellness programme for all!”*

### **On direct, support, communication**

**Interviewee 2:**

*“..to give support, to communicate, to give direction”.*

### **On putting in place systems, structures, standards**

**Interviewee 11:**

*“... putting in systems and structures especially because we are growing a bit in terms of revenue and people, I think they are looking to ensure that the standards and structures are put in place to support the teams to make money – to put it bluntly” [laughter].*

### **On empowering**

**Focus Interview 2:**

*“...when you go into team interventions and you come out of that intervention, and you sometimes take that functionality back to your office and your working environment, your working environment is not conducive to sustain that hype that you develop... the workload is also not evenly distributed, the work load and I don't think the management is taking control of that process.”*



### **On being consistent**

#### **Focus Interview 2:**

*“... we need to determine our deliverables on a regular basis because in my current experience is that you plan your day for something you want to do and in the morning when you get to the office all of a sudden Exco decide there are different priorities and everybody has to agree to them.”*

#### **Interviewee 5:**

*“... we [Exco] must provide our strategies and be consistent in terms of how we implement it that is actually it. You know that I have got a hell of a problem in terms of consistencies. Consistency is good in the sense of parameters in fairness. ...I think we are so obsessive about being consistent that we lose the ability to actually appreciate balance ... it has got to be so clear but when we need to make a decision we will always make the same decision and that in my book is taking consistency far, that is the way, in terms of any relations, that is robust.”*

When I conducted post-interviews (telephonic follow-up interviews), the following interesting remarks were made by respondents:

### **On Alignment / bigger picture**

♪ *“Our company needs to define its role in the bigger organisation and general economy. We are unsure of where we really fit in. Furthermore, we are not aware of the “bigger picture” and what all the products, services , role-players and stakeholders entail.”*

♪ *“Since we do not always know what the bigger picture is, we function only in our small teams and do not know how everything “clicks” together.”*



♪ “We are in need of regular vision alignment sessions to know if the team is still on track in terms of the organisation. We often do not know if we are on the right track.”

♪ “I feel totally lost in terms of where myself and the company fit into the bigger picture. It took me six months to realise the client I support is also supported by eight other units within the bigger company.”

### **On Policies / procedures / guiding principles**

♪ “There is no one ‘right’ way to do things. Each unit develops its own procedures and implements it in isolation. The organisation needs to give clearer policies and guidelines so that we can – in a sense – standardise. I do not mean control heavily, I just mean give us guidelines to operate in but with one focus.”

♪ “The organisation should further ensure that all policies and procedures are benchmarked. How do we know if what we are doing is based on best practices? Sometimes we just do things to meet the deadline.”

♪ “The organisation should motivate teams to work together. The absence of internal operational service level agreements (OLA) is, for example, a huge problem. Teams are supposed to work together and should support each other and need to know what they expect of each other. The opposite happens and teams often work in opposite directions. They just focus on their little bit.”

In conclusion, it can be said that teams in contemporary organisations often feel “let down” by leadership. They often do not experience the necessary support, but mostly reflect on the business’s need for them to make a profit and reach financial goals. This “misalignment” of expectations is discussed in



more detail in the discussion of the *21<sup>st</sup> century organisations' challenges*. As already stated, many of the sub-themes are integrated to such a degree that they form part of more than one theme.

#### 4.6 THEME 4: 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TEAM CHALLENGES

The 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation is not for the faint-hearted. McRae (in Cooper 2005:274) argues that contemporary organisations will be, and already are, confronted by the following phenomena:

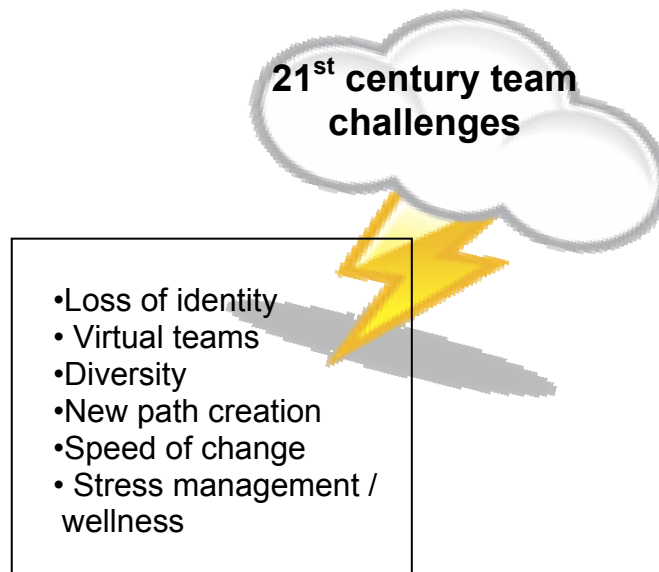
- in their **international relationships**, they will find that they are managing complex supply chains with a workforce defined by different cultural norms;
- **at home**, they will find they are managing a much more diverse group of people – more part-timers, students, semi-retired employees, etc.; and
- thirdly, they will be challenged to make optimal use of their scarcest resource, **the human capital** of their workforce.

The challenges are summarised in Figure 4.6

*♥Developing and organising this theme proved how integrated the themes really are. Many of the issues elaborated on now have been mentioned earlier when discussing the other themes, since they affect all organisational levels.*

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♥ From the researcher's diary.



**Figure 4.6: 21<sup>st</sup> Century team challenges**

Before the sub-themes will be discussed, the 21<sup>st</sup> century organisational context and evolution of organisations will be highlighted.

#### **4.6.1 The 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation in context**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation should be discussed in context and not in isolation. This type of organisation does indeed operate in a certain period and is characterised by specific economic, social, global and other issues. To enhance understanding of these issues, the goals set by the United Nations (2007) were examined. This report forms a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. The participating countries identified the eight issues as mutual goals to be reached within a specific time frame. The goals are to:

- eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- achieve universal primary education;
- promote gender equality and empower women;
- reduce child mortality;
- improve maternal health;
- combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases;

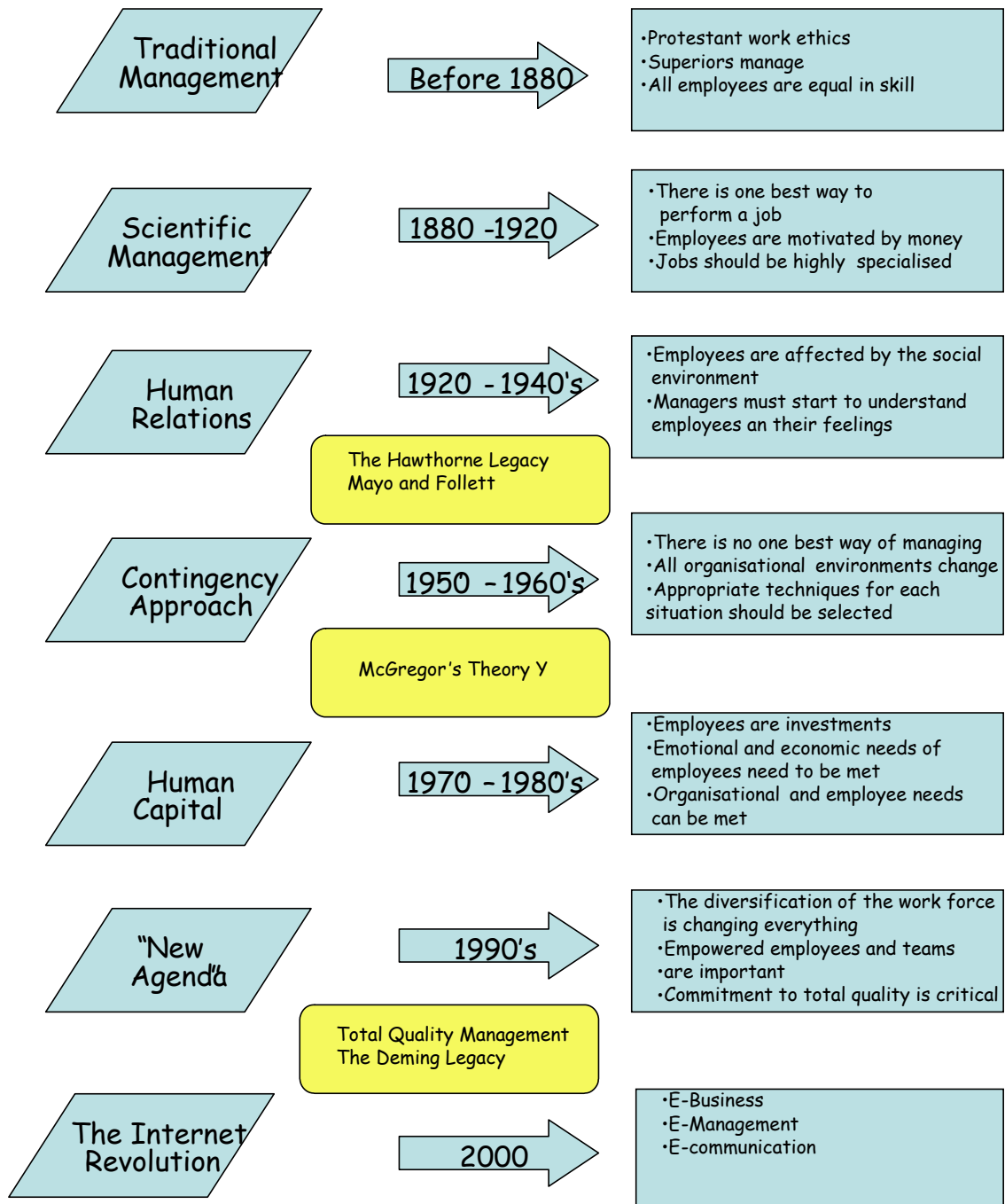
- ensure environmental sustainability; and
- develop a global partnership for development.

It is thus important to realise that, just as the world around us is physically changing, individual, team and organisational behaviour is influenced by this environment and might also change.

#### **4.6.2 Evolution of organisations: From past to present – 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations**

Modern organisational behaviour theories and their application in organisations have evolved over a period of approximately 100 years (Kreitner & Kinicki 2001:5). Finding answers and insight comes from understanding past practices and theories, so a historic review might just sharpen our vision for the future. Carrel, Jennings and Heavrin (1997:3-5) use a model that guides understanding of the evolution of behavioural and management theories. Their model was used as a baseline to develop my own understanding. The model is set out in Figure 4.7 (overleaf).

## Theory Period Beliefs



**Figure 4.7: Evolution of behavioural practices (adapted from Carrel, Jennings and Heavrin 1997)**

Leadership practices in the 1980s were mostly characterised by people working harder and longer to achieve goals, and this was often referred to as the “enterprise culture” (Cooper, 2005:1). Globalisation, re-engineering,

mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and many other interventions transformed workplaces into so-called free-market environments.

Since the beginning of the 1990s (this falls within my own experience) major re-structuring occurred as companies started to “flatten” or “down-size”; and numerous changes were experienced in the workplace. Throughout this redesigning of organisations, individuals were expected to be “open to continual change and life-long learning” (Cooper, 2005:2). The question is now what 21<sup>st</sup> century teams and organisations expect of team work?.

For the purposes of this study, it was important to explore the trends of changes in contemporary organisations by asking 21<sup>st</sup> century employees what they have experienced and what the impacts of these experiences were. Lathmand and McCaley (in Cooper, 2005: 203) write about the “yesterday vs. the tomorrow” of organisations. They summarise the concept as set out in Table 4.3 (below).

**Table 4.3: Yesterday vs. tomorrow**

<b>Yesterday</b>	<b>Tomorrow</b>
<b>Selection of employees</b>	
Tests and equal opportunity legislation	Selecting and developing employees for global organisations
<b>Employee involvement</b>	
Participation in decisions	Shared responsibility and accountability
<b>Public Sector as a model</b>	
Private sector economy	Mosaic economy
<b>Science and technology</b>	
Who could have predicted	No predictability, but be optimistic! A virtual community
<b>Leadership</b>	
Individual Activity	Collective Activity
<b>Teams</b>	
Followers waiting for guidance	Self-motivated, well-educated individuals with high expectations
Decisions within clear boundaries	Shared sense-making Diverse social identity groups Cross-discipline decision-making

Source: Adapted from Lathmand and McCaley (in Cooper:2005)



These findings are in line with research done by Geoff Armstrong (in Cooper: 2005:290). He identified what he calls “four management legacies”. As I transcribed the interviews, I recognised these legacies (I illustrate them by relevant verbatim quotes from my interviewees):

- Management is only about top management.

♪ Some senior managers are not approachable although they say they are. I further feel that in this organisation your rank determines the value of your input. “Top management” decides many things and the rest are not asked for inputs. Decisions are made by managers and the rest just have to follow.

- Management is about ownership and power

♪ Auditors feel threatened by trainees and use their power instead of knowledge to “handle” them.

- Management is about controlling.

**Interview 1:**

*“It is a little bit of a challenge because how do you manage them, how do you actually know that they are working and not running around with the kids and taking them to school and going shopping.”*

- Management is only about business decisions.

**Interview 11:**

*“ I think we do not necessarily do everything that we can do to get teams to work together in the correct way. A lot of, like I say, a lot of 15 emphasis is placed on structures and standards and systems but not necessarily the softer side of team work’.*

### 4.6.3 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges: sub-themes

#### 4.6.3.1 *Loss of identity*

In 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations, teams struggle to find and demonstrate their identity. Diversity complicates this further.

**Interviewee 14:**

*“20 years ago in South African organisations, when I started to work, we all at least looked more or less the same – now everyone looks different, has different cultures and even come from different continents.”*

Wynn and Katz (1997:97) argue that identity is created and experienced through the “negotiation and co-construction over meaning and manners among team members interacting in a specific context”. Cheney and Chriarwnawn (2000:246) refer to “congruent identity” as reflecting a sense of oneness among members, irrespective of their own personal biographies or geographical locations. Such an identity allows team members to “perceive themselves as part of a whole, autonomous and anthropomorphic team”.

The notion of a third space has entered the academic circle since Homi Bhabha’s (1994) work on third space in cultural studies. To address the notion of identity, Bhabha (1994:5) defines the “third space” as “the constructing and reconstructing of identity which is fluid, not static”. He also views third spaces as “discursive sites or conditions that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity – that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated and rehistoricised ‘anew’” (Bhabha 1994:37). According to Bhabha, a third space is a place where we negotiate identity and become neither this nor that, but our own. The third space is that place where negotiations take place and where identity is constructed.

It seems to me that creating this third “space” is a problematic issue in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. It also seems as if there is a strong need for a personalised approach that stems from this feeling of being “lost”.



### On “feeling lost”

#### Interviewee 11:

*“Yes, I feel a bit lost, but I must say I don't feel too uncomfortable with that, so ... but I can, even for me, it is difficult so I can imagine for someone that has a very structured approach to life like ..., it must be extremely difficult to be dumped into a situation like that.”*

This theme has already been discussed as an individual need, but it seems to be a growing need in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. Gooding (in Cooper, 2005:350) argues that employees today are expecting a more personal approach from management. They demand a “one-on-one relationship with managers” and often see this as their right.

### On the relationship with managers

#### Interviewee 2:

Interviewer: “Do you think team members want to be known? Do you think they want the managers to know what their passions are and stuff like that?”

*Interviewee: “I think definitely. Well, me thinking of myself [unclear] as a team member I want my manager to know what my aspirations are. But I think if you work for somebody that knows what my passions are, what my motivators are, who I am, that person can manage you better. That person ... you might have people in your team that are, for instance, like me, on some issues I am very sensitive; on other issues I am not sensitive, so in order to manage your team members you must know how can I give this person criticism without breaking him down as a person.”*

#### Interviewee 2:

*“A lot of people are just de-motivated and you become ... you think you are a number in an organisation. You are no longer a person, you no longer have a personality, you are just a number and you must get the*





*job done and you have those feelings that our manager doesn't care about me, doesn't care about what happened, even if I do my work well I don't, you don't get rewarded for it...."*

#### **4.6.3.2 Virtual teams**

Virtual teams include members who must work together from separated physical locations across different time zones. We have always worked with virtual teams in some or other form, but in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations, virtual teaming is becoming an integral part of most small group work, mainly because technology has evolved and today includes far more than merely teleconferencing (Katzenbach & Smith, 2001:23). In both organisations, small groups are expected to use intranets, internet, fax and the various types of software that support project management, and knowledge and information sharing.

Technology is making communication amongst virtual team members so fast and easy that even non-virtual teams are starting to work in a virtual manner. I found that even team members sitting next to each other would use technology to communicate rather than personal interventions. In both companies, e-mails are used to a great extent. However, in many cases, e-mails are used for the wrong reasons, for example, to act as proof of or portfolios of evidence. Katzenbach and Smith (2001:31) warn that an e-mail is a poor substitute for "threaded" discussions or personal contact.

#### **Interviewee 11:**

Interviewer: "Do you think that teams need to physically sit together geographically in order to be successful?"

*Interviewee: "My brain says ... my rational brain says no, but in my opinion I think proximity to each other is an advantage. Look, I think I can make a team work very successfully being in even different countries for that matter, but it does make it a lot easier if you can physically stand up and look the person in the eye and say this is what I want and this is what I am thinking, so ja [yes]..."*



**Interviewee 13:**

Interviewer: “What are the advantages / disadvantages of virtual teaming?”

*Interviewee: “...a lot of the people that ... sometimes even I do that ... you tend to work from home, if you are working on projects you know, they allow you to work from home which can work really well ... I mean I have seen it even with myself. You are a lot **more productive** but what does happen is that ... will walk in one morning and say where is everybody? And then everybody is working at home and then all of a sudden there is a crisis, you can't get hold of this person or the e-mail is down and things like that so there can be **communication problems** like that.”*

**Interviewee 10:**

Interviewer: “Do you think it is important that a team should sit close together or can a team sit all over the country and still be a great team?”

*Interviewee: “I think they can [sit all over the country], but then you have to be a strong team, or a strong person with strong personal skills and stuff otherwise they have to sit together.”*

♪ Interviewer: “What do you mean with strong?”

*Interviewee: “Focused, self-driven, self-managed, able to work even when no other team members are around and not go shopping.”*

**4.6.3.3 “New path” creation / new ways of doing “old” things**

People in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations need to be led to creativity (Richard in Cooper, 2005:299). Interviewees expressed the need for new ways of doing business, new ways of communication, new ways of serving the customer and new ways of learning in contemporary organisations.



**Focus Interview 2:**

*“In your centre, in your small team, I think they have accomplished things and what I also found is that people are not scared to try out new things to those people because they are protected in a team and that is the whole idea of the team. You are protected, you make errors but you are protected in a team. That is actually the benefit of having a team.”*

**4.6.3.3.1 New ways of working in teams**

In both organisations, I found strong “small” teams but weaker “bigger” teams. In many cases, team development interventions are focused on individual teams only, and the bigger team or organisation does not benefit from the smaller team’s synergy.

**Focus Interview 1:**

*“I cannot afford, I cannot, I cannot work without the outputs of ... or anyone of the development teams. I can do a certain part of my revenue, say 40% of my total revenue of my budget of R12 Million a year, I can do without [name], the rest of it I am absolutely dependent on the success of his team. I am looking at the development teams to be successful in order for me to create work for myself, but having said that, that is not the way that we at GijimaAST look at this whole thing. We look at this whole thing as silos where every silo has got his target and if he does that, he will be successful.”*

*“I think the strong teams reach out to other teams, whether the other teams like it or not because that makes them a strong team, they need other teams to be able to deliver on their KRA’s [key result areas], they need other teams, they need integration with other teams.”*

Teams thus need to break out of their “little silos” to add maximum value to organisational growth.

#### 4.6.3.3.2 *New ways of communicating*

Communication is and probably always will be a strategic issue in organisational development. Interviewees noted that new ways of communication in modern organisations needed to be devised, especially since e-mails often prove not to be as effective as managers would like to believe they are.

♪ “Let us think of another way to communicate than e-mails. E-mails need to be filtered. We get numerous e-mails about in-house issues that do not concern us and waste our time – for example, Mr X will be on leave and Mr Y will stand in for him. Have the right people on the address list. 80% of the communication we receive is irrelevant. We suffer from an e-mail ‘overload’.”

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

Interviewee: *“Can you have a virtual drink? Really I am thinking [over speaking].”*

Interviewee: *“Well, those things, now it is the 21st Century, I mean it is possible to do that.”*

#### 4.6.3.3.3 *New ways of serving the customer – client-centricity*

“Client-centricity” is one of the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century companies (Galbraith, 2005). It implies a strong focus on what the client wants, and this is a strong trend in modern business. “Not only does client centricity make business sense, it is also predicted that in the current client economy, investors will value companies based on the sum of the values of their client relationships” (Galbraith, 2005:101). Interviewees from both companies interviewed defined client focus as one of their values, and both strive to be viewed as “world-class” providers of services.

Jackson (2000:99) notes that information about the needs of customers and how well the organisation is doing in meeting those needs “permeates the whole organisation”. He argues that truly dynamic organisations “monitor



results for customer satisfaction and retention and spend time with customers – with the people who buy and use the company's products and services”.

### **On client service**

#### **Interviewee 5:**

*“Which is also I think is something totally new for that environment in the sense that consultation and the client is becoming far more important. Again I think it is something that we actually understand, it is not very comfortable in doing as we are supposed to.”*

#### **Interviewee 11:**

*“...but I experienced it in Gijima, we were a small team, but real synergy is what I experienced. It is on a very low level, I won't say that we change the world in our team but we did make the client happy which is very important.”*

#### **Focus Interview 2:**

*“Service excellence, that is the secret. Service excellence and that encompasses everything, anything whether it is a relationship, whether it is a product-service excellence as a whole. The whole thing is about excellence. If you are not excellent you are going to fall behind.”*

#### **Interviewee 12:**

*“No, they [the coders] are not client centric at all. They focus on their programme and they think of their programmes as delivery programmes. Not Gijima's programmes, not the customer's programme, their programme and there is nothing wrong with that. Ownership is nine tenths of the law and they are sitting in front of the programme and they are changing it and I would say that is more than nine tenths and therefore they own the programme. Have a nice day. ... you can just go and choreograph whatever the customer asks for, but that is not adding value. Any idiot can take the customer's Excel spreadsheet and recode it so it is into the system [unclear] the guy is even criticizing it; that is not adding value. Adding value is analysing it,*

*understanding it, critiquing it, bettering it, improving it, making it something that really works for the customer.”*

Leadership teams in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations need to adopt an approach of “serving the client at all times” if they want to ensure that customers will return to the organisation.

#### *4.6.3.3.4 A new approach toward learning*

A “new” approach toward training and learning should be based on the paradigm of whole brain development and outcomes based learning. Higher education plays a pivotal role in the social, cultural and education system to serve a new social order in our country. This should be noted by South African organisations.

According to the White Paper on Higher Education, as published by the Department of Education on 24 July 1997 (South Africa, Department of Education, 2007), higher education needs to redress past inequalities, transform, meet national training needs and respond to new realities and opportunities. Aspects that are emphasised by adult learning providers and that speak of a new and fresh approach include the following:

- a movement towards a whole brained learning approach;
- outcomes based training interventions; and
- team learning approaches.

Dyer (1983:127) suggests that contemporary organisations should concentrate on the need of its employees to get relevant “skills, knowledge or attributes needed to move ahead in the organization”. He identifies coaching and on-the-job training as a priority that should be met by modern organisations.

Interviewees expressed the view that a “whole brain” learning approach be implemented in all organisations.

Up to ten years ago, most South African training interventions catered for left-brained learners. Ned Herman (1996) and Kobus Neethling (2005) can be

seen as pioneers in popularising the concept of “whole brain” learning. According to them, a person has definite preferences when learning, and a successful trainer focused on techniques in all four quadrants, namely left 1, left 2, right 1 and right 2, will get the most out of the trainee. The preferences of learners in terms of their brain orientation are stated in the figure below:

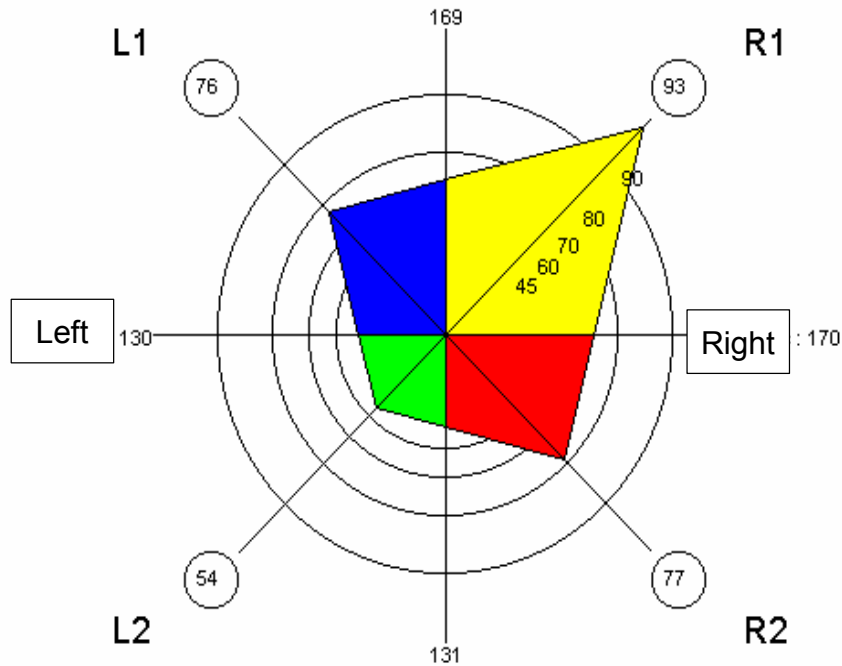
**Table 4.4: The four brain quadrants**

Left 1 Preferences	Right 1 Preferences
Analytical	Conceptualising
Technical	Integration
Problem solving	Innovation
Financial Aspects	Creative aspects
Left 2 Preferences	Right 2 Preferences
Administrative	Expressing Ideas
Implementation	Writing
Planning	Interpersonal Aspects
Organising	Teaching / Training

**Source: Adapted from Neethling (2005) & Herman (1996)**

André Vermeulen, MD of a South African Company called Neurolink, is a great advocate of so-called brain-based training (Neurolink, 2007). According to him, more and more South African companies are following this approach to ensure that both left- and right-brained learners can benefit from training interventions. Annie Coetzee (2000) adds that, in the past, many learners fell behind because of their distinctive right-brain orientation. Contemporary organisations should take note of the “era of the brain”, and thus training solutions offered in the “new” South African organisation should be more integrated and holistic in terms of whole brain use.

The following Figure 4.8 is a typical example of a Kobus Neethling brain profile, and this interviewee’s profile clearly reflects the interviewee’s preference to utilise the right brain when filtering information.



**Figure 4.8: Neethling Brain Profile** (Neethling, 2007)

#### ***4.6.3.4 Speed of change / change management***

Change is inevitable. What works today may not work tomorrow. However, change is uncomfortable for most people. They seek consistency and familiarity instead of uncertainty. The reality is that change is likely to accelerate and the importance of managing change is going to increase. The effective implementation of change is necessary for the survival and growth of organisations.

Alvin Toffler (1983:1) describes the effects of change as follows: “The acceleration of change in our time is an elemental force. The accelerative thrust has personal and psychological, as well as sociological, consequences. Unless man quickly learns to control the rate of change in his personal affairs as well as in society at large, we are doomed to a massive adaptational breakdown.”

The 1990s have already presented individuals and organisations with some very complex problems and challenges, and change will continue to bulldoze its way through organisations. It seems that employees are often





overwhelmed by all these changes and do not get the necessary support to cope.

### **On change**

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“Let me clarify the statement of not having the time to do it. We tend to take things for granted that we have a lot of intelligent individuals and we tend to do a lot of new things and start a lot of new things and then we drop the penny [bomb] at the Mancom meeting and we expect the line managers, the business managers to implement all of those changes. It is just not possible, I mean we [are] currently running about six or seven internal projects ... which makes a hell of difference to your time lines and what you are capable of and now you sit with a dispersed staff complement who sits all over the world and you must bring them together and you must enforce those changes, because in the end they want to use the integrated project offers for their forecasting...”*

#### **Interviewee 1:**

*“I think we have been thrown around so many times, that we don't exactly know what is going to happen tomorrow.”*

#### **Focus Interview 1:**

*“[Our leader] is getting tied up in restructuring and strategies and budgets and all of that so he ... when last did he have time to spend with ... over a cup coffee and just talk maybe rugby. You don't get the chance anymore, but it used to be like that. It is not there anymore.”*

### **4.6.3.5 Stress management / wellness**

The need for a work-life balance in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations is well documented and has been discussed in detail under Theme 1. The reality is that stress is a phenomenon that has a negative impact on organisational productivity, and thus has to be acknowledged and managed.



Groups are often called upon to perform under highly stressful conditions. Brown and Millar (2000) and Hollenbeck *et al.* (1997) argue that, within limits, teams seem to be able to adapt to higher levels of work stress. However, if such stress grows sufficiently high, team performance will eventually be influenced negatively (Adelman *et al.* 2003). Interviewees all expressed the view that the pace of living is affecting their functioning in the organisation and thus also have an effect on the success of their respective teams.

### **On the pace of living**

#### **Interviewee 8:**

*“... especially in the IT industry because traditionally there it seems a bit ... socially the people in the IT industry are very self-centred and working with a computer and looking at their [unclear] and doing their thing so, in our industry yes and also life is becoming so hectically fast-paced especially in Jo'burg and more so in Sunninghill so the traffic is ... you just come to work early and you leave early and you do this because you just have your own life as well so, ja [yes], there are a lot of pressures in terms of that as well and that is also contributing towards people being a bit more self-centred and wanting to do their own thing.”*

#### **Focus Interview 3:**

*“I think that there are a lot of challenges... changes that really it is difficult to keep up with”.*

#### **Interviewee 1:**

*“Ten years ago the pace wasn't as fast as today. We had ... we worked hard still, but it wasn't that crucial that you have to do ten things at a time, you tend more to be not as pressed as today.”*

Interviewer: “You said earlier that the pace has changed. Do you get any support from top management to help you to adapt better in this fast environment as a team?”



Interviewee: *“Yes, I think we do, we get systems. We have our technology is good. We are up to date. We have proximas, we basically have everything we need technology wise to get our work done, it is just the training sometimes, you get the programmes but training doesn't happen because they see it as costly and time-consuming and I don't think it is such a problem. If you can take some time and teach the people well at the long end you will benefit.”*

Interviewee 11:

*“I think also the fact that a lot more is expected of a team maybe than 40 years ago has an impact. Ag, ja [yes], now I am making a very big assumption that people, like I do think the pace of change is immensely different from 40 years back, so a team needs to cope with a lot more changes in their environment than 40 years ago and I think that is a big pressure on teams.”*

Interviewee 14:

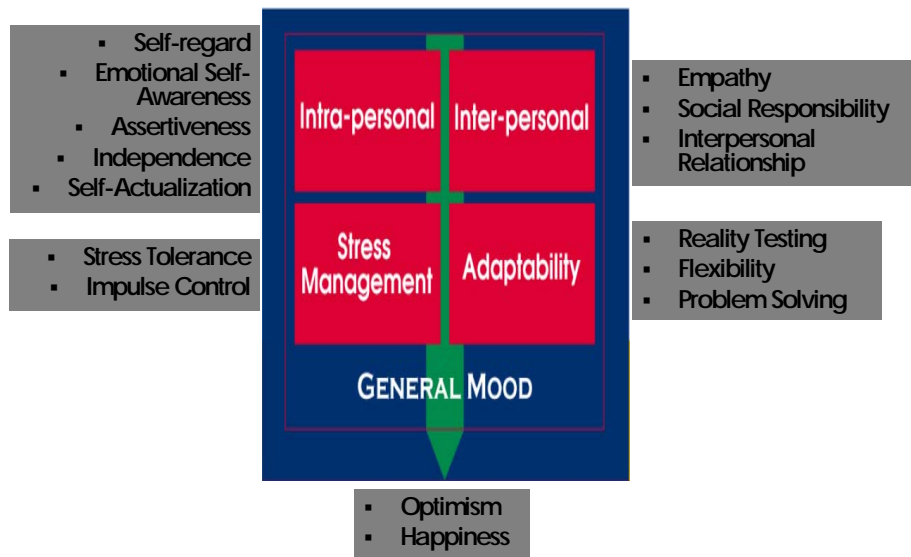
*“There is always pressure, always, always, always.”*

**Emotional Intelligence** is seen as part of the overall ability of organisations to “manage stress” amongst its employees. In *The new leaders, transforming the art of leadership into the science of results*, Daniel Goleman (2003:18) says: “We are by no means the first to suggest that the main tasks of a leader are to generate excitement, optimism, and passion for the job ahead, as well as to cultivate an atmosphere of cooperation and trust. But we wish to take that wisdom one step further and demonstrate how emotional intelligence – self awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management – adds a crucial set of skills for resonant leadership.”

Emotional intelligence can best be defined as an array of non-cognitive abilities, skills and competencies that influence an individual's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and environmental pressures

(BarOn, 1988). The BarOn EQ instrument (see Figure 4.9) measures emotionally and socially intelligent behaviour in five key areas, namely intra-personal, inter-personal, stress management, adaptability and general mood.

## The BarOn EQ-i Facet scales



**Figure 4.9: EQ Facet Scales** (Van Rooyen, 2007:s.p.)

BarOn developed his tool based on 19 years of research and tests on more than 48 000 individuals worldwide. The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory is designed to measure a number of constructs related to emotional intelligence. A growing body of research suggests that emotional intelligence is a far better predictor of “success” than the more traditional measures of cognitive intelligence (IQ).

Both organisations in the study have embarked on a number of “emotional intelligence” interventions, thus agreeing that the whole concept of emotional intelligence is a huge challenge in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations.

### On emotional intelligence and maturity

#### Focus Interview 3:

*Interviewee: “It goes with the maturity; unfortunately team work has got to do with maturity. I would love if you were sent to Mauritius. I would love it. I would congratulate you. I won’t be jealous, but I don’t see*



*twenty other people will get that. I will work even harder. The next time I go to Bok Park. I will work even harder, but unfortunately you sit with those various people.”*

*Interviewee: “That will hate you, ja [yes].”*

**Interviewee 5:**

*“I think you need to acknowledge some of the things that have gone wrong and when we talk about being vulnerable and admit that there's something wrong and everybody will need to be part of the solution and really make it an impressive process. But I think there has got to be a point when the debate ends ...that is emotionally intelligent.”*

Hughes and Bradford (2007) argue that teams that function with healthy emotional and social intelligence experience a multitude of benefits. They identify seven skills of a team's emotionally and social intelligence, namely team identity, motivation, emotional awareness, communication, stress tolerance, conflict resolution and a positive mood. The interviewees confirmed that they saw a great need for teams to act in a more mature manner. They also remarked that teams should physically demonstrate both emotional and social intelligence when working together as a team.

#### **4.6.3.7 Diversity management**

Workforce diversity and the management thereof is a burning leadership issue in modern organisations. “Workforce diversity is more than a euphemism for cultural and racial differences” (Cummings & Worley, 2005:105). The danger is to define diversity too narrowly and to miss the broad range of issues that a diverse workforce faces. Diversity lies in many things, in character, personality, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, culture, values, etc. Strong diversity management presents an opportunity for businesses to harvest a diversity dividend from their human resources.

Cox (1993) argues that diversity that is not strategically valued and managed has an adverse impact on organisational outcomes at two levels:



- organisational effectiveness (diversity-related problems can have a negative impact on organisations in terms of attendance, turnover, quality of work, problem-solving, team cohesiveness, innovation and communication); and
- organisational performance (diversity-related problems can also have a negative impact on the achievement of organisational strategies; aspects such as market share and profitability will be seriously hampered by a lack of diversity management).

According to McGrath, Berdahl and Arrow (1996), there are five clusters of diversity:

- demographics (age, race, ethnicity, religion, education, etc.);
- task-related knowledge, skills and abilities (due to the historically differential education of black people in our country, South Africa as a whole is a reasonably low in task-competence);
- values, beliefs and attitudes (values in our country are to an extent influenced by African humanism);
- personality and cognitive behavioural styles (these aspects have been researched in Africa, but publications on this are not recognised in the Euro-centric parts of the continent); and
- status in the work group (based on past discrimination, black people enjoy the least recognition and status in organisations).

#### **On understanding diversity**

##### **Interviewee 5:**

Interviewer: "Is diversity an issue in teams in the Auditor General?"

*Interviewee: "I would love to believe that it is not such a big issue but I think it is. Perhaps in a very negative way, I think the requirements of employment equity are misunderstood. I think we are so obsessive about being consistent that we lose the ability to actually appreciate balance or ... and that is the other part of diversity that you have got to respect."*

##### **Focus Interview 1:**



*“I think as well in the 21st Century this whole thing about diversity is going to explode in our faces one time or the other because it is just not working, it is a very artificial thing at this stage, we tend to tolerate one another but it is going to explode definitely.”*

♪ **What do you mean with this remark?**

*“We talk about diversity being black, white or coloured, but it is far more than that. Gender everything, the full monty.”*

*“ ... if you can get the diversity thing right you can get the team thing right as well. And it is very definite, you are not only black and white. ... Diversity lies in sort of character and to be able to manage diversity you must know the other person, know what makes them tick and we don't [over speaking] and we don't have that.”*

**Age and diversity**

**Interviewee 2:**

*“... I think that diversity is, it doesn't matter what colour your skin is, it doesn't matter what religion you are, it doesn't matter, diversity even comes in different age brackets. Our office is especially on your teams who actually do the work, it is generally young people because that is just the way it works, that is how you come here, you train and then you get qualified. So we have very young people in our teams and that to me is diversity and the biggest thing for me is to just get to know that person. Everybody ... there will be a link between ... it doesn't matter if you come from a different culture, if you have a different colour skin, a different religion, there will be links that you are the same as the other people around you.”*

**Interviewee 1:**

Interviewer: “Do you think that makes it easier for people in an organisation to work together if you are younger?”



Interviewee: *“I don't think it makes it easier but because we are all basically the same age and we can more you know, I don't know how to say it ... our experience is basically the same when it comes to culture, diversity issues than to sit with people who are fifty or sixty, to work with a guy who is 20 or 30 that definitely makes a big difference.”*

Interviewee 9:

*“...we work in a team where we have got two Afrikaans people, one Indian, one Black person, one Polish person and I mean it we are lucky to have an interesting team.”*

The interview process was enriching and highly challenging. Individuals and teams, employees and managers shared their team expectations with me and openly expressed their concerns about working in teams. After numerous hours of interviewing, processing, and interpreting research material, I had to reflect back on my research questions:

What are the expectations of teamwork in 21<sup>st</sup> century, South African companies on multiple levels?

How do South African **employees** experience teams and team work?

What do **teams** regard as critical success factors in terms of teamwork?

In the team development processes?

As already mentioned, I focused my research on team expectations on the various organisational levels. Some expectations were verbalised on all the levels, and some proved to be relevant on only one level. I refrained from trying to quantify by, for example, stating that 5 out of 31 interviewees had the same expectation. That was never my purpose nor my intention. As qualitative researcher, I was interested in understanding at deeper levels instead of putting numbers to my findings. In conclusion, I can share the expectations that interviewees shared with me, the researcher, and indicate on which level these expectations were expressed. The fact that the same expectation was





expressed on all levels does not make that expectation more significant – it merely means that more than one interviewee group shares that expectation.

**Table 4.5: Expectations on multiple levels**

<b>Expectation</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Organi- sation</b>
A need for experiencing a culture of support	X	X	
Fun and humour in the workplace	X	X	
The need to be empowered and trusted	X	X	X
Work-life balance	X	X	
Clear Roles and responsibilities	X	X	X
A need for guidance and strong leadership	X	X	
Clear goals	X	X	X
To be rewarded and recognised for good performance		X	
To be understood and to understand others	X	X	
Sound communication	X	X	X
A culture of synergy and a understanding of dependency		X	
Team skills in order to understand the working of teams better	X	X	X
To make profit and reach financial targets			X
Quality and efficiency			X
Strong individuals and strong teams			X

These expectations should lastly be interpreted in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century or contemporary organisation, where I found the following to be the greatest challenges:

- The loss and constant search for identity
- The virtual nature of the team environment
- A growing environment of diversity
- The need for “new” ways of doing “old” things
- The enormous speed of change or “flux”
- Growing stress levels and a search for work-life balance

The expectations of teamwork as expressed by the interviewees seem to become the critical success factors. Each theme and sub-theme proved to be critical to the successful implementation of teamwork in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations.

**In conclusion**, it can be said that modern organisational behaviour theories and their application in organisations have evolved over a period of approximately 60 years (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001:5). It is indeed challenging to be part of searching for answers in order to sharpen our vision for the future. So-called 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations are unique and trying to understand them and specifically the expectations of teamwork prove to be a challenging and vigorous study. The results and findings revealed themes and sub-themes on expectations of teamwork in the 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation that can be confirmed by previous researchers. However, no previous research documentation has indicated the totality as in this study.

My interviews indicated that there are many challenges in contemporary organisations. The truth is that there are still many “truths” to be found. As researchers, we are faced with many significant human problems in organisations, and the challenge would be to continuously find solutions to these problems.