## Team or Committee?



Like many of you, I've worked on and with both teams and committees for decades.  For the past several decades I've had oversight responsibility for teams engaged in new product development.  It has always frustrated me when people referred to these groups as committees.  Why? Because committees and teams have very different objectives and methods of operation.

Think of any committee you've known.  Chances are good that it was created to exercise control over something.  It's also likely that the membership was somewhat homogeneous and that all members were empowered to vote on any given subject.  Now, think of a team. I'm guessing it was created to get something done!  These two objectives are, in fact, often in direct conflict.

More significant than the semantics is the reality that many teams act like committees in that they vote or seek consensus, even when some members clearly have expertise in certain areas while others do not.

Some years ago, I happened to be sitting in an airport waiting lounge as I was preparing a presentation on teamwork. I reflected on the flight crew and others who would work together to get me and others safely to our destinations.  Is such a group a team or a committee?  Do I want it to operate by voting or consensus or do I want it to rely on its experts?  Should the ground crew make the weather predictions?  Should the flight attendant decide whether a forecast thunderstorm presents a threat?  Sure, it's OK for the baggage handler to opine, "Gee, those clouds look scary!" but then he's out of it; someone more qualified needs to make the go/no-go decision.

Don't let your NPD teams work like committees.  Allow anyone to voice an opinion but then expect everyone to support the decisions of those most qualified to make them.