ANALYSIS   Stay-Alive Inc.*

Stay-Alive Inc., a small not-for-profit social service agency, hired Jean Smith to design, implement, and coordinate halfway house living programs for young adults.

When Jean arrived, the agency had an informal organization with little hierarchical structure and extensive participative decision making. The prevailing ideology that shaped virtually all decisions and interpersonal relationships was that a democratic system would be most effective and would lead to a higher level of job satisfaction for workers than would a more rigid hierarchical structure. The staff members attended at least five meetings weekly. Incredibly, the group devoted the majority of time at each one to exploring interpersonal problems.

Most staff members were young and had recently finished college. They often remarked that they sought a place to belong and feel accepted. Stay-Alive met that need in many ways: The group acted as a surrogate family for many employees. Even their life outside of work revolved heavily around activities with other Stay-Alive members. Salaries were low, and so the agency hired inexperienced people. Although the employees were bright, enthusiastic, and motivated, some were just beginning to develop the skills needed for effective performance in their jobs. Organizational leaders, therefore, defined success on the job primarily in terms of the employees' ability to relate well to others at work and only secondarily in terms of their ability to work with clients.

Within three months of her arrival, Jean submitted her plan for implementing the program. Her manager praised it, calling it a remarkable piece of work. Soon after the program was implemented, however, it became clear that it was not working. Still, the agency members responded by patting her on the back and telling her what a great job she was doing. Jean soon became frustrated and angry and left the agency.

Answer the following questions:

1. Is Stay-Alive Inc. an effective team? Why or why not?
2. How were the various team behaviors performed in this agency? What roles do you think have been considered the most important in the past? What roles do you think have been neglected?
3. Rather than leaving, how might Jean have helped Stay-Alive become a more effective organization?
4. What other suggestions would you give to the management team at Stay-Alive to help them improve?
5. If you were the director of Stay-Alive, what issues would you want to see addressed in a team-building session?