Figure 11.9
Surgical Teams Work
Under Particularly
Demanding
Conditions

At Customer Research Inc. (CRI), a progressive and successful marketing research firm, team members' feelings are illustrated in the following quotes:

- "I like being on the team. You feel like you belong. Everyone knows what's going on."
- "We take ownership. Everyone accepts responsibility and jumps in to help."
- "When a client needs something in an hour, we work together to solve the problem."
- "There are no slugs. Everyone pulls their weight."[48]

Team ability and motivation are crucial for effective delivery of many types of services, especially those involving individuals who are each playing specialist roles. Health care services depend heavily on effective teamwork (see Figure 11.9).

Creating Successful Service Delivery Teams

It's not easy to make teams function well. If people are not prepared for team work, and the team structure isn't set up right, a firm risks having initially enthusiastic volunteers who lack the competencies that teamwork requires. The skills needed include not only cooperation, listening to others, coaching and encouraging one another, but also an understanding of how to air differences, tell one another hard truths, and ask tough questions. All these require training.[49] Management also needs to set up a structure that will steer the teams toward success. A good example is American Express Latin America, which developed the following rules for making its teams work:

- Each team has an "owner"—a person who owns the team's problems.
- Each team has a leader who monitors team progress and team process. Team leaders are selected for their strong business knowledge and people skills.
- Each team has a quality facilitator—someone who knows how to make teams work and who can remove barriers to progress and train others to work together effectively.[50]

Motivate and Energize People

Once a firm has hired the right people, trained them well, empowered them, and organized them into service delivery teams, how can it ensure that they will deliver

service excellence? Staff performance is a function of ability and motivation.[51] Effective hiring, training, empowerment, and teams give a firm able people; reward systems, meantime, are the key to motivation. Service staff must get the message that providing quality service holds the key for them to be rewarded. Motivating and rewarding strong service performers are some of the most effective ways of retaining them. Staff pick up quickly whether those who get promoted are the truly outstanding service providers, and whether those who get fired are those who haven't delivered at the customer level.

A major way in which service businesses fail is not utilizing the full range of available rewards effectively. Many firms think in terms of money as reward, but it does not pass the test of an effective reward. Receiving a fair salary is a hygiene factor rather than a motivating factor. Paying more than what is seen as fair has only short-term motivating effects, and wears off quickly. On the other hand, bonuses that are contingent on performance have to be earned again and again, and therefore tend to be more lasting in their effectiveness. Other, more lasting rewards are the job content itself, recognition and feedback, and goal accomplishment.

Job Content

People are motivated and satisfied simply by knowing that they are doing a good job. They feel good about themselves, and they like to reinforce that feeling. This is true especially if the job also offers a variety of different activities, requires the completion of "whole" and identifiable pieces of work, is seen as significant in the sense that it has an impact on the lives of others, comes with autonomy, and if performing the job itself has a source of direct and clear feedback about how well employees did their work (e.g., grateful customers, and sales).

Feedback and Recognition

Humans are social beings, and they derive a sense of identity, and belonging to an organization, from the recognition and feedback they receive from the people around them—their customers, colleagues, and bosses. If employees are recognized and thanked for service excellence, they will desire to deliver it. We will discuss how to measure and use customer feedback in detail in Chapter 13.

Goal Accomplishment

Goals focus people's energy. Goals that are specific, difficult but attainable, and accepted by the staff are strong motivators and yield higher performance than no goals, or vague goals (e.g., "Do your best"), or goals that are impossible to achieve.[52] In short, goals are effective motivators.

The following are important points to note for effective goal setting:

- When goals are seen as important, achieving the goals is a reward in itself.
- Goal accomplishment can be used as a basis for giving rewards, including pay, feedback, and recognition. Feedback and recognition from peers can be given faster, more cheaply, and more effectively than pay, and have the additional benefit of gratifying an employee's self-esteem.
- Service employee goals that are specific and difficult must be set publicly to be accepted. Although goals must be specific, they can be something intangible such as improved employee courtesy ratings.
- Progress reports about goal accomplishment (feedback), and goal accomplishment itself, must be public events (recognition), if they are to gratify employees' esteem need.
- It's not usually necessary to specify the means to achieve goals. Feedback on progress while pursuing the goal serves as a corrective function. As long as the goal is specific, difficult but achievable, and accepted, goal pursuit will result in goal accomplishment, even in the absence of other rewards.

Successful firms recognize that people issues are complex. Hewitt Associates, a professional firm delivering human capital management services, captures the