

Group Behavior

2004

Introduction

People in every workplace debate about team building, operating as a team, but few understand how to create the experience of team building or how to evolve an effective team (Brannick, 1997). Many consider teams as the best organization design for involving all employees in making business success and profitability.

Foreword

Teams and teamwork exemplify very potent mechanisms for getting results and achieving substantial alteration in organizations.

Thesis Statement:

This research paper will explain how to evolve a high performance team and the impact of the demographic and cultural factors.

The discussions and recordings of this paper will be limited to the scope of the literature surveyed.

What is the Characteristics of a Group?

It can be best depicted as one where no significant incremental performance need or opportunity that would command it to become a team (Brannick, 1997). The members interact primarily to share information, best practices, or perspectives and to take decisions to help each individual execute within his or her area of responsibility. There is no call for either a team approach or a mutual accountability requirement (Brannick, 1997).

What Construes a High Performance Team?

Over the years, much has been ascertained about the evolution and implementation of teams, what works, and what doesn't. A class of team is evolving that has the potency of replacing traditional hierarchical structures with very flat, self-directed, cross-functional, organizations. Such teams are denoted to as high performance teams (Brannick, 1997). They are highly adaptive, hard to build, costly to maintain, and brilliant to behold. So long as human beings remain the crucial element of commerce, high performance teams will exemplify man's best hope for developing accurate, swift, and agile organizations (Brannick, 1997).

What are the key difference between a Group and a Team?

The important factors that distinguish between work groups and real teams are given below (Brannick, 1997).

1. An incremental performance need or chance
2. True interdependence
3. Real shared accountability

Concepts on High Performance Teams

High Performance teams are created with a mission or purpose in mind. This intention or mission should be conveyed in the form of a written charter. Over time teams develop their own set of norms. Norms are rules or guides for team behavior and decision making (Brannick, 1997). The idea of

using teams to solve problems and achieve results is based, in part, on a concept that the collective brainpower of a team far exceeds the power of any manager. Therefore, to a large level, teams are self-directed. High performance teams are also empowered. Teams are motivated by the challenge of accomplishing spectacular results within a short time-frame. It is quite normal for teams to thrash and churn during the early stages of development. This will normally appear disorderly to outsiders and team members alike. It is also normal for 75 percent of the real work of a team to be accomplished during the last 25 percent of the time allotted (Brannick, 1997). Team members are anticipated to pick up as they work together. Often the scope of work of a team touches or necessitates the activities of many people beyond the team itself, this external group can be referred to as the community of interest that must be included in the team's communication loop. All teams experience a deficit of resources. This phenomenon must be realized, expected, and available resources delineated for the team from the team's inception.

Building a High Performance Team

A critical element in the constitution of a team is the development and acceptance of the team charter. The team charter defines the task, scope and boundaries in which the team will operate. In one sense the charter is the team's license to function. Either organizational leaders or individual teams can draft the team charter (Brannick, 1997). No matter which approach to charter development is expended the organization's leader or leadership group still must sanction the team charter.

There are a number of elements that are crucial for the creation of any team. These include: two or more individuals, a common team goal, and the necessary resources of time, materials, space, and perhaps money needed to achieve and then affirm the goal (Brannick, 1997). High performance teams learn and demonstrate behaviors that are not evidenced by most teams. These characteristics represent the essential elements of high performance teams (Brannick, 1997).

In most organizations, teams are formed to either make decisions or carry out decisions. Decision making teams are normally made up of individuals who furnish a variety of expertise and experience. Teams formed to implement decisions already made by others are usually picked out to represent an area of influence or authority needed to attain a productive implementation. High performance teams are anticipated to both decide how alter is to occur and to be responsible for implementing the change. Selecting team members for high performance team's demands to take this dual role into consideration and choose both individuals who are thought leaders and influencers in the organization and individuals who have varied backgrounds and experience (Brannick, 1997).

While high performance teams can be implemented to accomplish any significant business purpose, they are most often formed to attain spectacular improvements within processes. Processes are a series of activities that have a starting point and a closing point. In business the trigger or beginning point of a process is often a customer order or request and the end point is the satisfaction of that order or request (Brannick, 1997). High performance teams are normally cross-functional, that is, the teams are composed of representatives who interpret one or more of the collection of activities that are performed by the process (Brannick, 1997). A high performance operating team will usually have a process owner who organizes the team's activities and is the communication interface with the organizational world beyond the team.

Three key characteristics of high performance team building involve trust, respect, and support (Brannick, 1997). Team members need to be coached in the need to trust and support each other. Support involves actively keeping an eye on the other team members and exhibiting a willingness to help each other out when help is needed--even when it might not be requested. Team members promote each other to stretch beyond their comfort zone by offering advice or assistance when asked or when it is obvious that the fellow team member needs it.

Diversity and Work Group Functioning

Diversity in-group membership can present both advantages and disadvantages for group performance. Researchers have examined the impact of diversity in identity group memberships, such as race and sex (Bassett, 1993); organizational group memberships, such as hierarchical position or organizational function (Bassett, 1993); and individual characteristics, such as idiosyncratic attitudes, values, and preferences (Bassett, 1993). Although certain types of diversity seem to be beneficial, studies focused on race and gender have exhibited both positive and negative outcomes, suggesting that certain conditions may moderate these outcomes. To date, however, most scholars have only speculated as to what these conditions might be. As a result, consultants and managers interested in diversity have had to rely largely on some combination of common sense and good faith for the rationales they advance about why and how companies should address the issue.

Diversity is a characteristic of groups of two or more people and typically refers to demographic differences of one sort or another among group members (Bassett, 1993). Researchers have rendered numerous dimensions for classifying demographic differences, often positing different outcomes for people and work groups, depending on the degree and nature of those differences. There has been one set of predictions about the impact of racial diversity among group members and another about the impact of functional background diversity, based on the visibility of race and the job-relatedness of functional background (Bassett, 1993). Others have distinguished among the effects of diversity depending on whether differences are cultural, physical, inherent and immutable or role-related (Bassett, 1993).

Perhaps more significantly, researchers' predictions about any one diversity variable differ depending on which of its dimensions they see as critical to determining its impact. Researchers anticipated that racial diversity, as a source of visible differences, would incite intergroup bias and lead to negative outcomes for work groups. Also there are predictions that racial diversity, as a source of

cultural differences, would heighten creative problem solving and lead to positive outcomes for work groups (Bassett, 1993).

In this research, the demographic variables in which were focused include race, ethnicity, sex, social class, religion, nationality, and sexual identity, all of which contribute to cultural identity. Cultural identities stem from membership in groups that are socioculturally distinct. They are often associated with particular physical (e.g., skin color), biological (e.g., genitalia), or stylistic (e.g., dress) features, though these may be more or less identifiable, depending in part on people's choices about whether and how they wish to be identified by others. Members of a cultural identity group tend to share certain worldviews, norms, values, goal priorities, and sociocultural heritage (Bassett, 1993). The cultural markers of such groups can be communicated through communication style, rules, shared meaning, and even dialects or languages, which others may or may not recognize as culturally linked (Bassett, 1993). The degree to which one personally identifies with one's cultural identities and the value one places on them vary across cultural groups and across members within cultural groups. Moreover, a person may alter in the degree to which he or she identifies with, values, or expresses a particular cultural identity at any given time, depending on the salience and meaning of that identity in the context within which he or she is operating (Bassett, 1993). Hence, cultural identity, as we interpret it, is socially constructed, complex, and dynamics in which one is interested shape one's inquiry.

In addition, cultural identities are affiliated in the larger society with certain power positions, such that some cultural identity groups have greater power, prestige, and status than others (Bassett, 1993). In Western society, men as a group are more powerful-have higher status and hold more positions of formal organizational and political power-than women as a group; similarly, whites are more powerful than people of color; Christians are more powerful than Jews; presumed heterosexuals are more powerful than gays, lesbians, and bisexuals; and the middle, upper-middle, and upper classes are more powerful than the working and lower classes.

Conclusion

High Performance teams are always aware of quality and strive to improve the quality of their teamwork as well as the quality of their output. A common practice for high performance teams to have one or more coaches (Brannick, 1997). The team coach is creditworthy for teaching team building behavior. Coaches are also helpful in making certain that the team receives guidance and training as needs arise.

Bibliography

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