



Team Building as a Method for Overcoming Destructive Team Problems

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Abstract: Team work is an interaction process of people with professional attitudes and mentality with the purpose of achieving high goals. Harmony and understanding are required for optimal results in the team but they are, however, difficult to combine. The cases when conflicts arise are not rare and then an adequate interference and sound judgment of situations are needed. The purpose of the publication is to outline the importance of team building as a method for overcoming destructive problems within teams.

Keywords: team, team building, problem situations, management.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the key aspects of management is to achieve high results through coordinating the mutual efforts of people. Obviously this is a difficult process which requires skills for working with people, appropriate resources and time to complete the set goal. Sometimes teams or organizations lack these factors but regardless of this they have to achieve optimal results in their activities. What is more, team work often implies conflict situations because it involves the ideas of people with different personality traits. In similar situations team building could be used to solve problems that affect team work negatively.

II. REQUIREMENTS FOR WELL-FUNCTIONING TEAMS

Well working teams could be an efficient method for achieving high results and job satisfaction of team members. This, however, needs not only team efforts and attitudes towards work but also events that are organized by the management so that they can structure the requirements for optimal results. Some of the most important requirements are as follows:

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1. Communication and feedback

The good interaction among team members and the management is a factor for achieving high results. Thus an appropriate environment is necessary where people can communicate freely, express their emotions openly and expect understanding and support from colleagues on these grounds. Therefore, in a well-functioning team its members should pursue [2,3,5,6]:

- social support when they need help or feel frustrated by professional or personal problems;
- positive interaction and mutual respect;
- constructive criticism from colleagues and moral support.

2. Delegating authority on behalf of management

A team cannot unfold their professional potential unless the company's management has an already developed approach to working with people. This approach should be based on ethical values and humane treatment of team members. It should also be an underlying principle of organizational culture and in cases it is missing it will be difficult for companies to achieve whatever optimal results. People should be given greater freedom in their work. Thus, in a good-working team its members should try to achieve the following [2,3,5,6]:

- responsibility and professional attitude towards goals and tasks;
- focus on team interests not on individual ones;
- implementing creative ideas;
- courage and mutual support in all undertakings.

3. Adequate approaches to problem situations

Team work gives rise to problems which affect the general aspects of work or result from conflicts among team members. Managers have to react adequately to problems by taking decisions that best correspond to particular problem situations. With reference to this team building is one of the possible solutions and its use is characterized by a number of aspects that have to be taken into account when team problems are to be solved.

III. TEAM BUILDING – PREVENTION OF DESTRUCTIVE PROBLEM IN TEAMS

In order to achieve great success in work team members should work in collaboration and have not only professional habits and but also a strategy for applying the synergic method. This is a difficult process which unfolds in time and is a responsibility of senior management or human resources manager. In all cases team building is a concept which has its characteristics and methods of application. This is not a situational approach which is used to provide temporary training to staff or to teach them how to behave with each other. Team building is a cyclic process defined by continuous improvement of team members' competences, adoption of new work models, changes in organizational culture and permanent training to achieve high results.

Team building is a method used by managers with the purpose of increasing effectiveness of team work (through directing employees' attitudes). This process cannot be realized unless there is active management (motivation, training, counseling, etc.). Therefore, teambuilding is a method used to overcome teamwork problems or increase the effectiveness of team members' work in their efforts to achieve positive results. This can be done by pointing out the main weakness of teamwork, working out development programs and optimizing the ineffective processes such as communication, decision making, etc.

From the above said it becomes obvious that teambuilding is a managerial instrument which is applied for solving dysfunctional problems or is aimed at increasing the constructiveness of teamwork. However, each team has its own characteristic work habits and members' behaviors. Therefore, the orientation of the teambuilding and the return of the expected investments should be defined in advance. Usually there are four approaches to designing teambuilding activities and the most appropriate ones are selected for particular teams. These approaches are as follows [4]:

1. Personally oriented team building

Team members are given questionnaires whose purpose is to determine their personality profiles. After the results are analyzed, the next steps for the further development of the team are undertaken. They include various events such as discussions or new experiments. The underlying idea of this approach is to enable team members to get to know each other and as a result optimize their communication and professional relations.

2. Team building through role play challenges and fun activities

Usually this is the teambuilding that is done outside companies and carries an emotional load for the team members (rope pulling, mountain hiking, rock climbing,

white water rafting, role plays, etc.). Extreme sports can be used as well if there are high levels of aggression or exhaustion in the team. Generally, these are activities whose purpose is to unite the team so that its members can work effectively together. The majority of the tasks are focused on specific team needs such as building mutual trust, team problem solving, taking responsibility, etc. The concept of this approach is that facing challenges in a friendly atmosphere will have a positive effect on team members in their work environment and this will therefore increase the team effectiveness.

3. Team building through specialized workshops

The objective of this type of team building is to optimize team performance by organizing trainings where team members acquire job-specific competences and behaviors (ethical perceptions, overcoming conflict situations, reaching consensus on controversial issues, approaches to constructive criticism, etc.) Team members are influenced during sessions with different terms and duration. The objective of these training sessions is to give participants knowledge of methods for improving team work and opportunities for practicing immediate reactions to arising difficulties.

4. Team building for overcoming team contradictions (conflicts)

The main idea of this team building is to train participants how to ignore obstacles that have negative effects on team work. These difficulties are intra-team contradictions with various levels of conflict. They affect negatively team members by reducing their productivity. In order for them to work effectively and in collaboration it is possible to apply various strategies for ignoring problems. Often the services of an outside team member (an arbiter) are used. They act as intermediaries between disputing parties. The objective of this approach is to eliminate contradictions within teams and improve their performance.

It is necessary to point out that these are categories that characterize team building and are not universal and strictly applied to specific approaches. It is possible to have situations that require the use of elements belonging to the four approaches or, for example, the integration of certain elements from only two or three approaches. This would depend not only on the specific situation but also on the tactics managers would like to apply in the particular case.

In order to overcome destructive relations among team members, however, the main emphasis should be placed on the fourth approach. It is specific with respect to the psychology knowledge implied in team development. Each participant possesses unique personality traits which determine their attitudes towards work and as a result influence relations with colleagues. In addition, there are often discrepancies between these attitudes, the work conditions and communication with other team members. This leads to



dysfunctional problems in the team that have to be solved promptly.

To eliminate destructive relations in teams, managers should plan the process carefully by taking measures to identify the problems and select initiatives to optimize the team work. The stages of the process should be executed in the following sequence [1,2,5,6]:

- identification of problem relations in the team;
- initiatives for solving the problem;
- development of the team.

• *Identifying problem relations in the team*

In order to solve a problem we should be properly diagnose it first. This is the first and most important prerequisite for optimizing team performance. In many case the attempts to eliminate dysfunctional problems fail because managers do not think critically about problem situations. Identifying problems is not an easy task because it is necessary to analyze a number of aspects that influence team work. With respect to the human factor (the catalyst of conflicts) there are two perspectives that have to be considered. The first one determines the people's profile in a team (their level of aggression and tendency of conflicts). The second one refers to the attitude (actions) of other team members towards their behavior.

The different reasons people have to behave destructively in teams require the respective instruments for diagnosing problem situations. What these instruments have in common is the fact that they are used to study team members' behavior through a personal dialogue to identify the reasons for their destructive conduct. At this stage managers can use techniques whose aim is to determine employees' attitude towards professional obligations and ways of perceiving coworkers. Two elements emerge here as well. They are of key importance to effective work and thus an essential reason of conflicts in teams. The first one is the lack of understanding of the organization's priorities (goals and tasks) while the second one refers to the antipathy to certain types of people (attitudes and types of behaviors).

In the first case confrontation among team members can appear because they lack clear understanding of their responsibilities and the ways they have to be performed. This happens when managers have not established good connection with their team members or do not have the necessary preparation to carry out an effective training. Regardless of the reason, performed diagnosis reveals problems in the professional realization of people and explains their conflict behavior.

In the second case the diagnostic activities focus on people's behavior and attitudes and how they perceive their coworkers. This is a major problem because there are often discrepancies in the personal evaluations of team members and this leads to false impressions about their actions or could be a reason for idleness. Not always people realize that through their actions they can

influence others in ways that are very different from the expected ones.

This is a complex process of communication and a personal interpretation of events. Sometimes people think that their counter-partners understand what they do or mean but at the same time the other party cannot rationalize their behavior. For this reason diagnostic work is done to help team members overcome the discrepancies in their ideas and understand each other's attitudes. Usually the analysis is aimed at determining the reasons for destructive relations in the team and at creating positive dialogue, trust and understanding. This will stimulate people to cooperate, show support and be motivated in their work.

• *Initiatives for solving the problem*

After managers analyze the problem leading to destructive relations in the team, they have to take the appropriate measures for solving it. There are certain factors that have to be considered in this process. These factors refer to the team members' roles and the changed approaches to work. In order to solve team problems in the best possible manner, it is recommended to take the following initiatives [2,6]:

- every team member should be aware of the nature of the existing problems and cooperate in resolving it;
- every team member has to use their skills and competences in the process of problem solving;
- every team member has to encourage their co-workers to participate and try solve the problem;
- team members must help each other by exchanging information and ideas about solving the problem;
- team members should make compromises when they have different views about solving the problem.

These are only some of the possible initiatives which require the direct involvement of team members in the process of problem solving. These measures will also determine a change in the attitude towards work which will eventually lead to better results from the mutual work of team members. This process is carried out by the guidance of human resources managers but often companies hire external experts (consultants or intermediaries who help resolve arising problems in a constructive manner).

• *Development of the team*

When problems are resolved successfully the process should not stop on the level reached by teams. Team work is always characterized by problems which must be solved not only by external interference but also by team members. Therefore the purpose of team building is to train staff so that they can solve team problems in a routine manner without hindering their relations. Various training programs are developed to optimize team work and prepare employees to cope with problems efficiently.

IV. CONCLUSION

When destructive problems arise it is necessary to react adequately to the situation which creates tension in the team and the relations of its members. Team building has a positive effect on team work because it brings people together, defines the nature of the problem and is the basis for determining creative guidelines for its solution. As a result of the publication the following has been achieved:

- the specific aspects of using team building in team work have been outlined;
- the role of team building as an effective method for solving destructive problems in teams has been revealed.

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