

7

Managing Dynamics in Teams

G P Sudhakar

This article is about the dynamics in team environment. It describes the team development stages such as Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning. The relationship among team members, with manager, roles of different team members and behavior of a self-managed worker are explained in this article. Meeting organizational objectives, managing differences and conflicts among team members and dealing with tough team member are dealt. Aspects related to multi cultural teams and managing interdisciplinary teams are also discussed in this article.

Introduction

Teams are like the heart of any organization and with cooperation as well as teamwork anything is possible to achieve (Leigh, 2008). The leader of the team should recognize that there is a discipline to study the team dynamics and the work of the team to know the blind spots and to operate as an effective team (Mary, 2007). Teamwork is one of the popular ways of organizational control.

Anytime, there are three or more than three people interacting, there are group dynamics (Ann-Marie *et al.*, 2003). Hence, there is a need to study the team dynamics. How individuals behave in teams, how do they maintain relationships with their fellow team members, with their manager, how conflicts arise among team members and how to deal with tough team member, etc. are discussed in this article. The different team development stages are discussed here under.

Team Development Stages

Team orientation in organizations started in 1970s and has continued since then. A lot of research is going on to find the individuals behavior in teams, teams' interaction, team dynamics, etc. Every team in an organization undergoes a specific life cycle. According to Tuckman, a team will undergo the stages of *Forming*, *Storming*, *Norming* and *Performing*. Another stage after performing is *Adjourning*.

In the *Forming* stage of team development, introduction among team members takes place. Everyone tries to behave formally with each other. There won't be any give and take relationship among team members. They will stick only to work relationship.

In the *Storming* stage of team development, the differences among team members are surfaced. The informal groups will form from the formal team. There may be chances of informal leadership struggle among the team members.

In the *Norming* stage, team norms will be formed. Everybody tries to follow those norms and guidelines. Slowly give and take relationship starts in the team. The team forms their ground rules to follow.

In the *Performing* stage, the team members know each other. They are comfortable with each other's behavior and are considerate to other team members. There will be coordination and cooperation among team members. Team productivity will be high in this stage. To reach this stage a team must spend atleast a year together.

A team reaches *Adjourning* stage after spending sometime in performing stage. Here in adjourning stage, team members have contributed their part and are ready for their release from the team. They will go back to their respective vertical, once this project is over. This is the stage before team dissolves.

The team won't follow these stages sequentially. Because whenever a new team member joins the team or leader changes for the team, the team again enters into storming stage of team development. Hence, one should be careful when adding new team members to the team or while changing the team leadership in the organization. It is the responsibility of the current members to help new team members and get oriented with team (Ann-Marie *et al.*, 2003). How does the communication takes place among team members will be discussed in the next part of the article.

Managing Communications in the Team

It is the responsibility of the team leader to manage the communications in the formal teams. He or she won't be having control over all the communication channels that exists in the team. However they can control the information, which flows among the team members.

The communication process includes sender, receiver, medium of communication, channel of communication and the noise. In modern day organizations, where virtual teams exist in the organizations, the communication is taking place through e-mail, fax, teleconferences, videoconferences, and webinars, etc. Different ways of communication channels are required which based on the team members' location. Interpersonal as well as listening skills are must for teamwork (Leigh, 2008).

Written and oral communications are used among team members based on the need and the complexity of the topic to be discussed. When the discussed topic is complex, it is better to use written communication. Informal discussions can be held orally. In the similar way different forms of communication are in need to formal and informal communication, in the teams. It is better to find a common method of communicating ideas, needs and results among the team members (Michelle, 2007). An Organization, which encourages communication among team members, will have high success in teamwork (Leigh, 2008).

Virtual Teams

In virtual teams, team members are distributed geographically in different locations. They may be working in different time zones. These team members have a common goal. We can find the virtual teams very commonly in IT industry. With the onsite-offshore model and distributed development, team members are working in different

countries in different time zones. They collaborate and communicate using state of the art communication technologies such as teleconferencing, video conferencing, e-mail, Internet, data and voice communication technologies.

According to Lisa (1997), managing virtual teams means dealing with communication strategies, project management techniques, human and social processes which takes care of the team. According to the definition provided by the *managementhelp.org* (2008), the virtual teams are of seven types. They are networked teams, parallel teams, project or product development teams, work or production teams, service teams, management teams, and action teams.

The advantages of virtual teams are the best practices can spread faster, easy cross-functional and cross-country communication, collaboration across companies and industries, better intra company and inter departmental communication. For example, reduction in software product development time, because of time zones advantage in different countries is an another advantage of virtual teams.

Relationship among Team Members

Cooperation, rejection, denial, support, emotional attachment, like, dislike and attraction are some of the relationships that are possible among team members. Only team members are responsible for managing their relationships with their fellow team members. In case, any conflict arises between team members, the leader can facilitate and resolve those conflicts. There is possibility of differences of opinion among team members as well in the team.

One should be responsible and careful when dealing with opposite sex team members. Attraction in initial stages should not turn into bitter relationships between them as the team progresses. There should be professional relationship with the opposite sex people in the teams. If you observe some of the companies, they encourage marriage between the employees of the organization or team members. There are both positive and negative effects of it.

Relationship with Manager

The behavior of the individual team members in the organization is based on their relationship with their immediate supervisor. The way team members behave has lot

of influence on their leader or manager's relationship with them. If their relationship with their manager is good and cordial, they try to participate in the team activities and organizational activities. If the team members are not having good relationship with their manager, absenteeism, rejection, disintegration, informal groups, occur in the teams. Sometimes, team members may challenge their team manager, if their relationships are strained.

Working in Different Organization Structures

There are different forms of organization structures available in the industry. They are functional, matrix and project oriented organization structures. The reporting structure varies from one organization structure to another. In case of matrix organization structure, the team members report to two bosses, one is functional manager and another is project manager. Again matrix organization structures are of three types. They are weak matrix, balanced matrix and strong matrix organization structure.

Team members' interaction varies from one organization structure to another. In functional organization structure, the communication can be vertical and horizontal. In matrix kind of organization structure even diagonal communication is possible in the organization.

Team Members Roles in Teams

Every team member will have a designation in the organization and role in the team. Here the designation is different and role is different. According to Belbin, the nine roles which the team members play are Shaper, Team Worker, Resource Investigator, Monitor Evaluator, Plant, Completer-Finisher, Implementer, Coordinator and Specialist (Fiona, 2005).

When it is observed the teams, in the organization, one will be working as supporter, one may be executor, one may be specialist at certain skills, one may be learner, etc. These people play different roles at different times. One won't be playing one role permanently. However, based on the situation, they change their roles.

Meeting Organizational Objectives

The purpose of formal teams in organizations is to meet the organizations' objectives. Every team will have an objective to achieve and the team members work together to

reach a common goal. There will be some team members whose objectives do not meet the organizational or team objectives.

If the team member is having objectives other than the team's objectives, it is better to keep him in the team whose objectives align with his personal objectives. If this is not possible, then it is better to advise him to find an organization, whose objectives are similar to his objectives.

Self-Managed Worker and Team

Usually knowledge workers are self managed workers. Managing knowledge workers is easier than managing non-knowledge workers. Because knowledge worker is self managed worker. He can plan, as well as organize his work and coordinate with other workers.

The manager plays an important role in managing self-managed workers as well. The motivating, directing and controlling the behaviors of team members are still remain with the team manager. Hence, the manager plays a significant role in managing workers. In case of managing knowledge workers, the manager needs to have the domain specific knowledge as well to understand the team dynamics. Ramachander (2006) expressed that the breed that will make the difference in service economy is the knowledge worker.

Managing Differences and Conflicts in Team

The manager is responsible for managing differences and conflicts in the team. In a team environment, there is possibility for differences and conflicts among team members. The manager has to respect the team members' differences. He or She should facilitate to remove the differences among team members. This is going to help to improve team productivity.

In a team environment, conflicts can exist among team members. There are several reasons for conflicts among team members. The reasons include schedules, priorities, costs, technical issues, resources, administrative issues, personality differences and benefits provided by the organization, etc.

When the conflicts arise, the manager has to resolve the conflicts by using techniques such as confrontation, smoothing, avoiding, compromise and forcing.

The confrontation technique can create win-win situation for the parties, who are in conflict. The confrontation with the help of facts and figures in hand creates win-win situation. The forcing technique creates win-loose situation. Particularly the team managers, in the current organizations, should have the conflict resolution skills.

Leadership in Teams

Generally, every formal team, in the organization, will have a team leader or manager assigned by the organization. However, in teams there is possibility of the formation of informal groups and informal leaders in the team. The more the size of the formal team, the more these groups will form. Usually, the informal leaders in the organization will have the power gained through influencing skills.

The formal leader in the organization will have powers such as legitimate, reward, penalty, expert and referral.

Managing Multi Cultural Teams

The cultural background of the team members can also be the reason for differences or conflicts in the team environment. Because in industries like IT and Pharmaceutical industries, diversified cultural background people will be working together in teams. The manager should be in a position to welcome other culture people into the team. When developing team members, the organization should take into consideration of diversity and work habits of them (Leigh, 2008).

Some organizations believe that the diversity improves the productivity. The problem solving and decision-making process in the teams also have the cultural influence. Diverse teams will also bring a diversity of understanding and expectations about processes and team work in organizations (Chad, 2006). According to Chad (2006), the objective in multicultural teams is to create an environment in which there is recognition for all team members. In multi cultural teams, one of the strategies is to look at the problems as cultural differences rather than personality problems (Kathleen, 2006).

Most successful managers and leaders when dealing with problems in multicultural teams follow four strategies. They are adaptation, structural intervention, managerial intervention and exit (Jeanne *et al.*, 2006).

Human Resource Skills Required for Managers

Recruiting, selection, induction, goal setting, performance evaluation, interviewing, communications management and conflict management skills are very much required for the team managers. These team managers' responsibilities vary from organization to organization. In some organizations team managers are responsible for the deliverables only. They won't be having any people responsibility. In some other organizations, the team managers will have responsibility of both the team members and the deliverables.

Managing Interdisciplinary Teams

In product development environment, it is common to have interdisciplinary teams. In interdisciplinary teams, individual specialists from different disciplines or domains come together to work on a common goal. For example, in consumer durables manufacturing, electrical, mechanical, electronics, and software engineers, marketing and sales executives come together to produce and market the products in an interdisciplinary way.

Similarly, while managing high performance teams, it is difficult to retain the team members, but retaining them can prove to be beneficial (Deepashika, 2004). Deepashika (2004) expressed that giving more responsibility to team members will enhance their sense of achievement. Describing the desired future of self-managing teams is difficult because it goes beyond the prevailing management and work paradigms and requires thinking about the vision of the organization (The Wisdom Meme, 2007).

Dealing with Tough Team Members

In day-to-day life, sometimes, team managers have to deal with tough team members. There should be specific approach that manager has to follow to deal with the tough team members. Difficult behavior can be extremely problematic to the workplace and affect the team productivity (RAN ONE, 2002). The steps to be followed while dealing with tough team members are assess merits of the manager himself and his management style, consider workplace stressors, enquire the personal problems of team member, offer needed help, counsel the team member and fire the team member as a last resort (RAN ONE, 2002).

Conclusion

In this article, how the team member maintains relationships with other team members and how he maintains relationship with his manager; how a self-managed worker and knowledge worker behave are discussed. The team development stages, how to consider problems in multicultural teams as cultural differences, what are the human resource skills required for the manager, what are the powers of the leader in team management, how to deal with conflicts and how to deal with tough team member are discussed.

References

1. Ann-Marie Nazzaro and Joyce Strazzabosco (2003), *Group Dynamics and Team Building*, Hemophilia Organization Development, September 2003, No. 4, Available at http://www.wfh.org/2/docs/Publications/Hemo_Org_Resources/Monographs/HOD4_Group_Dynamics.pdf (Accessed on 09-July-2008)
2. Chad Lewis (2006), *Managing and Working with Diverse Teams*, allpm.com news letter 30-Mar-2006, Available at <http://www.allpm.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=1514&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0> (Accessed on 09-July-2008)
3. Deepashika Mehta (2004), *Managing a High Performing Team*, The Hindu, 11-Feb-2004, Available at <http://www.hinduonnet.com/jobs/0402/2004021100220600.htm> (Accessed on 09-July-2008)
4. Fiona Beddoes-Jones (2005), *Team Theory and Group Dynamics*, 2005, available at http://www.cognitivefitness.co.uk/thinking_styles/fenman/TtT_team_theory_group_dynamics_23.pdf (Accessed on 09-July-2008)
5. Jeanne Brett, Kristin Behfar and Mary C. Kern (2006), *Managing Multicultural Teams*, Harvard Business Review, November 2006
6. Kathleen Melymuka (2006), *Managing Multicultural Teams*, Computerworld, 20-Nov-2006, Available at <http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&articleId=271169> (Accessed on 09-July-2008)
7. Leigh Goessl (2008), *Understanding team dynamics in the workplace*, available at <http://www.helium.com/items/583889-understanding-team-dynamics-in-the-workplace> (Accessed on 09-July-2008)
8. Lisa Kimball (1997), *Managing Virtual Teams*, Speech delivered at Team Strategies conference, Federated Press, Toronto, 1997, Available at <http://www.groupjazz.com/pdf/vteams-toronto.pdf> (Accessed on 25-Aug-2008)

9. managementhelp.org (2008), *Definition of Virtual Team*, 2008, available at http://www.managementhelp.org/grp_skill/virtual/defntion.pdf (Accessed on 25-Aug-2008)
10. Mary Johnson-Gerard (2007), *Team Formation and Development – Team Dynamics*, 2007, available at <http://ezinearticles.com/?Team-Formation-and-Development—Team-Dynamics&id=426059> (Accessed on 09-July-2008)
11. Michelle S. Berryman (2007), *Interdisciplinary Collaboration: A Case for Good Project Management*, 2007, Available at http://www.idsa.org/webmodules/Articles/articlefiles/ed_conference02/02.pdf (Accessed on 09-July-2008)
12. RAN ONE (2002), *Managing Difficult Team Members*, published in *Grow your Business*, RAN ONE Inc., 2002 Issue 1, available at http://www.rhlccpa.com/Advisors/rhlccpal_january2002.pdf (Accessed on 09-July-2008)
13. S. Ramachander (2006), *Managing the Knowledge Workers*, *The Hindu*, 10-April-2006, available at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2006/04/10/stories/2006041001680900.htm> (Accessed on 09-July-2008)
14. The Wisdom Meme (2007), *Managing the transition to Self Managed Teams*, 2007, Available at <http://www.thewisdommeme.com/Articles1/selfmanagedteams.htm> (Accessed on 09-July-2008).