

## Lesson:-27

### Exercise

#### **Organizational behavior – discussion –**

Business is about people; customers are people, suppliers are people, managers are people, and the employees are people. Whenever we bring people together into an organization or team, the group will develop its own personality representing a conglomeration of all members of the group, but strongly influenced by the dominant person or people.

We have the potential for turbulence when we bring people together in groups. Groups of people have the potential for many problems and for much greatness. The effective management of people in groups requires that we know how to enhance the good behaviors while also removing the impediments to peak performance. The challenge can be to know the difference between which behaviors are really good and which are actually harmful.

Managers make gallant attempts to do the right thing, but are at a disadvantage because they maintain relationships with the group they monitor or regulate. Friendships and rivalries occur within groups, which make it difficult to maintain an unbiased perspective. It is difficult to accurately diagnose problems within our own organization while being influenced by the interpersonal relationships. Managers often cannot see the root causes of problems within their own organization and this can have a significant effect on the decision making process. The best solution is to utilize the services of an independent outsider who is not part of the internal politics of the organization.

Conflict is a natural occurrence within most organizations. Talented people tend to have strong personalities and are comfortable being in a dominant role that raises the conflict level within the group or team. There are many conflict resolution strategies available to the manager, but the wrong strategy is often selected and the conflict is simply suppressed instead of being addressed. This leads to problems:

- Attempting to manage to reduce turbulence caused by conflict usually leads to groupthink, which is very dangerous.
- The wrong strategy allows the conflict to remain, but the turbulence is suppressed in a manner that it returns with a different look and feel; and with a new set of problems.

When managers seek to manage down the path of least resistance, it often causes trouble. We recently reviewed a decision to purchase a large piece of equipment. The company's vendor, who maintained a close relationship with the general manager, wanted to install equipment from the former market leader with a reputation for quality, but whose products were so out of date that it was no longer economical in the current energy environment. The company engineering manager wanted to install a similar component from the new market leader that is known for innovative products that perform very well and economical. The impasse stalled the project for several months as both parties felt they were acting in the best interest of the company. The engineering manager left the company for another opportunity and his replacement was asked to provide an opinion on the purchase decision. The new manager asked the opinion of his most knowledgeable subordinate and was advised to just tell the general manager what he wanted to hear so that it would be his fault if there was a problem. That same subordinate would never have given that same advice to the previous manager, because the previous manager had not managed avoid conflict. This illustrates a serious problem with managing in an environment where subordinate input is based on a dependency relationship.

One of the most difficult problems facing management today is that of getting reliable input from subordinates. Subordinates usually provide input that will prevent them from being responsible for a bad decision instead of providing expert input. When we manage to reduce conflict, most subordinates will tell

the boss what they think the boss wants to hear instead of telling them what they need to hear. This is an early warning sign of groupthink and usually leads to ineffective decision-making. The most effective way to avoid these kinds of problems is to introduce a person whose job is to represent a devil's advocate position to introduce a controlled level of conflict that helps people offer their own fresh and expert perspectives. A *Time-Slice* consultant can work with management to independently help create an operating environment that avoids these organizational traps.

Source: [www.time-slice.com](http://www.time-slice.com)

#### Multiple Choice

- 1 . \_\_\_\_ groups are defined by the organization's structure. -
  1. Informal
  2. Formal
  3. Friendship
  4. Interest
  
- 2 . The stage in group development which is characterized by uncertainty is -
  1. Norming
  2. Storming
  3. Forming
  4. Performing
  
- 3 . Which of the following is NOT an external condition imposed on the group? -
  1. group composition
  2. Authority structure
  3. Formal regulations
  4. Performance evaluation system
  
- 4 . The organization's overall strategy will -
  1. Define who reports to whom and what decisions groups are empowered to make.
  2. Influence the power of various work groups.
  3. Standardize employee behavior.
  4. Will influence what behaviors will be rewarded.
  
- 5 . How others believe you should act in a given situation is a -
  1. Norm
  2. Stereotype
  3. Role expectation
  4. Role perception
  
- 6 . Which is NOT a common class of norms appearing in most work groups? -
  1. Performance norms
  2. Appearance
  3. Termination
  4. Arrangement

7. In comparing the results of individual and group performance on a rope-pulling task, Ringelmann concluded that -

1. The larger the group, the greater the individual productivity.
2. Increases in group size are inversely related to individual performance.
3. Total productivity tends to decline in large groups.
4. Group size is not a determinant of individual productivity.

8. Group cohesiveness is increased with each of the following EXCEPT -

1. When the group is heterogeneous.
2. When members spend time together.
3. When external threats exist.
4. When the group is physically isolated.

9. Which is NOT a weakness of group decision-making? -

1. They are time-consuming.
2. They offer increased diversity of views.
3. They suffer from ambiguous responsibilities.
4. They can be dominated by one or a few members.

10. Brainstorming is -

1. Used to build group cohesiveness.
2. A technique that tends to restrict independent thinking.
3. A process for generating ideas.
4. Used mainly when group members cannot agree on a solution.

True or False

1. While command groups are determined by the organization chart, task, interest, and friendship groups develop because of the necessity to satisfy one's work and social needs. -

True  
False

2. The stages of group development must occur sequentially and will never occur simultaneously. -

True  
False

3 . Almost every work group has a formal leader. -

True  
False

4 . All group members can be said to be actors, each playing a role. -

True  
False

5 . Norms tell members what they ought and ought not to do under certain circumstances. -

True  
False

6 . High status members of groups are given less freedom to deviate from norms than other group members. -

True  
False

7 . Physically isolating a group will make it more cohesive. -

True  
False

8 . Social loafing is a case of negative synergy. -

True  
False

9 . The Challenger space shuttle disaster was an example of groupshift. -

True  
False

10 . The chief advantage of the nominal group technique is that it permits the group to meet formally but does not restrict independent thinking, as does the interacting group. -

True  
False

## Questions for review

1. Differentiate between formal and informal groups.
2. Compare two models of group development.
3. Explain how group interaction can be analyzed.
4. Identify key factors in explaining group behavior.
5. Explain how role requirements change in different situations.
6. Describe how norms exert influence on an individual's behavior.
7. Define social loafing and its effect on group performance.
8. Identify the benefits and disadvantages of cohesive groups.
9. list the strengths and weaknesses of group decision making.
10. Contrast the effectiveness of interacting, brainstorming, nominal, and electronic. meeting groups

## Case Study and Analysis

LEAD STORY-DATELINE: HR Magazine, May 1999.

A growing trend in organizations is to create teams to accomplish business objectives. However, forming teams without sound business reasons may be detrimental. Creating a teamed workforce should be a reflection of a strategic business decision. "Teams are a means to an end, not an end in themselves" (HR Magazine, May 1999).

Although the benefits of teams can be great, organizations need to proceed with caution. The human element may create roadblocks. "Managers often fear their jobs will disappear if work teams become self-directed" (Management Review, June 1998). Additionally, not every worker wants or is ready to be a member of a team. "Some people will outpace themselves if they see teams coming and they don't like the idea" (HR Magazine, May 1999). "...they have to let go of old assumptions, fears and habits. ...For this reason, the implementation of [teams] must be carefully planned. ...A business needs a disciplined execution methodology if people are to make the transition from work groups to teams" (Management Review, June 1998).

The first step in building teams is to build individuals. "...workers are often conditioned not to think at work. ...If people can't think on their own, they can't think as a team" (HR Magazine, May 1999). To assume workers have the necessary skills without training is a serious error; individuals must have the needed skills before a team environment is created.

If managers want to build teams that come up with creative ideas, they need to pay careful attention to the design of those teams. Managers "...must create mutually supportive groups with a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds. ...creating such teams requires managers to have a deep understanding of their people" (Harvard Business Review, September 1998).

Once certain the right people are chosen for team work, they must learn "how to organize a meeting, set an agenda, determine priorities, assign work, then follow through" (HR Magazine, February 1999); the skills a self-directed or self-managed team must be able to accomplish to run smoothly. However, training must also occur at the team and business levels. People need to learn the complexities of the business and "Overall, the idea is that each employee learns not only a job, but also the ins and outs of the business; that way when a company shifts direction, employees can adapt quickly. It's pretty easy to train for new products and new technologies-what's more difficult is training people in different ways of doing business" (HR Magazine, February 1999).

Developing a team environment is not without risk or expense; it takes time, careful planning, extensive training, and patience. "As managers loosen the reins of day-to-day control, they

must ensure that SMTs [self-managed teams] have clear sets of behavioral competencies and performance standards, such as financial targets. ... These expectations ... determine the height of the bar and define the conditions for self-accountability ... such parameters actually give teams more freedom to take risks" (Management Review, June 1998).

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#### TALKING IT OVER AND THINKING IT THROUGH!

What is the definition of group? Team?

What is the difference between a group and a team?

What is the difference between a formal group and an informal group?

What are the characteristics of a self-directed/self-managed work team?

Does self-directed or self-managed (in self-directed or self-managed team) mean without management? What is a manager's role in a workplace with self-directed or self-managed work teams?

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#### SHARING THE NEWS WITH A GROUP!

This exercise is designed to identify some behaviors to overcome problems when leading a group. Break into small groups. Have the groups discuss the types of problems that might occur for group facilitators (leaders) running a meeting. Have the groups write their list on a sheet of paper. Next, for each problem, have the group brainstorm a list of possible behaviors to handle each problem identified. The groups should attempt to reach a consensus list of behaviors that can be used to handle the problems identified.

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#### THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE!

As stated in the articles, using the group or team approach to accomplish business objectives is not the best solution for all businesses. The decision to have work groups or teams should be linked to business strategy, not just because it seems like a good idea. The options must be studied carefully. But employee work groups are very common. This means that not only the manager but also the worker's knowledge and skills relative to groups will be more frequently put to use.

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### DIGGING DEEPER!

Good meetings do not happen by chance, they are created. Leading or facilitating a good meeting is work. According to Michael Begeman, manager of 3M's Meeting Network, "We have the knowledge to make meetings better. But most people haven't learned it or don't bother to use it. And then they wonder why their meetings just stumble along" (Fast Company, April 1999). More and more of what takes place at work happens in teams. "Meetings are events in which real work takes place" (Fast Company, April 1999); meetings become essential for work to get done.

What does it take to have a good meeting? Good meetings take a lot of thinking, planning, organizing, and designing before the actual event. A good meeting requires an agenda and a whole lot more; here are a few suggestions.

The purpose of the meeting should determine the tone of the meeting. A meeting for generating ideas should have a different conversation than a meeting for making decisions. "If you call a meeting, make it clear to people what kind of conversation they're going to have, and then impose a certain amount of discipline on them. Remember: Meetings don't go off topic. People do" (Fast Company, April 1999).

Most meeting participants come with a set of expectations regarding how people should act. "Rules of engagement" or ground rules should be explicitly stated. If people feel strongly about starting and ending on time, then an explicit commitment to do that should be made. Individual rules of engagement can be made as well. "For example: Before anyone makes a point, that person has to find merit in the point made by the previous speaker" (Fast Company, April 1999). By explicitly stating the rules, everyone can operate from the same set of expectations.

"There is a legitimate social component to meetings" (Fast Company, April 1999). Even meetings cannot be all business. Time should be included in the schedule to allow people to relate to one another. Put it in the agenda. That way no one will feel that they are not doing what they are supposed to do. "Remember just because people walk into a conference room doesn't mean that their mind is on your meeting" (Fast Company, April 1999).