Groups, Teams and Committees in Management of Organization

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Introduction

ORDINARILY, what comes to mind at the mention of a group is a collection. It could be a collection of human beings, animals, plants or any other thing. Similarly, at the mention of a team what comes to mind is a football team. Also, a committee suggests people assigned to a particular task. However, in the study of behaviour of people in an organization, these words are used in more technical terms than their ordinary meanings. Much organizational work is performed in teams. Their performance thus affects the success of the organization as a whole. Being able to work productively with others is so important that companies emphasize that their recruits should be good 'team players'. To ensure this, they invest in team development activities to develop their teams' working abilities. Hayes (1997:1) notes that "To an ever-increasing extent, modern management has become focused on the idea of the team. Management consultants propose organizational restructuring to facilitate teamwork; directors make policy statements about the importance of the team to the organization. And senior managers exhort their junior staff to encourage team working in their departments" (Buchanan et al., 2004).

What is a Group?

A group is defined as two or more people who have a common goal or interest and interact with each other or one another to accomplish their objective. Members of a team are aware of one another and perceive themselves to be a part of the group. Having a common goal means that group members have a common concern and each member must appreciate he is a member of or a participant in the group. Interaction may not necessarily be face-to-face; it could be in writing, over the phone in teleconferencing or video-conferencing. A group may be formal or informal. A group is formal if it is organizationally determined. Members of a formal group may relate vertically or horizontally in interactions among organizational members. Groups can also be classified as command groups and task groups. A command group consists of a superior and the

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subordinates who report to him. In other words, a command group ██████
chain of command. A task group consists of all other forms, ██ ██ ███
functional. All command groups, are also task groups whereas task group
not be command groups.

Types of Group Task

Group tasks may be additive, conjunctive or disjunctive..

Additive Tasks: Additive task is a task whose accomplishment dependiss
sum of all group members' efforts. Examples of additive task are ████
contests and pedestrians giving a stalled car a push-start. Synergy is ███
provided all members are making their contributions.

Conjunctive Tasks: A conjunctive task is a task whose accomplis██
depends on the performance of the group's least talented member. An eu██
running a relay race.

Disjunctive Tasks: A disjunctive task is that whose accomplish████
on the performance of the group's most talented member. An exampl██
team.

What is a Team?

A team is a mature group where leadership is shared, accountability ██
individual and collective, the members have developed their own purp██
problem-solving is a way of life and effectiveness is measured by ███
outcomes. A team is made up of people with complementary skills.

From these definitions, it is clear that the term 'group' is generic while
is used in a specific context. Also, it is realized that all teams are ██
whereas it does not follow that all groups are teams. Edgar Schein, ██
organizational psychologist, highlights the concepts by drawing ██
distinctions among a group, a crowd and an organization. He stated that
of a group is limited by the possibilities of mutual interaction and █
awareness. According to him, mere aggregates of people do not fit this ███
because they do not interact and do not perceive themselves to be a group
they are aware of each other, as with the definition of a group.

Differences between Groups and Teams

The following are the differences between groups and teams:
(i)   A group has a designated strong leader, whereas a team shares ██
      leadership roles.
(ii) A group holds individuals accountable whereas a team holds ██
      accountable to each other.
(iii) A group sets identical purposes for group and organization where██
      sets a specific team vision or purpose.
(iv) A group has individual work products whereas a team has colle██
      products.

    A group runs efficient meetings whereas a team runs meetings that encourage open-ended discussion and problem-solving.

    A group measures effectiveness indirectly by influence on business (such as financial performance) whereas a team measures effectiveness directly by assessing collective work.

    A group discusses, decides and delegates work to individuals whereas a team discusses, decides and shares work.

Group Development Process

A regular model of group development process consists of five stages, these being (i) forming (ii) storming (iii) norming (iv) performing and (v) adjourning.

Stage 1: Forming

This is the "ice-breaking" stage when group members are uncertain about many things, such as what their roles are, how they fit in the group, how to perform their roles, and which behaviour the leaders should encourage members to accept in informal discussions/socialization.

Stage 2: Storming

As members get to know one another better, they air their views more openly and forcefully. Disagreements and conflict ensue. The result is that group members iron out their differences and forge ahead. This stage may be prolonged and many groups never continue past this stage because they get bogged down in the emotionalism and political in-fighting. That is a fight for power.

Stage 3: Norming

This stage is typically of short duration. Members now understand and accept one another. Conflict is over, and there tends to be a harmonious relationship. Guidelines and standards are formed and the norms of the group are agreed on. Group cohesiveness, defined as the "we feeling" that binds members of a group, is the principal by-product of this stage.

Stage 4: Performing

At this stage of group development, the structure and cohesiveness to work together would have been created. Members are now concerned with task accomplishment. Participation and camaraderie run high as members believe that all the difficult emotional problems have been solved.

Stage 5: Adjourning

This is the time to sing "The day is past and over..." The work is done and it is time for members to disband. This can be marked with celebrations, parties, award ceremonies, etc.

Group Problem-Solving Techniques

Use of groups to reach decisions requires that they must reach a consensus. This does not mean unanimous agreement, since group members may still disagree with the final decision. There are a number of problem-solving techniques, namely (i) brainstorming (ii) the nominal group technique and (iii) the Delphi technique.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is used to generate a pool of ideas/alternatives to solving the problem at hand without critical or judgemental interference from other group members. A second session is used to critique and evaluate the alternatives. There are seven rules for brainstorming:

(1) Defer judgement while ideas are being generated.
(2) Build on the ideas of others by avoiding "buts" and using "ands".
(3) Encourage wild ideas. The wilder and more outrageous the ideas the better.
(4) Go for quantity over quality.
(5) Be visual. Use coloured pens.
(6) Stay focused on the topic.
(7) No one interrupts another person, no dismissing of someone's ideas, disrespect, and no rudeness.

The Nominal Group Technique

Under the nominal group technique, a group is convened to discuss a particular problem or issue. After the problem is understood, individuals silently generate ideas in writing. Each individual obtains ideas from questionnaires or via the Internet as opposed group discusses them. Anyone may criticize or defend an item. During this step, clarification is provided as well as general agreement or disagreement with the idea. Finally, group members anonymously vote for their top choices with a weighted voting procedure.

The Delphi Technique

Unlike the nominal group technique, experts' ideas are obtained from questionnaires or via the Internet as opposed to face-to-face group discussions and the experts are physically dispersed. The Delphi process is initiated by first identifying the problem to be solved. Next, participants are identified and a questionnaire developed and e-mailed to the participants who in turn e-mail the completed questionnaire to the originator. The originator summarizes the responses and e-mails them to the participants, expecting them to review the feedback, prioritize the issues being considered and return the survey within a specified time period. The cycle is repeated until the necessary information is obtained.

Team Characteristics

Team characteristics can affect team dynamics and performance. Some characteristics of teams are (i) the size (ii) diversity, (iii) member roles, and others.

Size: The ideal size of work teams is said to be 7, although variations of from 5 to typically are associated with good team performance. If a team grows larger than 20, managers should divide it into subgroups, each with its own members and goals.

Diversity: Heterogeneous teams would be more effective than homogeneous teams since teams require a variety of skills, knowledge and experience. Diversity in terms of functional areas and skills, thinking styles, and personal characteristics is often a source of creativity.

Member Roles: Roles are sets of behaviours that persons expect of occupants of a position. There are task roles in which an individual devotes personal time and energy to helping the team accomplish its task. There is also maintenance or socio-emotional roles in which the individual provides support for team members' emotional needs and social unity.

Task Roles: People who play the task roles initiate ideas, give candid feedback on others' suggestions, seek information relevant to the task, relate various ideas to the problem at hand and energise the team into action when interest drops.

Maintenance Roles: People who play maintenance or socio-emotional roles encourage others to be forthcoming with ideas, reconcile group conflicts and reduce tension when group atmosphere is tense. They also compromise, that is, shift ground in order to accommodate the opinions of others.

Types of Teams

The easiest way to classify teams is to consider those created as part of the formal organization structure and those created to increase employee participation.

Formal Team: A formal team is created by the organization as part of the formal organization structure.

Vertical Team: A vertical team is a formal team composed of a manager and his or her subordinates in the organization's formal chain of command.

Horizontal Team: A horizontal team is a formal team composed of employees from about the same level but from different areas of expertise.

Special-Purpose Team: A special-purpose team is a team created outside the formal organization to undertake a project of special importance or creativity.

Problem-Solving Team: Employees' participation inevitably led to their autonomy, which made it possible for problem-solving teams first to be created and then self-directed teams followed. Typically a problem-solving team consists of 5 to 12 hourly employees from the same department who meet to

discuss ways of improving quality, efficiency and the work environment. The first known application is quality circles, first used by Japanese companies.

Self-Directed Team: A self-directed team consists of 5 to 20 multi-skilled workers who rotate jobs to produce an entire product or service, often supervised by an elected member.

Teams in the New Workplace: Advances in information technology have brought about two other types of teams, viz:

(a) Virtual Team: A virtual team is a team that uses advanced information and telecommunications technologies.

(b) Global Team: This is a work team that is made up of members of different nationalities whose activities span many countries; they may operate as a virtual team or meet face-to-face.

Team Problem

The basic team problem is not assigning responsibility to a particular person or member of the team.

> "There were four team members named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.
> There was an important job to do and Everybody was asked to do it.
> Everybody was sure Somebody would do it.
> Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did.
> Everybody was angry about that, because it was Somebody's job.
> Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't.
> In the end, Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done."

Threats to Group and Team Effectiveness

Threats to group and team effectiveness are (i) Groupthink and (ii) Social loafing.

Groupthink

Groupthink is the tendency for people to be so committed to a cohesive team that they are reluctant to express contrary opinions. Author and scholar Jerry Harvey tells a story of how members of his extended family in Texas decided to drive 40 miles to Abilene on a hot day when the car's air conditioning did not work. Everyone was miserable. Later, each person admitted they had not wanted to go but went along to please others. Harvey used the term Abilene Paradox to describe this tendency to go along with others for the sake of avoiding conflict. Similarly, when people in work teams go along with others to avoid conflict, a problem is created. A bit of conflict leads to better decisions because different viewpoints are considered.

Social Loafing

Social loafing refers to the tendency for individuals to exert less effort when working as part of a group on an additive task than when working alone. This phenomenom was originally known as "Ringelmann effect", named after the man who first made the observation. This is negative synergy in action and it challenges the idea that "unity is strength". Social loafing has been ascribed to the belief of loafers that there should be equity of effort: "Others are not contributing, why should I?" There is also dispersion of responsibility: "I'm hidden in the crowd, no one will notice me." And there is a negative effect of group reward: "Everyone will get the same, why should I work harder?"

Committees

Committees are one of the frequently used devices in organization. A committee is a group of persons to whom tasks are grouped or assigned. Much of the discussion about teams above also pertains to committees.

Group Processes in Committees

The stages of group development, that is, forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning are applicable in varying degrees to committees. People play certain roles in committees. Some seek information and others give it. Some try to encourage others to contribute, others are followers. Some try to coordinate the group's effort or to achieve a compromise when disagreements occur, while others take a more aggressive role (Weihrich and Kootnz, 2006).

Functions and Formality of Committees

Some committees undertake the managerial functions of planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling. Others make decisions while some merely deliberate on problems without having the authority to decide on them. Some have authority to make recommendation to managers who may or may not accept them. Just as well, some committees may have line or staff functions. If committee authority involves decision-making that affects subordinates it is responsible for, it is a plural executive – *a line committee* that also carries out managerial functions e.g. a board of directors. If its authority relation to a superior is advisory, this is *staff committee.*

Committees may also be formal or informal. If they have duties and authority they are formal. If they have no specific delegation of authority they are informal. Committees may be relatively permanent or they may be temporary. Formal committees tend to be more permanent than informal ones.

Reasons for Using Committees

Committees are useful for the following reasons:

- Advantage of gaining group deliberation and judgement.
- Fear of too much authority in a single hand.