Integrating self-managed work teams into project management

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Integrating self-managed work teams into project management

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Abstract

Purpose – To present the advantages and possible deterrents of self-managed work teams, and offer recommendations on ways to integrate these teams into project management.

Design/methodology/approach – A range of works, which provide a description and practical advice about self-managed work teams, are reviewed in an effort to provide a thorough picture of self-managed work teams. The information is sorted into sections: history of self-managed work teams; self-managed work teams: a definition; characteristics of self-managed work teams; the role of emotional intelligence in self-managed work teams; developing and empowering the team; barriers to successful self-managed work teams; factors to consider before forming a self-managed work team; and the longevity of self-managed work teams.

Findings – Integrates theories and findings from other works to offer a holistic view of self-managed work teams in today's workplace.

Research limitations/implications – Resources from USA, as well as European writings, were analyzed to bring global perspectives. Applications are not specific to FM or construction, but business in general.

Practical implications – A useful source for project managers or other managers considering implementing self-managed work teams to increase productivity and employee morale.

Originality/value – Takes an integrated approach in exploring all areas of self-managed work teams, including emotional intelligence. Provides useful information on integrating self-managed work teams in project management.

Keywords Autonomous work groups, Project management, Productivity rate, Employees, Morale

Paper type General review

Introduction

Ask any project manager about his or her job and a common response is "project management isn't what it used to be!" From who is on the team and the location of team members to the tasks they are expected to complete, project management is a changing discipline. The best project managers are certainly a multi-talented bunch, possessing many of the same inherent personality traits that make them sticklers for detail. Whether they possess financial, interpersonal, or technical expertise – or the ability to constantly juggle multiple projects and their prospective deadlines – it is not enough to only have these natural skills. Knowing when to apply the right one at the right time is what separates good project managers from great project managers. More frequently, project managers are using their delegation skills and are relying more heavily on individuals to manage themselves and their assignments, consequently forming a new trend in project management – self-managed work teams.

The self-managed work team has been heralded as the productivity breakthrough of the 1990s. Project managers turned to self-managed work teams because of the high-quality work these teams produce (Hoerr, 1989; Wellins *et al.*, 1991). Popular literature is full of examples of successful quality-enhancing results from self-managed

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work teams. The Volvo Kalmar facility reduced defects by 90 percent in 1987, Federal Express cut service errors by 13 percent, and Corning's specialty cellular ceramics plant decreased defect rates from 1,800 parts per million to nine parts per million by using self-managed work teams (Sexton, 1994).

Self-managed teams can be a light at the end of the tunnel for the American corporation because they shift the company's focus from simple planning to a focus on the entire process of production. Having a share in the end result is expected to reduce defects where they are most likely to occur, provide a timely response to customer requests in highly competitive environments, and streamline the organizational chart. Like other forms of group work design, increasing organizational effectiveness is a primary goal of self-managed work teams. Self-managed teams are so intensively focused on high performance that often individual needs of the team members can be overlooked. This paper focuses on characteristics of self-managed work teams, conditions for success, potential barriers to effectiveness, training methods, stages for development, longevity, and implication for practice. In this paper, self-directed team or self-motivated team will be used interchangeably with self-managed work team.

History of self-managed work teams

The self-managed work team is not a new revelation; rather, it derived from the autonomous work group, a prominent form of worker organization developed as an outcome of socio-technical system theory in the 1960s and 1970s (Herbst, 1962). This theory combined both the technical and social systems of the organization. It is the only framework that specifically deals with the group rather than the individual (Pasmore *et al.*, 1982). Meaningful work and direct responsibility for its outcome has been found to satisfy individuals much more than what is accomplished on an individual basis (Buchanan, 1979). Human needs have precedence over technology. Therefore, the emphasis must be on the equilibrium between organizational effectiveness and the individual's quality of life.

The autonomous work group gained popularity in Europe during the 1970s and is often synonymous with participative management or European concepts of industrial democracy. However, in the USA, work group studies were a response to finding solutions for specific problems, or developing a new product or service (Hackman and Oldham, 1980).

Self-managed work teams have received additional momentum from those recognizing the results of employee empowerment (Matza, 1990; Messmer, 1990). Through empowerment, everyone on the team has a vested interest in the outcome. Empowered teams share equality through managing the risks and benefits of decision-making from training, mutual commitment, and trust (Gandz, 1990). This shared responsibility is expected to lead to an increase in efficiency, quality control, and overall effectiveness.

Self-managed work teams: a definition

The concept has been defined as a mechanism for allowing workers to be responsible for organizing, regulating, and controlling the various aspects and conditions of their jobs in order to affect the outcome. In a total quality management environment, the convergence of democracy and independence is essential because of the dual focus on both the worker and the organization.

The purpose of the self-managed work team or self-directed work team is threefold. It is to:

(1) improve quality of the work environment;

(2) increase the overall performance of the organization; and

(3) provide an environment that focuses on the well being of its employees, as well as the organization's performance.

Consequently, conflicts often arise in these situations since managers may be faced with the daunting task of striking a balance between creating positive employee morale and getting the job done on time and within budget (Sexton, 1994).

Although self-managed work teams may vary depending on the culture of the company, there are common characteristics, including: group task design; group composition; and the development of group norms (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). Group task design is largely determined by the motivation of the team members and focuses on the variety of skills essential to the successful completion of the task. Group composition includes not only the specifically skilled, but also a diverse, multi-talented cross section of the organization, including all levels of management (Corderey *et al.*, 1991). The relevance of the task must be important to others within and outside the organization (task significance), and it must be designed to provide the latitude for the team members to be responsible for the entire task (task autonomy). This last characteristic is extremely significant when defining self-managed work teams.

The self-managed work team is largely defined by its autonomy, self-regulation, or self-management. Autonomy is a multi-dimensional concept. In terms of work groups, at one end of the autonomy continuum are:

> Co-acting groups in which workers are independent actors whose jobs are each externally well-defined in advance and supervised by management. At the other end are fully realized self-managed work teams, characterized by self-regulation of work content (scheduling methods of doing work, job rotation), self-evaluation (quality and productivity decisions), and self-adjustment to contingencies (client interface). The team is responsible for production cycle activities, output rate, and the quality and quantity of the output (Sexton, 1994, p. 47).

The degree to which a team is autonomous is largely determined by the culture of the company and the management style of its leaders. The majority of self-managed work teams most likely fall somewhere in the middle of the continuum, and, therefore, do not fully realize the ideal self-managed work team (Sexton, 1994).

Characteristics of self-managed work teams

Virtually every effective self-managed team ranges in size between two and 25 members, with the majority averaging 10 members. Small size is more of a realistic guide than an absolute necessity for success. For example, it is far easier for 10 people than 50 to work through their individual, functional, and hierarchical differences toward a common plan and to hold themselves jointly accountable for the results they create, not to mention logistics for meeting time, location or other factors (Hirschorn, 1991).

In addition to finding the right size, teams must develop the right mix of skills. In order to do its job effectively, a team must possess complementary skills. Proper skill

sets are a common denominator in potential self-managed teams. Skill requirements fall into three fairly self-evident categories:

(1) technical or functional expertise;

(2) problem-solving and decision-making skills; and

(3) interpersonal skills.

Technical or functional expertise

Product development groups that include only marketers or engineers are less likely to succeed than those with the complementary skills of both. As a result of the integration of viewpoints, self-managed teams offer multi-functional definitions and solutions to problems that generate innovative products or services. However, self-managed work teams also offer unique challenges. Traditional management models often will not work in these teams because of the varying functional backgrounds of the members. Leaders may not have sufficient expertise to provide appropriate technical guidance or evaluation to each team member. Instead, members have to look for technical support in their functional areas. The lack of common backgrounds means teams members cannot likely cover for one another. Thus, members must become personally responsible for adequately representing and integrating their technical contributions into the final product. Moreover, there is greater potential for conflict resulting from diverse viewpoints and varying perspectives (Heaney, 1989; Parker, 1994). Project leaders act more as coaches, facilitators, and coordinators than as supervisors because they cannot enforce technical standards for work. Team members must take greater responsibility for monitoring and managing their own technical contributions (Uhl-Bien and Graen, 1998).

Problem-solving and decision-making skills

The ways in which teams manage themselves differs greatly from the way individuals manage themselves. In a team environment, members focus on problem-solving and work collaboratively rather than independently. They generally focus on policies and procedures, human resources, performance guidelines, and overall expectations. In fact, studies have shown that when team members focus only on individual unit performance, the overall team performance can suffer (Liden *et al.*, 1994). Individual contributions and buy-in to the group decisions are essential.

Interpersonal skills

Mutual understanding and purpose require effective communication, as well as occasional constructive conflict, which call on the unique interpersonal skills of each team member. These interpersonal skills include objectivity, active listening, supporting opposing viewpoints, and valuing the successes of individual team members. For successful management and motivation, two-way communication is needed among all members of an organization. Effective work teams perform at a higher level of effectiveness when the team members are able to communicate up and down the organizational chart, as well as within their own departments. Internal communication among project members is important for the performances of technical service teams, particularly interaction between project members and their project managers (Allen *et al.*, 1979). The value of oral communication cannot be overstated and must be taken into consideration as it affects the interaction patterns among

project members. In an age of the internet, e-mail and instant messaging, the quality of the actual communication can determine the longevity of the group and help predict the likelihood of the group's survival. Face-to-face communication is needed, especially in the early stages, to establish understanding and trust among members.

The role of emotional intelligence in self-managed work teams

When Goleman (1995, 1998) wrote his landmark books on emotional intelligence in the 1990s, managers were relieved to finally have a label for what they had always felt but could not quite identify – success in the workplace partially depended on one's ability to get along and work with others. Most importantly, the concept could now be the catalyst for creating positive energy and change both personally and professionally. For the past decade, research has shown the impact of positive emotions on organizational effectiveness and profitability. Emotional intelligence is critical to the dynamics of teamwork because the majority of work for organizations today occurs in groups (Lassiter, 2004). There is enormous pressure on leaders to maximize effectiveness. By using emotional intelligence, and acknowledging responsibility, leaders and their teams can boost interpersonal skills and performance.

There has been significant research focusing on the optimization of systems and processes that help to make successful teams. As anyone would agree, an actor simply following a script does not guarantee a great movie. An actor must deliver his or her lines with passion and conviction. In the same sense, successful teams can apply the principles of effective task processes, but they must also work together wholeheartedly.

Modern businesses can outperform the competition when they embrace teamwork. Teams have more talent and experience, a diversity of resources, and greater operating flexibility than individual performers. Research in the last decade has proven the superiority of group decision-making over that of even the brightest individual on the team, but this concept can implode with the same or greater force when a team lacks the ability to work together effectively. An important difference between effective and ineffective teams lies in the emotional intelligence of the group. A team's emotional intelligence is comprised of the emotional intelligence of individual members, plus a collective competency of the group. Everyone contributes to the overall level of emotional intelligence; however, the leader has the strongest influence (Lassiter, 2004). Teams emphasizing respect, trust and mutual benefit for all members are emotionally intelligent and have a better performance than teams without these skills.

In the paper "Building the Emotional Intelligence of Groups" Druskat and Wolff (2001) identify three conditions essential to group effectiveness:

(1) trust among members;

(2) a sense of group identity; and

(3) a sense of group efficacy.

To be most effective, teams need to create behaviors and habits that support the identity and trust among group members. Group identity is a feeling among members that they are connected and working for a common goal. A sense of group efficacy is the belief that the team can perform more effectively as a collective body than they can individually (Druskat and Wolff, 2001).

Group emotional intelligence involves expressing feelings openly and honestly without hesitation, and discussing how the positive effects of expressing feelings can contribute to the success of the team. Understanding and addressing all feelings and not treating them superficially will be the first step in forming a strong foundation and steady alliance among team members.

Group emotional intelligence also involves building relationships both inside and outside the team. This bond that generally forms among members will become invaluable in the face of a crisis or challenge. In order to strengthen relationships, the group must feel safe to explore, embrace, and, ultimately, to rely on emotions in work situations. Team leaders must constantly strive for a healthy balance between harmony and productivity. Being cognizant of energy levels and moods of employees may be even more important than previously thought. It is almost a given that employees will go the extra mile if they believe in the mission and are upbeat about the group dynamics. There is also research to show that for every one percent improvement in the service climate, there is a two percent increase in revenue. New research from a range of industries now reaffirms the correlation between leadership and profitability. According to Goleman *et al.* (2002), how people feel about working at a company can account for up to 20-30 percent of business performance. Key to understanding the emotional condition of a team is discovering the particular habits embedded in a team or organization that drives behaviors. A prime example is the notion of "unspoken messages and the personality of the company." The team leader is effective when he or she has his or her pulse on the team and spots unhealthy work habits in order to make corrections (Lassiter, 2004). Teams are at the very foundation of organizational effectiveness, and they will not work without mutual trust and common commitment to goals.

Four categories of emotional competency

A group's emotional intelligence requires the same competencies as an individual's. These competencies are:

- self-awareness;
- self-management;
- social awareness; and
- relationship management.

These competencies continue to be researched extensively. Core dimensions are measured by the Hay Group in the emotional competencies inventory, a 360° survey of emotional intelligence. How the emotional competencies affect teams are somewhat different than how they impact individuals. Groups have their unique personalities and the extent to which team members mesh with the group personality can determine how successful the team will be. Much of the team leader's role is to strengthen these core competencies so that the team can become more productive.

Four categories of emotional competency

(1) Self awareness:
    - emotional self-awareness;
    - accurate self-assessment; and
    - self-confidence.

(2) Social awareness:
- empathy;
- organizational awareness; and
- service orientation.

(3) Self-management:
- self-control;
- transparency;
- adaptability;
- achievement;
- initiative; and
- optimism.

(4) Relationship management:
- inspiration;
- influence;
- developing others;
- change catalyst;
- conflict management; and
- teamwork and collaboration.

The Hay Group recommends one technique for raising awareness is to have team members rate the team on a scale of 1-10 on each competency. They then rate the overall team on where they should be, in order to maximize team effectiveness. They then rate themselves individually and select one or two behaviors they can commit to improving. They make a public commitment to the team and ask for regular feedback on their progress. Lassiter (2004) recommends using a trained coach to facilitate the process.

Developing and empowering the team

Comprehensive training is also critical to developing self-directed work teams. Not only do team members need ongoing training on interpersonal skills, but also on critical-thinking skills, which are likewise essential in self-managed work teams. The level of decision-making is at an all-time high in self-directed work teams and, therefore, requires additional skills in conflict resolution, negotiation, and business strategy.

One strategy, developed by 3M Corporation to facilitate high involvement in many of its businesses, is the train-the-trainer approach. Professionals train people to go back into their departments and provide teams with the knowledge and skills to manage their work processes. The intent is to transfer as much of the knowledge and skills as possible to team members. A strategy to build effectiveness for managing the work process includes:

- Developing a customer focus and making customer satisfaction their top priority. All teams exist for an external reason – someone else will use their

outputs. By focusing on the customer, whether internal or external, the team makes sure that every action reflects this goal.

- Becoming aligned around a common vision and mission. This includes understanding the organization's mission, as well as how each individual fits into the overall mission.
- Building skills for working together to make decisions, plan work, resolve differences, and conduct meetings. Understanding the importance of trust among team members. When there is an increased level of trust, employees tend to be more likely to assume responsibility.
- Empowering the team to make the necessary adjustments in order to increase effectiveness. When an employee sees that an adjustment must be made, he or she initiates the change rather than simply waiting for a directive.
- Setting goals and solving problems for continuous improvement. The team is constantly looking for ways to optimize the system and make necessary adjustments (Williams, 1995).

Barriers to successful self-managed work teams

According to Appelbaum and Batt (1994), authors of *The New American Workplace*, when it comes to team work, there are many obstacles that affect overall performance. The major challenges organizations face in changing from a traditional environment to a high-involvement environment is fostering a culture of management support. Teams go through several stages of increasing involvement on their way to self-management. This journey can take between two and five years and is never-ending from a learning and renewal perspective (Williams, 1995). Others contend that there are major differences between functional teams and self-managed teams, stating that, while self-managed teams can serve as valuable tools for addressing organizational problems, they are the most difficult type of team to lead (Parker, 1994). The following obstacles have been identified for self-managed work teams:

- confusion about the team's authority;
- complexity of the team leader's role;
- ambiguity about the team's goals;
- difficulty communicating with key stakeholders;
- lack of rewards and recognition;
- troublesome interpersonal dynamics among members;
- lack of credit for team participation on performance appraisal;
- unwieldy size of team; and
- lack of management support.

Most successful teams form out of a response to a demand or an opportunity put in front of them by a member of management. However, it is recommended that management leave enough flexibility for the team to develop its own commitment to a purpose, set of specific goals, timing, and approach. The best teams invest a tremendous amount of time and effort exploring, shaping, and agreeing to a purpose that belongs to them both collectively and individually. There is always the act of

re-tooling and re-defining their purpose that continues throughout the life-cycle of the team. In contrast, failed teams rarely develop a common purpose. For whatever reason – an insufficient focus on performance, lack of effort, or poor leadership – they do not unite around a challenging aspiration (Hoerr, 1989).

The most effective teams crystallize their performance objectives by clearly and specifically articulating their goals. These could be goals such as reducing operating costs by 10 percent or improving customer retention from 30 to 50 percent. Without these specific goals or the use of pre-designated goals that do not relate directly to the team's overall purpose, team members could become disjointed, disillusioned, and regress to mediocre performance. Conversely, when purposes and goals build upon one another and are integrated with commitment from the entire team, they become a powerful catalyst for performance (Manz and Sims, 1987).

Taking broad objectives and turning them into specific and measurable goals is the initial process that a team needs to reach in trying to shape a purpose that is meaningful to its members. Specific goals, such as launching a new product line in record time, responding to all customers within 24 hours, or achieving zero delinquency by the fifth of the month, all provide affirmations to the true meaning of self-managed work teams. The combination of purpose and specific goals is essential to performance. Each depends on the other to remain relevant and vital. Clear performance goals help a team keep track of progress and hold itself accountable. Broad aspirations in a team's purpose supply both meaning and emotional energy.

Changing the role of leadership

Generally, it is the front line and middle management that is the first to recognize the benefits of self-managed work teams. It is usually at the top of the organizational chart that progress of self-managed work teams seems to stall. Thus, upper management has a vital role to play in the implementation of self-directed work teams. The old adage, "the speed of the leader determines the speed of the pack," directly relates to the amount of support self-managed work teams receive. Management must exhibit patience and tolerance because the transition to self-managed teams will take time. Delays and mistakes will also inevitably occur. Leaders can help to equip a team with sufficient knowledge and skills, membership stability, and performance-enhancing norms. Leaders can also help by ensuring that the work that is required is adequately designed for teams. Team members will feel ownership and will be motivated to perform well if they have responsibility for providing a whole service, or, at the very least, an identifiable part of that service. Team leaders can also ensure that they support effective teamwork. More specifically, the leader has a key role in providing team members with the necessary training and resources. The leader needs to ensure that the systems are in place to provide performance feedback. The team leader also needs to work with senior management and human resources to create a team-based, performance-contingent reward system. Rather than managing the day-to-day functioning of the team, the more effective role of the team leader may be to focus on the team's design and oversight.

For those who prefer self-managed work teams, the benefits of such teams should not be kept hidden. It is through continuous improvement and fine-tuning that these practitioners can derive maximum benefit. For example, if tenant retention becomes a problem in facilities management, time would be better spent on identifying factors

that would improve overall quality than to engage the teams in revamping policies and procedures or team-building activities. Practitioners cannot assume that there is a uniform set of guidelines for improving self-managed work teams.

A high involvement work culture

By supporting self-directed work team efforts with effective training for employees and management, many leading companies have developed a high involvement work culture that: contains multi-skilled jobs; is customer-focused; promotes empowerment, moves decision-making to the highest effective levels, and focuses rewards on group performance and continuous improvement. The change to self-directed work teams cannot come without growing pains. It generally takes at least five years to develop mature teams and to have all the systems in place to support them. Owing to the need to constantly adapt to new technologies and the changing business climate, processes must be flexible and able to withstand the cyclical nature of business.

The environment that the team functions within includes: management support; the reward system; performance evaluations; goals for the team; and the education, training and information systems of the organization. Active management support provides guidance (not directives) to the team. Team members should be allowed to receive the training they need and team members should be encouraged to try innovative solutions that go against existing regulations (Yeatts *et al.*, 1996).

Creating a mechanism in which employee's pay can be based on the team's performance will help to encourage teamwork. However, according to Yeatts *et al.* (1996), more times than not, individual performance is rewarded rather than team performance. With the current emphasis on self-managed work teams, rethinking compensation plans is in order. Group incentives, such as performance-based pay, incentives for meeting quality goals, and other measurable improvements, should be considered. Performance evaluation of the overall team can be a means of encouraging team members to put the team first, rather than themselves. In a self-managed work team, individual performance must be downplayed so that competition between team members does not hinder the performance of the team (Yeats *et al.*, 1996). This can be particularly effective when the team's performance evaluations are linked very closely to pay increases and bonuses. In the case of Nucor, a steel manufacturer, an employee's bonus can triple when the entire shift accomplishes a particular goal. Even executive pay is geared toward team-building (Byrnes, 2006). However, if material rewards are given, the rewards need to be large enough to result in the same motivating effect. Nonmaterial rewards can also be given continuously (Buckenmeyer, 1996), but only so many ribbons, plaques, and trophies can be displayed at the team worksite. The inherent differences in the various productive processes further complicate performance evaluations due to the difficulty in determining the optimum performance for a particular team (Buckenmeyer, 1996). Finally, it is difficult to measure intangible processes, such as communication, team leadership, meeting effectiveness, cooperation, and problem-solving ability. When defining measurements, rewards, and team expectations, the difficulties in measuring these intangible processes should be kept in mind so they do not become a disincentive. Internal motivational aspects, such as the feeling of doing a good job, are connected with the same activity. According to Buckenmeyer (1996), it is necessary to continuously change rewards and discover new approaches to effectively recognize worker accomplishments.

It is extremely important that the goals or objectives of the self-managed teams are measurable and can be communicated in a clear and concise manner. Otherwise, team members will spend their time addressing tasks that do not contribute to the team's goals and will make team decisions without considering the subsequent effects on the team goals and the organization, thus hindering the team's performance. Certain "stop gaps" should be available to be put into place if the self-managed team gets off-track. These interventions should be utilized in order to get a team back where they need to be efficiently.

In addition, an effective information system is necessary so that the team can obtain all the information it needs, and, as a result, can make the most informed decisions possible. A lack of adequate information could lead the team to make poor decisions. This "information repository" should be available to all team members and organized so that is can be easily accessible and user-friendly.

The longevity of self-managed teams

As group longevity increases over time, a number of new but interrelated social processes begin to affect group behavior. One of the most important principles in organizational theory is that groups strive to structure their work environments to reduce the amount of stress they must face by directing their activities toward a more workable and predictable level of certainty and clarity (Thompson, 1967). Based on this perspective, project members interacting over a long period will fall into a work pattern that is both comfortable and predictable. Routines and precedents play a relatively large part in these patterns (Weick, 1969). Weick (1969) discusses the strong tendency for groups to establish certain stable structures of interlocked behaviors and relationships simply because it keeps them feeling secure and confident in what they do. One of the consequences of such behavior stability may be that long-tenured project groups become "an island unto themselves" and therefore lose their objectivity to fresh ideas (Pelz and Andrews, 1966). With increasing group longevity, project members gradually become less receptive to embracing changes in their work patterns (Staw, 1977; Katz, 1982). Furthermore, findings by Katz (1982) suggest that group members who have been performing their jobs for extended time periods are relatively less responsive to the challenging aspects of their project activities. Such individuals come to rely more and more on the customary ways of doing things to complete their everyday project requirements, and thereby fall back into working more independently rather than collectively. Thus, instead of being committed to seeking information from outside sources, they become increasingly complacent about external events and new technological developments. It is critical to keep change and innovation as key components of self-managed teams. Rewards and incentives for innovation can be helpful in avoiding the complacency syndrome.

Another set of forces affecting the amount of outside contact for projects with longstanding membership is the tendency for group members to communicate only with those whose ideas and viewpoints agree with their own interests and current perspectives. One of the main principles of human communication, often referred to as selective exposure (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971), is the strong tendency for individuals to communicate with others who are most like themselves or who are most likely to agree with them. Over time, project members learn to interact selectively to

avoid messages and information that might conflict with their established practices and dispositions, thereby reducing their overall levels of outside contact.

It is further argued that, as group members continue to interact and build a history with one another, a more homogeneous set of understandings about the group and its environment will develop through informational social influence (Homans, 1961; Berger and Luckman, 1966; Salanick and Pfeffer, 1978). Group homogeneity can come either from similarity of social backgrounds or from group members remaining in their project positions long enough to make shared socialization and shared group experiences a meaningful basis of mutual support (Grusky, 1964; Kanter, 1977). Such shared meanings not only provide group members with a strong sense of identity but also serve as a cocoon, leading to further reductions in the group's overall level of outside contact. With increasing group longevity, the effects of behavioral stability, selective exposure, and group homogeneity combine to reduce the group's willingness to search out and actively internalize new or conflicting knowledge and developments. These can be damaging impacts for effective self-managed teams.

Conclusion

Self-management of teams involves the need to assume a set of new roles and responsibilities that have traditionally been exclusive to managers and supervisors. As a result, when a conventional work group or team moves to become a self-managed work team, exciting opportunities emerge, but these opportunities are accompanied by new challenges.

External demands, such as competitiveness, globalization, and customer satisfaction, have made it necessary to operate businesses in a team-based organizational structure to gain maximum efficiency. At the same time, as new teams enter the workplace, the opportunity for conflict based on class, gender, race, and ethnicity is increasing. Conflict is inevitable; thus, in this continually changing environment, ongoing training in these areas will play a significant role in the future of companies. Companies are moving towards a more knowledge-based organization where employees will become more specialized. These expert employees will be forced to openly share their knowledge, collaborate with other workers and share information to create innovation, in order to move the team in the direction of its goals.

Before making any radical changes or adjustments in their management procedures, it is advisable to consider factors that can be associated with high-performance work teams:

(1) More:
- cooperation;
- collaboration;
- talent pool;
- team goals;
- organizational performance;
- togetherness;
- job security; and
- self-regulation.

(2) Less:
- autonomy;
- individual skills;
- single superstar;
- individual recognition;
- departmental performance;
- isolator;
- instability; and
- supervision.

To successfully survive these challenges and achieve self-management, the traditional team must learn the disciplines of the self-managed team. These disciplines are a set of skills, approaches, insights, and practices that are not typically mastered by more conventional teams. Since, mastery of the disciplines is evolutionary rather than revolutionary, most teams move gradually toward self-management along a continuum from being managed by others to becoming self-directed.

The emergence of self-managed teams often boosts greater confidence, loyalty, and mutual respect among team members and for the organization. Those who have come this far stand to reap greater rewards collectively rather than individually.

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