

THE EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON THE DYNAMICS OF A GROUP

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INTRODUCTION

General knowledge has it that leaders are mostly at the helm of affairs in any group or team. In most circumstances the leader provides leadership for the team though sometimes other members of the team may play the leadership role when the leader does not live up to expectation. It is also true that several individuals come together to form a group or team. However, good leadership can ensure the diverse backgrounds of people who form various teams or groups work together as one while functioning in effective and efficient ways. This paper assesses how leadership styles can affect the dynamics of a group or team.

Types of Groups or Teams

The use of teams or groups in organisations is a very common phenomenon especially in top-tier companies. Devine et al. (1999) generally defines a group as “a collection of three or more individuals who interact intensively to provide an organisational product, plan, decision, or service.” Zoltan and Vancea (2015) intimate that members of a group do not necessarily need each member to be present in order to function effectively while on the hand, members of a team as a matter of necessity require each member to be present in order to function effectively. Notwithstanding this difference, for this paper, groups will be used interchangeably with teams (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).

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Four types of organisational teams are identified namely ad-hoc project teams, ongoing project teams, ad-hoc production teams and ongoing production teams (Devine et al., 1999). Both ad-hoc and ongoing project teams plan, decide, solve problems, as well as engage with clients. However, while ad-hoc project teams have a finite duration, ongoing teams are permanent with relatively fixed members. Production teams on the other hand manufacture products or provide service to the public with ad-hoc production teams being temporary while ongoing production teams are permanent and provide the service or build the products on a recurrent basis.

Due to globalization and internationalization, most organisations can categorise teams based on culture and positioning in time and space. These are cross-cultural, mixed culture, transnational teams and virtual teams (Earley & Erez, 1997). It is worth noting that teams of this nature present diverse forms of challenges that revolve around values, stereotypes, expectations and behaviours which have to be handled well to ensure the group's objectives are achieved effectively. Virtual teams have become much more popular in recent times. A virtual team is a team that has its members scattered in space and makes use of mainly information and communication technology for personal communication and information sharing. Despite the fact that the types of groups discussed so far is not conclusive and that there are more types that can be identified; these few identified types bring to bare the fact that there are diverse group characteristics. This therefore implies that what works for members of a particular group may not necessarily work for members of another group.

LEADERSHIP AND MOTIVATION

Leadership plays an important role in the success or otherwise of a team considering the fact that one of the main roles of leaders is to motivate followers towards the achievement of the desired objective. According to Mitchel (1982) motivation involves identifying those characteristics that trigger people's behaviour and causes them to engage in the required behaviour. Individuals however have various motives for which they do the things they do. As a result, what motivates one person may not necessarily motivate the other (Mitchel, 1982). Considering the complexity of individual needs and motives, various theories are used to explain the concept of Motivation. Among such theories are Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory/ Motivator-Hygiene, McGregor's X and Y Theories, McClelland's Need Achievement Theory, The Equity Theory, Value – Percept Theory, Vroom's Expectancy Theory and Porter-Lawler Model (Badubi, 2017).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs groups human needs in five stages and explains that depending on which level an individual is, will be satisfied and motivated to work productively if necessary needs are met appropriately. The five stages are namely physiological needs, security needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs (Smith & Cronje, 1992). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory identifies satisfiers or characteristics of work that bring about satisfaction in

employees such as achievement, recognition, the actual work, responsibility and advancement (Saif, et al., 2012). McGregor's X and Y Theories classify employees in two groups (McGregor, 1960): the first, theory X, assumes that employees generally do not like work and need to be forced, controlled threatened with punishment and directed in order to produce the desired results; while the second, theory Y, assumes that if employees are satisfied well enough with their work, they will work effectively.

McClelland's need achievement theory explains that individuals are propelled to excel due to their own personal ambition (Saif, et al., 2012). According to the Equity Theory, employees will always consider the work that is put in and the rewards they get from assigned responsibilities such that if the reward is high, they will work better (Naveed et al., 2011). The Value – Percept Theory postulates that personal values influence individual satisfaction (Anderson, Ones, Sinangil & Viswesvaran, 2001). The main idea of Vrooms's expectancy theory is to obtain satisfaction while reducing dissatisfaction among employees (Wagner and Hollenburg, 2007). The Porter-Lawler Model assumes that the way individuals behave is affected by both internal and external elements, personal goals, needs, desires and the ability to decide between possible behaviours (Wagner & Hollenburg, 2007).

These motivation theories, though they apply to individuals, also apply to groups as individuals come together to form groups. Motivation however becomes more complex with teams because individuals in the group will have peculiar personal needs that will motivate them to give off their best. If this is not well managed by leadership, some members of the team may not work as expected while on the other hand those who are motivated will work excellently. It is the responsibility of leadership to ensure that every team member is well motivated to contribute in achieving the team's objectives. Even if leadership does not come from the official leader, some members of the team are able to play the leadership role in ensuring that members of a team are well-motivated (Wolman, 1956).

Leadership Styles and how they impact the dynamics of a Group

Leaders make use of various styles to ensure team objectives are achieved effectively. Wolman (1956) identifies four leadership styles that influence the dynamics of a group namely weak leadership, excessive deference to authority, blocking and evaluation apprehension. These leadership styles can positively or negatively impact on a group depending on what motivates individuals in the group. The leadership styles are assessed in the discussion that follow.

If a group or team has weak leadership, it means the leader is not firm enough when it comes to decision making and is not able to provide the required direction for the team. In as much as the leader is in charge of motivating the team, he is also in charge of directing the team towards achieving the objectives of the group. In a case where the leader is weak, a member of the group may rise up to perform the "directing" responsibility. The negative impact of this on the team will not be very severe if the subordinate who takes on the directing responsibility has

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enough information that will facilitate excellent decisions. However, most times not much information is available to group members as they are available to the leader. In a case of insufficient information to the dominant member, the group may lose focus as a result of misplaced priorities thus delaying the achievement of the team's objectives. If the dominant member of the team who assumes the leadership role does not handle the situation well, there may be disputes between him and other members of the team or even the weak leader.

Excessive deference to authority refers to a situation where members of the team seem to always agree with the leader without any kind of opposition to everything that comes from the leader. In such a team, whenever there is a directive from the leader, it is binding on the entire team. The danger here is that even when the leader is making a mistake, no member of the team is able to voice out until it becomes too late. This mostly negatively impacts organisations as project timelines, quality and cost planned are not achieved during implementation. However if the leader is experienced, team members receive the required direction to achieve objectives on time, in the right quality and the right cost. This style of leadership does not allow team members to make inputs in decision making, thus demotivating them. Experienced team members may sometimes feel disrespected if their opinions, suggestions and inputs are not sought for.

Blocking is said to have happened when information flow among team members is disrupted. The free flow of information among team members is what ensures that things are done right. Most times, in a team, due to the close relationship between the leader and some few team members, those few people are able to have access to some information that is not available to the other members of the team who are not closely related to the leader. This is likely to bring division in the team and cause some team members not to have the necessary information to achieve the set objective. An advantage however is that blocking ensures that confidential information does not leak into inappropriate settings. Thus, it becomes difficult for competitors to make use of confidential information against organisations who own the information.

Sometimes, team members feel they are misunderstood or judged harshly by other members of their group. In that instance they hold back their thoughts. This is referred to as evaluation apprehension. In most cases these opinions, if they are voiced out, have a way of pruning the leader's decisions, removing all forms of ambiguity from given directives and revealing the weaknesses in a particular course of action. Members of a team who are not able to express their opinions or thoughts freely due to criticisms from other team members may become demotivated. A leader in such a situation should ensure that all team members have the freedom to express themselves freely without fear.

CONCLUSION

Following the discussion, it is noted that there are several types of groups and leadership ensures that group objectives are achieved effectively. Leadership ensures that this is done through motivation of members of the team. In as much as

there are diverse theories on motivation, they all conclude that what motivates a member of the team may not motivate another member. Various leadership styles can motivate or demotivate team members. It is however up to the leader to make use of the appropriate style that will motivate his team members taking into consideration characteristics of team members.

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