

Study on Communication Practices Among Team Members in Project Management Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Project Management organizations need to manage their teams effectively to achieve the goals. The teams are often diverse in their composition with members from different cultural and competency levels. Communication practices play an important role in the effectiveness of the functioning of teams. Organizations often make the mistake in forming and managing teams like including everyone in the team with some connection to the task. As a result, the team members find it difficult to meet their achievements in time. The research has been conducted in a descriptive and qualitative mode with the help of available literature in the field. Study of the functioning of project management functions of certain organizations has been conducted to have a deep understanding of various issues connected to the problem. The results of the study helps in identification of communication issues among diverse team members which determines the level of achievement of goals in project management organization.

KEYWORDS: Teams, Communication, Project Management Organizations

1. INTRODUCTION

Teams: Teams are groups whose members work intensely on a specific, common goal using their positive synergy, individual and mutual accountability, and complementary skills. Some of the traits of team are as follows: Shared leadership roles Individual and mutual accountability Specific team purpose that the team itself delivers Collective work products Encourages open ended discussion and active problem-solving meetings Measure performance directly by assessing collective work products discusses, decides and does real work.

Types of Teams: The four types of teams in an organization include problem— solving teams, self-managed work teams, cross-functional teams and virtual teams. The teams from the same department or functional area who are involved in efforts to improve work activities or to solve specific problems will come under problem—solving teams. In this type of teams, members share ideas, offer suggestions on how work processes and methods can be improved. But these teams are rarely given the authority to implement any of their suggested actions. The formal group of employees who operate without a manager and are responsible for getting the work done for managing themselves are known as self—managed work teams. This type of teams usually do planning and scheduling of work, assigning tasks to members, collective control over the pace of work, making operating decisions, and taking action on problems. A work team composed of individuals from specialties is known as cross—functional teams. Virtual teams are teams that use technology to link physically dispersed members in order to achieve a common goal. In virtual team, members collaborate online with tools such as wide-area networks, video—conferencing, fax, e-mail, or web sites where the team can hold online conferences.

Communication: Communication in simple terms is a transfer of information between people, resulting in common understanding between them. In the words of Anderson, “Communication is the process by which we understand others and in turn endeavour to be understood by them. It is dynamic, constantly changing and shifting in response to the total situation”. Communication has the following characteristics: it is unavoidable, a two-way exchange of information, it is a process, it involves a sender and a receiver, it could be verbal or non-verbal, it is successful when the receiver interprets the meaning in the same way as the intended by the sender, it is dynamic process, it enables understanding.

As the name indicates a diverse team is a team which is unlike in nature or qualities with different assigned objectives or works. Many diverse teams together helps a project management organization to establish its goal. Communication becomes deliberate damage to productive capacity for these diverse teams when it becomes inadequate and incomplete. Also if the team is a diverse one, usually the lack of trust, poor interpersonal relationship and conflict are endemic.

Organizational Project Management: The term organizational project management was defined as the execution of an organization’s strategies through projects by combining the systems of portfolio management, program management and project management. According to PMI (2003), organizational project management is the systematic management of project programs and portfolios in relation with the achievement of strategic goals. The concept of organizational project management is based on the idea that there is a correlation between organization’s capabilities in project management, portfolio management and the organization’s effectiveness in implementing strategy.

A project management consultancy is a professional consulting firm with knowledge and experience in the specialized area of assisting organizations to improve their practice of project, program and /or portfolio management. The areas these firms focus on also include the supporting environment and necessary leadership that

enables projects and programs to accelerate the implementation of an organizations' strategy and the achievement of business result.

Scope of the study: The current era gives more importance to communication practices, as it is one of the basic physiological as well as psychological activity of human being. This study is to analyze the different communication practices among the members of a team in project management organization. Further the scope of the study is limited to analysis of various level managers of Government and Private sector.

Statement of the problem: Lack of proper communication among members of a diverse team causes conflicts and leads to ineffective functioning which affects the execution of projects and achievement of organizational goals.

Objectives of the study:

- The basic objective of the study is to analyze the communication practices among members of a diverse team in the project management organizations.
- To identify the interpersonal communication practices of team members essential forming various teams responsible for planning, designing and execution of projects.

2. DATABASE & METHODOLOGY

The study is analytical and qualitative in nature and it is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data required for the study has been collected from the sample employees associated with project management activities from various organizations like the Airport Authority of India, Trivandrum, NRHM, INKEL (Infrastructure Kerala Limited), KINFRA (Kerala Infrastructure Development Agency), BSNL. A structured questionnaire was used for this purpose. The secondary data required for the study has been obtained from various books and articles relating to the topic and also from websites.

Hypothesis of the study: In this study following hypothesis formed: There is some association between the interpersonal communication skills among team members

Sample design: A convenience sampling method was adopted for the sampling design and the 50 questionnaires were distributed among managers associated with project management organizations like Airport Authority of India, Trivandrum, Kannur Airport, KINFRA, NRHM. The study revealed inadequacies in communication skills which affected the execution and functioning of project management teams.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

For the analysis, data collected from 50 respondents out of 500 project managers from different project management organizations at Trivandrum, in relation with variable communication practices among team members in the project management organizations. A descriptive statistical analysis is done. A Table 1 is formed as follows showing the mean and standard deviation of the collected data.

Table.1. Gender wise classification of managers in different levels

Gender/Position of Managers	Senior	Middle	Junior
Male	15	23	9
Female	7	5	1

The Hypothesis Formed as Follows: H₀: There is some association between position of managers and relationship with the members in the project management organization during the execution of project.

Table.2. Chi-Square Test on Position of Managers and Relationship with the Co-Team Members

	Designation			Total
	Senior	Middle	Junior	
Rare	1	9	4	14
Neutral item	2	4	2	8
Often	7	7	12	26
Very often	2	2	7	12
Total	12	23	25	60

Table.3. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.715 ^a	6	.190
Likelihood Ratio	9.653	6	.140
N of Valid Cases	50		

a. 8 cells (%) have Expected count less than 5. The minimum Expected Count is .90.

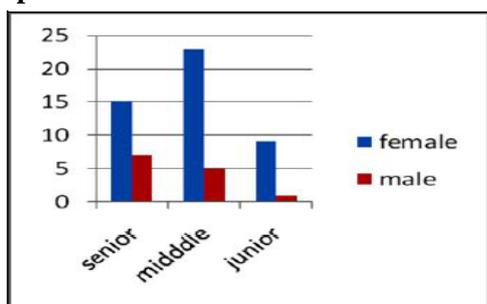


Fig.1. Graphical representation of gender and position of managers

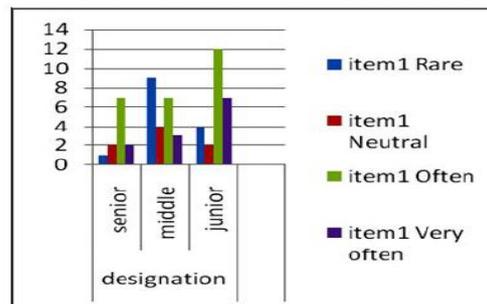


Fig.2. Classification of Respondents on the Basis of Relationship with Co-Team Members

Table.4. Relationship between Team Managers and Team Members

Relationship with Co-Team Members During Project Execution	Mean	Standard Deviation
Feel valued by your co-team members	3.4400	1.01338
Feel accepted by your coteam members	3.9600	0.78142
Respect your co-team members	4.2000	0.72843
Like your co-team members	3.4200	1.08965
My team members treat me as an equal	3.9200	0.85332
My team is warm, accepting and free of hostility	3.7000	0.70711
While at work your manager alone take decisions	3.4000	0.85714
At work manger presents problem, get suggestions, make decisions	3.7600	0.84660
At work manager defines limits, ask group to make decisions	3.7000	0.81441
Manager assists team members to identify the training and development needs	3.2600	0.96489
Manger encourages professional development	3.6200	0.83029
While at work, has your manager/supervisor made insensitive or disparaging remarks about you	3.0400	1.02936
While at work, has your manager/supervisor made insensitive or disparaging remarks about others in your presence	3.1600	1.09470
While at work have your team members made insensitive or disparaging remarks about you	2.1000	0.93131
While at work have your team members made insensitive or disparaging remarks about others in your presence	2.6400	2.80495
My team members behave as if they think they are better than I am	2.0800	0.72393
Other members in the team encourages my development	2.5400	1.03431
I cannot predict how my team members will respond in a given situation	2.5000	0.93131
I share my honest thoughts and feelings with my team members	3.7600	0.98063
I encourage my team members to comment on their thoughts and feelings	3.2800	0.85809
I can count on my team members to meet their deadlines and performance standards for their work	3.4800	0.73512
When I faced with a problem, I collaborate with my team members, to define the problem, explore alternatives and arrive at a solution	3.9000	0.70711
Notions about Team Members During Project Execution	MEAN	Standard Deviation
I wonder if my team members appreciate my work: I sometimes think they question the value of my contribution	3.1000	0.97416
When I am in bind, I know I can depend on my team members to bail me out	3.4600	0.86213
My team members seem to lack the knowledge/experience they need to do their jobs effectively	2.6000	0.90351
Department staff meetings are filled with open and honest participation	3.3000	0.86307
Members resolve conflict honestly, effectively and quickly.	2.5400	1.01439

Table.5.Percentage Analysis

Communication Skills/Percentage	Position OF Managers	Very Rare	Rare	Neutral	Often	Very Often
While at work your manager alone takes decision	Senior	0	3.33	11.67	18.3	3.33
	Middle	1.67	3.33	13.33	20	8.33
	Junior	0	1.67	6.67	8.33	0
At work manager presents a problem, get suggestions, make decisions	Senior	0	0	3.33	10	0
	Middle	3.33	11.6	16.67	13.3	1.67
	Junior	1.67	0	11.67	20	1.67
My team members treat me as an equal	Senior	0	0	1.67	10	5
	Middle	0	3.33	15	23.3	5
	Junior	0	3.33	8.33	21.6	3.33
At work manager defines limits ask group to make decisions	Senior	0	1.67	1.67	11.6	0
	Middle	1.67	1.67	13.33	6.67	3.33
	Junior	0	5	10	20	1.67
I wonder if my team members appreciate my work : I sometimes think they question the value of my contribution	Senior	1.67	11.6	3.33	1.67	0
	Middle	1.67	18.3	16.67	8.33	1.67
	Junior	5	13.3	13.3	5	0
When faced with a problem I collaborate with my team members to define the problems, explore alternatives and arrive at a solution	Senior	0	1.67	3.33	10	0
	Middle	1.67	5	16.67	21.6	1.67
	Junior	0	1.67	10%	21.6	3.33
My team members seem to lack the knowledge/ experience they need to do their job effectively	Senior	3.33	6.67	3.33	1.67	0
	Middle	8.33	25	6.67	6.67	0
	Junior	5	11.6	8.33	10	1.67
I can count on my team members to meet their deadlines and performance standards defined for their work	Senior	0	0	6.67	8.33	0
	Middle	0	10	13.33	16.6	3.33
	Junior	0	6.67	6.67	18.3	16.67
I share my honest thoughts and feelings with my team members	Senior	0	1.67	1.67 6.67	3.33	3.33
	Middle	0	3.33	16.67	23.3	3.33
	Junior	0	0	10	16.6	8.33
I cannot predict how my team members will respond in a given situation	Senior	3.33	6.67	6.67	3.33	0
	Middle	0	3.33	20	21.6	3.33
	Junior	1.67	5	11.67	16.6	
While at work have your team members made insensitive or disparaging remarks about you	Senior	3.33	3.33	6.67	3.33	0
	Middle	0	3.33	20	20	1.67
	Junior	1.67	5	10	16.6	1.67
I encourage my team members to comment on their thoughts and feelings	Senior	3.33	6.67	0	0	1.67
	Middle	6.67	20	13.33	3.33	0
	Junior	11.6	16.6	5	1.67	0

Interpretation: By analyzing the Table, it is clear that 18.33% of senior managers are supportive in the statement that while at work manager alone takes decisions during project execution period, also 20% middle level managers are supporting the same. Only 8.33% of junior managers supporting the same. At the same time, 20% of junior level managers states that at work manager presents a problem, get suggestions, make decisions.13.33% middle level

managers are supporting the same. Only 10% senior level managers are supporting this statement, which shows that senior level managers didn't discuss or share ideas with middle level or junior level managers. It is clear from the table that, 23.33% middle level managers and 21.67% junior level managers think that their team members treat them as equal which shows that middle level managers and junior level managers are more concerned about team members and they have a good relationship with the team members. Also in the statement team members lack the knowledge/experience they need to do their job effectively, 25% of middle level managers are not responding it is also clear that they have consideration for their team members. But regarding the team members performance to meet their deadlines defined by their work 18.33% juniors and 16.67% middle level managers are sure. Still 21.67% middle level managers and 16.67% junior level managers are not sure how their team members will respond in a given situation.

Findings of the study: From the above analysis the data the author found that some of the communication skills of managers with team members are need to be improved. Most of the time managers have a wrong notion that his/her team members are not supportive in his/her team work. So managers are developing a negative attitude towards their team members or co-workers. Also they feel themselves that their co-workers are not in a position to understand the difficulties or stress suffered by the team leader or the manager. They have some ego to open their feelings to the team members or co- team members. Most of the team managers are authoritative and once they are in the position of a leader or manager, they have less faith in their team workers or co-team members. Also it is found that there is some relation between position of managers and communication skills among team members.

Suggestions of the study: The author found that egoism, attitude of team managers towards the team members are there in the organizations during project execution. This clearly affects the proper communication among team members. The goal and mission of project management organizations were very much affected by this.

- The author suggests that team managers should develop faith in the group members and be more interactive to team members.
- Author also suggests that egoism of team leaders can be reduced by using job rotation, or dividing the responsibilities among team members.
- A word of appreciation or remuneration as a token of good work to the team members is a motivational aspect to enhance communication between team members.

4. CONCLUSION

This study revealed that Project Management Organizations with efficient and talented team leaders are inevitable in the fast and advanced moving world. Different diverse teams are supporting the project management organizations with their capacities and skills to execute the project and achieve their ultimate goals for different tasks. To manage these diverse teams, managers or team leaders with extra skills in communication and team co-ordination is necessary.

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