A model for crew relationship management

Life, Relationships

For an organization to become effective in delivering its products and services to its clients and customers, it should have a dedicated workforce that seeks to deliver such products and services at the most efficient and effective manner as possible. This is to ensure as little distraction and as little disruption to the service as much as possible. With the effective management of an organization's crew, the customers will be happy with the kind of service that they received and they will definitely use the same service again.

Crew resource management started out with the airline industry because of the need to effectively manage the affairs and the activities of the crew within the limited space and time of the airlines. Moreover, due to the risks associated with flying and the occasional turbulences encountered while the airline is aloft, ensuring that there is proper crew resource management becomes important and necessary for the safety and security of the operations of the aircraft (Helmreich, Merritt, & Wilhelm, 1999). This paper seeks to trace the basics of crew resource management as practiced by the aviation industry.

It will look at the components of CRM as well as the rudiments and the implications of CRM in the aviation industry as well as in other related industries. By looking at these qualities of CRM, it will look at the viability and feasibility of applying CRM in medical practice and outline the issues that may arise as a result of using the model. The Basics of Crew Resource Management In training employees for Crew Resource Management (CRM), the organization needs to take into account the kinds of skills, knowledge

and even attitudes that should be learned by the crew involved in the process.

CRM also takes into account thecommunicationsystems, awareness of different scenarios and situations, solving problems as they become apparent along the way and how to make decisions in the midst of difficult issues as events unfold. Although the role of individuals are taken into account in CRM, it is worth noting that teamwork is essential in order to maximize the impact of CRM in the organization and in the lives of the customers and clients involved in the process.

Given this, CRM may be considered as a system of managing an organization's workforce as they deliver important services in critical areas of the operations of an organization. An effective CRM model necessarily integrates and ensures that there is proper coordination with the people, the procedures they have to follow and the equipments that they have to use during the process. The end goal of this management process is efficiency, safety, and the satisfaction of customers (Salas, Bowers, & Edens, 2001; Salas, et. al, 1999).

More than just the technical knowledge, talents, and skills being held by the employees, it is also important to take into account their interpersonal skills because in the course of performing their jobs, they are bound to encounter other people and work as a team towards the achievement of a specific goal. In addition, cognitive skills and alertness in stressful situations are also necessary for individuals that are the objects of crew resource management. Cognitive skills refer to the mental processes and capabilities of employees to deal with problems and make meaningful choices to solve the problems.

Interpersonal skills, on the other hand, refer to the ability of employees to handle working relationships with other people in the crew. These two sets of skills tend to overlap each other during the performance of crucial tasks in fulfilling the mission of the teams within the organization (Helmreich & Merritt, 2000). Beyond the Aviation Industry Previously, CRM was used exclusively by the aviation industry. In fact, various CRM models have been developed by airline corporations so that they can deal with the rigors and difficulties of each flight (Flinn & Martin, 2001).

However, because of the importance and even groundbreaking findings and application of CRM, it is now being adapted by other industries, especially those that require careful handling by the employees of the organization. In fact, the medical industry is also looking at ways in which they could apply the principles of the CRM model in their particular fields of practice. Principles of Crew Resource Management Crew resource management is all about open communication between and among the members of the team working together.

This kind of framework allows open discussion and even respectful dissent and disagreements with authorities may be permitted. At its surface value, this feature is already an important improvement from hierarchical and tightly structured organizations. Yet, even if the communication of teams within the organization is enhanced, this does not mean that the purposes of CRM have been achieved. The main purpose why CRM is being implemented is to enable the different members of the team to be aware of the situation and the implications of what they are supposed to do in cases of emergency.

Taking all orders from the superior officer simply will not work in cases where high reliability is needed for the outputs of the team. This is why in the aviation industry, every crew is empowered to be aware of the situation and make necessary suggestions as needed (Kosnik, 2002). CRM also seeks to prevent or at least minimize the role of humans in the occurrence of errors in crucial operations and processes. This is also explains why the aviation industry was the first to utilize the principles of CRM.

Since the 1970s, CRM was used in developing various tools and processes for training employees so that they would reduce the rate of error and enhance the overall reliability and effectiveness of the employees handling processes and procedures during flights (Flin, O'Connor, & Mearns, 2002). In addition to the technical skills that employees need to display, CRM tends to focus on the non-technical aspect of processes. This includes decision-making, the ability to work in teams, as well as the importance ofleadership.

With the need to reduce errors and enhance effectiveness and efficiency, other industries followed suit in implementing CRM. Among these industries are anaesthesiology, Navy, nuclear industry and air traffic control among others (Flin, O'Connor, & Mearns, 2002). There are three major components of CRM training. These are efficiency, safety, and morale of the crew. Although there is no single coherent framework for CRM training, these three major components act as the guiding principles for training officers in implementing a model of CRM.

Through these major components, errors in processes and decision-making are mitigated and avoided. At the first stage, CRM seeks to avoid errors. Potential errors are also anticipated and preparations to contain such errors

are made in advance. If such errors were actually committed, then the last stage would be the mitigation of those errors and attempts to correct the errors committed. Through this process, the impacts of errors are mitigated (Pizzi, Goldfarb, & Nash, 2000). Implementing CRM to a Contemporary Medical Organization CRM has also been used in medical issues during flights.

As such, there have been documented ways in which CRM was used. According to Fisher, Phillips & Mather (2000), the effective application of CRM has also helped ensure the safety and security of air medical programs. The authors studied the responses of crews that received CRM training and those that did not regarding the importance of team efforts in implementing air medical program. They did find out that the employees who received CRM training perceived better the importance of teamwork and situation awareness if there emergencies as compared with those that did not receive training.

Given their findings, it means that it is also possible for the medical industry to implement the principles and practices of CRM. In view of stringent rules in medical malpractice as well as the importance of ensuring the safety of patients and clients in medical settings, the crew and employees of medical organizations should implement CRM. This would be an effective means of preventing errors and ensuring better communication and coordination between and among the individuals and groups that are dealing with sensitive medical operations.

There are several steps that should be followed in order to effectively implement CRM within the organization. If this process were abrupt, it may

not be appreciated and will instead cause rifts and divisions. Such strategy will not be appreciated by the crew as much as by the leadership of the organization. Prior to the implementation of CRM, it would be important to get the feedback of employees regarding the process of reducing errors and mistakes in the organization. This would be similar to an internal audit that the crew will participate in.

After such an evaluation, the employees themselves will make suggestions as to the best way to deal with such errors and mistakes. The principles of CRM will then be slowly shared with them so that they will have a collective effort in implementing CRM. The top leadership of the organization shall be engaged in this process so that they can also give their approval to this project. By carefully explaining the intended outcome of the model, the leadership will gladly support the project. The support of the management team is also very important because the financial aspect of the project will be borne by them.

The framework of CRM will then be developed as it applies to the organization. Although there may be a lot of frameworks on CRM available, such framework should be tweaked and improved so as to take into account the peculiar situation of the organization. Otherwise, the CRM model will only introduce concepts that are not entirely compatible with the organization. To facilitate this, a team will be chosen so that they can study the principles of CRM and look at the specific needs of the organization while considering the impact of such needs on the medical needs of customers and clients of the organization.

The team will be composed of people from medium level leadership and file and rank employees so that there will be a confluence of ideas from all levels of the organization. This will be more effective in gathering what the people within the organization think about the proposed CRM model implementation. A period of CRM awareness will be implemented. This will be a time for briefing and explanation on the part of the employees what CRM is all about and what it means to them. Promotional materials such as posters and manuals will be posted in strategic places in the organization so that everyone can see the innovations being proposed.

This way, they will not be taken aback when the changes shall be rolled out finally. The tools, equipments, and other technical needs also need to be setup to facilitate the training and the communication process of the teams within the organization. After the preliminary awareness campaign, the actual CRM training sessions will be held. These training sessions will be short enough so as not to disrupt the operations of the organization yet they will be comprehensive enough for the crew to understand the full impact and importance of these to the operations where they are involved.

The training sessions will not only be classroom instructions but will also include practical applications. This way, the crew will have an idea how the concepts of CRM are implemented while they are doing their crucial procedures and tasks. Conclusion Given the importance of reducing errors in the medical industry and the need to ensure maximum compliance with existing rules and procedures, the leaders of teams and organizations are not the only ones who should be empowered. Rather, the members and the crew are equally important in dealing with varied and complex situations

involving decision-making and problem solving. Read also when delivering a briefing volume and rate are classified

This way, the decisions arrived at will be more effective and possible errors are identified even before they are committed. Although implementing crew resource management in the organization may be difficult, it is nonetheless a worthy investment in the long run.

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