

Teamwork and leadership essays examples

[Business](#), [Employee](#)



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Teamwork is a double-edged sword; if an efficient and well-functioning team leads to faster and effective work, a dysfunctional team can produce worst results. This essay has been divided into two parts with sub-sections in the second part. The first part relates to my personal experiences and the second part highlights the theoretical concepts related to leadership, teamwork, motivation and other such factors that are important for an organization. The essay also provides a brief overview on how these concepts can be applied to solve the existing challenges in the company.

My Personal Experiences

I remember working with a telecom company as a team lead around 5 years back. That, I can say, was one among the worst experiences in my tenure till now. Internal conflicts and communication lags didn't even allow the timely delivery of the project. The retrospection revealed some of the factors that had substantially contributed to the team failure.

First of all, team members could not rise above their individualistic

perceptions to fulfill the collective goals. Instead on contributing as a team member, emphasis remained shifted on taking personal credit. This behavior spoiled the very purpose of the team. Secondly, the leadership did not prove effective. As I feel, there remained a communication gap among team members leading to lack of knowledge transfer and proper coordination. In addition, slow decision-making, blame game, and lack of team- working skills among members contributed to the failure.

On a positive note, I have also got the opportunity to work with an efficient team that produced outstanding results in the given time-frame. Just a couple of years back when I was working in a global Hi-Tech company, I had an excellent time working with the team. Our goal was to increase the sales of a newly launched product in one year and we promoted it so well that sales amplified more than expected.

Coordination among members was outstanding and results were excellent. This time we also had a grievance redressal mechanism to solve the issue arising out of cultural and other differences among team members. It helped the members focus on team goals rather than piling up complaints inside. In addition, small targets and feedback plan, participative leadership, and open communication were among other major factors that contributed to the team success.

These personal experiences reveal that team functioning depends on various factors including leadership, employees' motivation, sense of adaption and collective focus on goals. Next part of the essay will elaborate on various aspects of team functioning that will serve as the foundation of knowledge to solve the work-related challenges.

Theoretical Framework and Analysis

Leadership is an important aspect of team functioning because only an effective leader can keep the spirit going. Locke defines leadership as a process that encourages others to act for the fulfillment of common goals. Leigh and Maynard have defined two types of leadership: inspirational and enabling. Enabling leaders are facilitators, motivators and supporters. In contrast, inspirational leaders adopt less prescribed behaviors such as integrity, initiative and likeability.

In fact, leadership is an evolving concept in the sense that the traits of successful leaders keep changing with the changing business environment.

As such, different theories have been put forward suggesting different leadership styles. Traits theory, popularized in late 20th century, assumes some pre-determined aspects of good leadership including courage, extraversion and confidence and link these with successful leaders.

Contingency or situational theories have stated that there is nothing like the best leadership style. Different styles should be adopted in different situations. More importantly, the leadership styles are also dependent upon the level of those being led. In contrast to traits theories, the behavioral approach believes that good leaders are not born; they are made. Rather than focusing on the mindsets of leaders, the theory focuses on their actions.

In the similar box, there are relationship theories or transformational theories that focus on team performance by motivating the members.

Transformational leaders are considered an agents of change, not confined by immediate results but emphasizing on improved effectiveness and performance.

Management theories, also called transactional theories, emphasize upon the organization, planning, supervision and group performance. Based on the system of rewards and punishments, this theory advocates a sort of transaction between the followers and the leader. It means that employees are rewarded on good work and punished for low performance. Participative theories, suggest that an ideal leader should increase the participation of members in decision-making. This leadership style is usually linked with increased employees' motivation as employees get the greater say in working of the organization.

A close analysis reflects that there are merits and weaknesses associated with each of these. Traits theory seems to be out dated in the present day competitive business environment. Ignoring the role of training and development, this theory focuses more on the inherited traits which may lead to subjective interpretation among different leaders. Situational theory is correct in saying that leadership style should be adopted as per the situation but critics have asserted that it becomes useless in the 'realities of constant change'. Likewise, participation is crucial because it depends on the skills of members. If members are not proficient enough to take part in decision-making, their participation may lead to failures.

Simply put, selecting a wrong leadership style may prove detrimental to the team's success. Actually, it depends on various factors including the ability and maturity level of a team that what style will suit it. As Bruce Tuckman has stated, different leadership styles can be adopted at different levels of the team's maturity. For instance, the stage one (forming) is the initial stage when a team requires good direction from the leader. So, directive or

authoritative style can suit more than the participation here(Telling@ Situational leadership). In second stage(Storming), the team is at the level of establishing and there may be power struggles and lack of clarities. So, leader can initiate two-way communication while providing the directions at the same time(Selling@ Situational leadership). Participative style can be adopted at the third level when roles are clear along with the capabilities of individuals. Finally, the last stage may adopt delegation because team has a shared vision and can continue on its own without the leader's interference. So, the leader can delegate tasks to members and may restrict his/her role to supervision.

Clearly, keeping up the morale of employees is the pre-requisite for team's success. For this to happen, leadership style can be adopted keeping in mind the four stage model put forward by the Tuckman. This model is also in the conformity to the situational theories and states that leadership style should be flexible enough to accommodate changing business scenarios.

The Importance of Internal Environmental Factors

As has been witnessed in the organization, teams are ineffective because of internal crisis including cultural and communication differences. These factors are so crucial to the success that no team can afford to function smoothly if there is lack of compatibility on part of these aspects.

Embracing cultural diversity promotes effective teamwork by promoting creativity and innovation. In contrast, problem solving becomes difficult in groups or teams that don't accept the cultural differences among team members. It may lead to lack of motivation and work productivity among employees. Likewise, effective communication is also the pre-requisite for

team success. The primary merit is that employees can share their opinions with fellows leading to venting out of undesirable feelings. Lack of communication may crop up misunderstandings and hamper work quality. The best way to embrace the diversity is adopting the best possible solution without the discrimination on the basis of language, culture, caste, race and nationality.

Technological challenges, also one among the major internal factors, often pop up leading to diverse views. At times, members may not be interested in adapting technical changes, at times they may not have the necessary skills. Whatever be the reasons, technological challenges are detrimental to employees' morale; therefore careful handling of these issues is crucial. The effective way is knowledge transfer, training sessions and peer discussions. Simply put, internal factors are as important to business as external factors. In fact, internal aspects affect the employees motivation more than the external conditions. This is the reason different theories related to employees' morale have accounted for one or more such factors. For a company suffering from the internal crisis, it is more than necessary to adopt neutrality as far as culture is concerned. For technological and other differences, open discussions and training sessions can help substantially.

Steps to Overcome the Identified Challenges

Major challenges in the organization are: lack of employee motivation, lack of team spirit and ineffective teamwork. The problem lies more at the level of leadership than on the part of employees. The first step to overcome these challenges is to change the leadership style suiting to the different levels of teams maturity as has been suggested by Tuckman.

The second step is to make policies for to keep up the morale of employees by understanding their requirements. Leaders must know the potentials and shortcomings of their team and give the maximum possible chance to members to prove themselves. There are several ways to boost up motivation level like flexible work timings, linkage of business strategies with rewards and punishments, open-door policy and surprised appraisals. A combination of different ways can be used to lift up the dwindling morale. Last but not the least, there should be a platform where employees can share their grievances with no hitch. It will help out in getting solutions rather than piling up of anger and ruining the productivity.

Conclusion

Teamwork and leadership are closely intertwined as effective team functioning requires an effective leadership. There are different leadership theories and approaches that can be applied according to the different situations existing in an organization. However, the strategies should be flexible enough to accommodate the ongoing trends in Human Resource Management.

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