

# A case study on team dynamics management essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



The report has conducted a case study on a manufacturing company – Electron. The author seeks to analyze and evaluate a number of team issues in Electron with support of relevant theories and models. The main body of the report consists of four sections. The first section will critically analyze the team dynamics and formation of Electron with the relevant theories and concepts on team norms, team development, team context, structure and team cohesion; the second section will assess the impacts of team size, social loafing and emotional on team performance; in the next section of the report, based on above analysis, the author tries to generate feasible recommendation for Electron to improve its team effectiveness and performance, which will also required on necessary changes on leadership and management style in final section. CONTENTS

## **1. Introduction**

Electron is a small English telecommunications components manufacturing company established in 1997. To cope with the increasing competition in the market, Electron has restructured manufacturing department into 8 teams. Each team consists of 10 members, some of which are full time workers and the other with temporary contracts. The objective of the teams is to improve productivity within 2 months. If it is achieved, the team members can be rewarded. This report will have a critical evaluation on a number of team issues of Electron teams with the support of academic concepts, relevant theories and models. Based on the evaluation, the author seeks to provide feasible recommendations for the teams to improve their performance and effectiveness.

## **2. A Case study of Electron teams**

In this section, the author will have a critical evaluation on a number of team issues of Electron teams with the support of academic concepts, relevant theories and models.

### **2. 1 Team dynamics and team formation**


In this section, the author will critically analyse team dynamics and team formation of Electron teams, including team norms/values; stages of group development; team context, structure and team cohesion

#### **2. 1. 1 Team norms and values**

A concrete control system is also developed in the teams of Electron. Teams of Electron achieved this by establishing and agreeing on specific team values and norms. Team values indicate what ought to do and ought not to do, if they want to make an effective team. The Electron team had agreed on a number of values for doing good team work, for example: they should achieve improved productivity. They should make sacrifices to support the needs of the team. They should be willing to do whatever it took for the team to be successful; they should all speak honestly and openly at team meetings. They should reduce the chance of error etc. Based on the team values, there are also a number of norms and rules in Electron team. Norms are practice of values, which represent how the team members can behave in accordance with their shared values. Thinking about what one ought to do is thinking about a value. Behaving in a way one ought to behave is behaving according to a norm (Sypher, 1997). Based on their values, Electron teams have norms of holding regular meetings to share

information. The teams can decide which temporary worker to be hire on as full-time workers. They will check each other's work. If a member come in late the third time and don't want to do anything to correct it, he will be kicked out of the team. They should be working on one board at a time.

## **2. 1. 2 Stages of group development;**

Bruce Tuckman (1965) has proposed a model of group development in 1965, which consists of five phase Forming – Storming – Norming – Performing – Adjourning, as indicated in Fig. 1. The five phases are necessary and inevitable stages in the development of a team. Fig. 1 Bruce Tuckman's model  For Electron teams, they are now at the third stages of group development, which is the Norming Phase. In this stage, team members begin to generate close relation and produce strong team recognition and friendship. Team members have reached a common goals and team value consensus. After the Storming stage, they are gradually coming to Norming period. Team members are connected together cooperatively. A tentative balance is forming between two competitive powers. With their efforts, team members can gradually understand the thoughts and the objective of the team, build up their common vision and tacit understanding during their interaction. Electron teams are now in the Norming stage. They start working to improve the whole team's effectiveness, for example, team member shall be willing to do whatever it took for the team to be successful. They no longer focus on individual objectives, but concentrate on building a cooperative process and procedures. To work as a team is something natural in people's mind. For example, Stephi, a temporary employee at the team

was trying to control her own attitudes and behavior to prove she could be a good team player. The teams have reached an agreement how they should work together, how to share information and resolve conflicts, as well as what kind of tools and procedure shall be taken and followed to finish the tasks. For example, their concrete control of turning their values into norms and rules is working quite well. They have a consensus that people should have team meetings every two weeks to share information and resolve team problems; they shall work at a board once a time to reduce chance of error, etc. The team are working toward a common goal instead of competing with each other.

### **2. 1. 3 Team context, structure and team cohesion**

Structure refers to the ways in which teams define themselves, which includes disciplines, roles, team mission, values, goals at both team and larger organizational levels (Heinemann & Zeiss, 2002). An Electron team consists of 10 team members, with some on temporary contracts, whilst others are full-time employees. The teams contain female and male workers, with an age range of between 25 and 50 years old. The team also consists of some older and experienced workers and some new workers. The older and experienced workers are trying to help the new team get organized. As one can see, the team size of Electron teams is relatively larger, which leads to multiple relationships. Those complicated relationships may create difficulty for people to know each other better. (Dyer et al, 2010) The structure is quite flat. There are not many layers of management. The team missions, values, and goals are established as discussed in the above paragraph. Context

refers to the experience of being on the team, the overall climate of the team or sense of team life, including the degree of team cohesion, quality of working relationship, and overall satisfaction of being on the team (Bower et al., 2003). The climate of Electron teams is tense. Team meetings began to have a confrontational tone, and the new workers' attitudes and performance became open topics for team discussion. There is peer pressure. The new workers feel it and are quite careful to ensure they do things right to please their other members. On the other hand, the older members were concerned about not wanting to be seen as being too harsh to their new peers. Team cohesion is defined as a dynamic process, which is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its goals and objectives (Carron, 1982). There are several causes of team cohesiveness, such as team size, member similarity, member interaction, external challenge, and team success and entry barriers. Finn et al. (2003) believes bigger team generates more relationships which are difficult for communication and the team tends to split to subgroups. Smaller size may have more cohesion. An Electron team is consisting of 10 members. It is a little bigger than the optimal team size of 6 to 9 members, suggested by Williams et al. (2011). In other words, this bigger team size has negative impact on the cohesion of Electron teams. As to member similarity, there are both older and experience workers and new comers as well as long term workers and those with temporary contracts. These differences may also cause different thoughts among them and impact team cohesion. In addition, the interaction within Electron teams is now having a confronting tone, which is also not positive to team cohesion.

## **2. 2 Critical factors impacting on the team's performance**

The author believes there are three critical factors impacting on the team's performance which are team size; emotional intelligence; social loafing.

### **2. 2. 1 Team size**

Team size refers to the number of people working in a team. Team size impacts a team's performance in following aspects: First of all, team size impacts team cohesion. Small groups (fewer than 7 members) usually have more cohesion than bigger groups and tend to pursue conformance. This is mainly because in small groups, members have more regular interaction, communication and emotional attached. In this way, it is easier for them to pursue and maintain conformance. Big groups do not have this kind of advantages. Bigger size leads to fewer direct interaction and more conflicts, and thus harder to keep conformance. It is also easier to form sub groups within the team, which will definitely impact the attraction among team members. Secondly, team size impacts the participation of team members. When a group expands, the participation of each member is reduced. In the condition of equal opportunity, the more the team size is, the less participation time each member have. However, in real situation, there are informal norms such as " not all members can participate in decision-making" or " who participant what in when", the participation and involvement behaviour of members are even less.

### **2. 2. 2 Social loafing**

Social loafing refers to a phenomenon that shows a reduction in effort performed by a person when he or she is working in a group than he or she

working alone. One cause of social loafing is the sense of inequality. (Latane et al, 1979) People usually like to compare their effort and reward with others. If the comparison results are fair and reasonable, they will continue to work happily. On the other hand, if the results are quite on the contrary, they feel inequality which further impacts their activeness. The other cause may be the Diffusion of responsibility. Diffusion of responsibility refers to the phenomenon that when people are working with others, their sense of responsibility will decline and tends to push their work to others. The major reason of Diffusion of responsibility is that pressure of group responsibility is diluted to individual. Therefore, individual have little pressure of responsibility. They depend on each other and shirk their responsibility to others. Generally speaking, more people in the group, stronger diffusion of responsibility and weaker sense of individual responsibility. A reduction in team members can enhance the sense of responsibility.

### **2. 2. 3 Emotional intelligence**

Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) believe emotional intelligence shall include all kinds of subjective emotion of individual. Team members bring individual level emotion and emotional experience to the team and interact with other members' emotional experience. During this integration process, individual EI synergizes into team EI. A team EI is impacted team performance by following aspects. Firstly, conflict management of the team. Due to complicated interpersonal relationship and different level of emotional intelligence of team members, conflicts are inevitable in a team. The occurrence of conflicts no only impacts individual emotional condition but



also impact the exerting of individual performance. More importantly, conflicts would impact the harmony inside the team and break the cooperation of team members, and finally impact performance of team. Barsade (2002) discovered during his study of EI and team dynamics that positive EI would improve the cooperation, reduce conflicts and dissatisfaction of team members, while negative EI would reduce the collaboration and increase conflicts and dissatisfaction among team members. Secondly, team norms. In a team environment, individual level EI are impacted by team norms. Team norms can be divided to two categories: one is team EI norms. These norms tell team members the team's expectation on what kind of EI shall be expressed while the other kind shall be hidden (Hochschild, 1983). When setting up these norms, the team shall actively influence team members to express and control their emotion and enhance the internal connection between the team and individuals. Therefore, these norms should consider on team members' confrontation, as well as their cares such as respect, manner, support, appreciation and sympathy. These norms should build up trust and ownership among the team and further facilitate team performance.

### **2. 3 Recommendations for the team**

Based on above discussion and evaluation, the author have raised below recommendations for Electron to improve their team performance. The author would suggest the team to adopt a collaborating style to handle the conflicts. In Electron teams, there are conflicts among new team members and old team members. Old members are adopting a competing style to

handle conflicts. They argue their position directly in the meeting and they use their power and authority such as peer pressure to get their way. (Kuhn, 2000) new workers are adopting an accommodating style to handle the conflicts. Although they may have different idea or attitudes, they still try to give up their ways in order to be accepted by the team. However, the author believes these two styles cannot really solve the conflicts. Collaborating style requires both kinds of workers to respect each other's, discuss problems openly and honestly, so as to find a reasonable and acceptable solution for the team. This change can be implemented by have an equal and respect discussion in the team meeting every two weeks. When people saw someone not acting in accordance with their norms, instead of accusing him and force him to obey the rules, they can discuss together to understand why he do not obey the rules and tell him why it is important to obey the rules in a peaceful way. This helps new members understand and accept the team values and norms better and help reduce these kinds of conflicts in the future. It is suggested Electron teams to adopt a coaching leadership style. The leaders will help members define their advantages and disadvantages, and connect with their individual objective and team objective. According to Goleman (2000), there are six types of leadership styles, which are coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting and coaching. In Electron teams, they tend to adopt an authoritative leadership style for example; they set up rules and expect all members to follow those rules. Those do not follow the rules will be criticized and kick out of the team. This creates a confront tone in the team atmosphere. With a coaching leadership style, the leaders of Electron will help members define their advantages and

disadvantages, and connect with their individual objective and team objective. This leadership style provides opportunity for new members to learn and grow and also make use of the experience of old members. To implement this leadership style, leaders can explain the rules to the members show them how to do it and also try to let members do it by themselves. Electron teams are adopting an authoritative decision making, while most of the decisions making is controlled by older members. It is suggested the team to adopt a consensus decision making, in which every members can speak out their opinions, negotiate with each other and reach a consensus. Brain storming in team meeting can be a good method to implementing this recommendation. With brain storming, everybody is encouraged to speak their mind no matter its good or bad. With equal discussion on this, the team can reach a consensus.

## **2. 4 Changes in leadership and management style**

To implement above recommendation requires certain change in leadership and management style. A high performance team need appropriate leadership and management style and structure to provide direction and focus. The author suggests Electron teams shall transfer its authoritative leadership and management style in to coaching style. The leaders will help members define their advantages and disadvantages, and connect with their individual objective and team objective. This leadership style provides opportunity for new members to learn and grow and also make use of the experience of old members. With a coaching style, member could achieve a consensus on task assignment and make sure all members have reasonable

workload. In addition, how to arrange the work schedule, how to resolve conflicts and task content for team members to make sure everyone exert their skills and capacity in right position. In addition, appropriate performance evaluation and reward system shall be established to ensure responsibility in both team level and individual level. One is to evaluate and reward individual contribution. This may require both monetary and material reward as well as spiritual motivation such as timely recognition and appreciation of members' achievement. This is better than negative criticism on their bad performance. The other is to have a performance evaluation and profit sharing on team level. Through this, it is aimed to enhance the team cohesion and connect the individual needs and team objective together.

### **3. Conclusion**

This report has applied relevant theories and models to access a number of team issues of Electron. The report first applied team theories to analyze the team dynamics and team formation. The result shows that Electron has a concrete control establishing and agreeing on specific team values and norms. They were at the norming stage of team formation. The team size was bigger than optimal size will have impacted on team cohesion. The author later summarized and evaluate at the critical factors that are impacting on the team performance which are team size, emotional intelligence and social loafing. Based on above analysis, the author raised a number of recommendations for Electron to improve its team performance, such as ways to handle conflicts, transformation on its leadership style and improving the decision making and achieving conformance. The author also

recognized the changes in leadership and management style to implementing the recommendations.

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