Define groupthink

Groupthink   Groupthink The term groupthink de s a psychological phenomenon, which affects groups of people that try to make decisions collectively. The groupthink phenomenon occurs within groups or teams that seek to conform or harmonize their decisions, and thus resulting in deviant or incorrect decision-making outcomes. Groupthink occurs when team or group members try to reduce conflict so as to attain consensus without making critical assessment of alternative viewpoints or ideas. The phenomenon is also characterized by the urge to isolate the group or team from outside influences. In groupthink consensus overrides common sense and inhibits the urge to present critique, unpopular opinion or alternatives to whatever is viewed as the commonly agreed ground (Wikipedia, 2013). In groupthink the urge to remain loyal to the team and maintain cohesion makes the team members to desist from raising alternative solutions or controversial issues. As a result, independent thinking, uniqueness in thought and individual creativity are lost at the expense of cohesion and loyalty to the group. The eventual outcome is poor problem solving and decision-making. The failed team dynamics of the " in-group" presents illusions that the appropriate decisions have been attained. Therefore the ' in-group' greatly overrates their decision-making abilities, and excessively downplays the decision-making ability of the ' out-group' or opponents. As such, team members tend to think or feel that they are more inclined to making the right decisions and offer better ideas and solutions than people from without the group. This happening often hinders the reception of contribution of ideas from non-group members or other groups (Wikipedia, 2013).

Events depicting groupthink

This source uses the Swissair collapse and the Bay of Pigs Invasion as examples of events in which groupthink was at play when they took place. In the corporate sector suboptimal and ineffective decision-making may negatively impact on the good performance of any company and cause significant losses. Swissair had been a successful airline to the extent that at times it was referred to as the ' Flying Bank (Hermann & Rammal, 2010).' However, during this period of success the airline had two symptoms of groupthink (Wikipedia, 2013). These symptoms included the belief in group morality and invulnerability. Additionally, before the collapse fiasco the airline's board was significantly reduced and people with expertise were eliminated. The board reduction action contributed to groupthink by leaving behind only members with a lack of expertise and somewhat similar values, norms and background. This action increased the pressure to conform because of the group's uniformity (Hermann & Rammal, 2010). The resultant group homogeneity that developed led to group think and finally to the poor decision-making that led to the collapse of the airline (Wikipedia, 2013).

In the Bay of Pigs invasion, the plan was started by Eisenhower's presidency, and when the Kennedy administration took over, they accepted the case without much critique (Janis, 1971). In this invasion President Kennedy made decisions, and the support staff working under him supported the decisions despite of concerns about the plans. When certain people, such as Senator William Fulbright and Arthur Schlesinger Junior made objections to the plan, the Kennedy' team ignored their objections and continued to believe in the morality of their group and decisions (Wikipedia, 2013). In the end, Schlesinger reduced his doubts, by undertaking self-censorship. The group designated by Kennedy stereotyped Fidel Castro and downplayed the

opponent's capability by making false assumptions. The team failed to question the CIA's assumptions about the Cuban Air force and the weakness of his army as well as the inability to quell uprisings (Wikipedia, 2013).

References

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