Role of project manager in communication management plan management essay

The role of a project manager in project communication management consists of Identifying stakeholders, Planning communications, Distributing Information and Managing Stakeholder expectations and Reporting performance

A key role of the project manager is to create a communications management plan to analyze stakeholder communications needs and disseminate important information efficiently.

Richer forms of communications should be used for important objectives

The Tuckman model developed by Dr. Bruce Tuckman in 1970 describes 5 stages of team development such as Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning

If project managers depended too heavily on money, penalty or authority, the project was more likely to fail compared to work challenge and expertise which were more influential

Project Managers should set an example by leading their teams such that the team members should know how to deal with conflicts, where team members work out small conflicts amongst themselves before elevating them to the higher ups

Project managers and team members could use these strategies such as confrontation, compromise, smoothing, forcing, withdrawal and collaboration

Project practitioners should adhere to the PMI's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct in dealing with conflict amongst team members.

1. Introduction:

There are four core knowledge areas of project management that deal with project scope, time, cost and quality management which help in defining the specific project objectives. Human resource, communications, risk and procurement management are the four facilitating knowledge areas. These four facilitating knowledge areas are processes that help in achieving the project objectives and hence are important. The greatest threat to any project is the ineffective communication between the project manager, team and the key stakeholders. Many problems in completion of projects are attributed to unclear scope or unrealistic schedules which indicate communication problems between the project manager, team and stakeholders. It is crucial for project managers and their teams to understand Project communication management. Project communication management deals with generation, collection, dissemination and storing of project information (Schwabe, 2010)

This next section deals with the role of a project manager in a communication management plan and the elements involved in it. Further sections show how project managers establish team culture, the characteristics of motivation, conflicts, strategies on conflict resolution and ethical behavior in dealing with conflicts.

2. Communication :

Communication is very important for the success of any project. It is also closely related with team work and team building and hence also affects how conflicts happen. A communication management plan for the entire project is

very necessary. The role of a project manager in project communication management is given as follows:

a. Identifying Stakeholders : This stage identifies the people involved in or affected by the project. The project manager creates processes and manages relationships with them. The project manager must create a Stakeholder register and Stakeholder management strategy.

b. Planning communications : This stage identifies the communication needs and the channel of communication required by the stakeholder. A communications management plan and project documents update are required made by the project manager.

c. Distributing Information and Managing Stakeholder expectations : The Project manager makes important information available to project stakeholders efficiently and in a timely manner, such that it satisfies the communication needs and expectations of the project stakeholders. Formal or informal plans, procedures, policies are the output of this stage.

d. Reporting Performance : A project manager collects and reports project performance information to the stakeholders in the form of status reports, forecasts and progress measurements (Schwabe, 2010)

Developing information and making it available to all the stakeholders is an important function of the project managers and team. Project managers and their teams must decide the recipient of the information and distribution channels for the information. They should also decide on the format of the

information, such as written reports or meetings etc. A key role of the project manager is to create such a communications management plan to analyze stakeholder communications needs and disseminate important information efficiently.

According to the Daft and Lengels Media richness theory, the richness of the media in communication is directly proportional to the time and cost spent on it. Hence face to face communication is preferred to email because of better communication but it is more costly and more time is spent. Thus richer forms of communications should be used for important objectives (Markus L, 1994)

3. Establishing team culture

Team work and people management are the most important issues in project management. Establishing and motivating teams are interlinked with communication and are important to understand before understanding conflict and the ethical issues related with conflict.

Belbin observes that, " The essence of a team is its members form a co-operative association through a division of labor that best reflects the contribution that each can make towards the common objectives."

To establish a team the project manager can use the following graphical techniques:

Work Breakdown Structures – shows major tasks broken down into smaller tasks

Linear Responsibility Charts – shows relationships between tasks and people

Organizational Hierarchy Charts – shows structure of a project team or organization

The Tuckman model developed by Dr. Bruce Tuckman in 1970 describes 5 stages of team development such as:

Forming – an important stage of introducing team members either at initiation, or as new members are introduces

Storming – team members have different opinions on how a team should work. Usually conflicts occur during this phase

Norming – team members have developed common working method and cooperate with each other

Performing – Team members are likely to build loyalty towards each other. Team can cope with greater change and complex tasks.

Adjourning – After completion of work and successful reaching of goals, this stage consists of the break-up of the team (Cadle and Yeates, 2001)

This model gives a brief idea about where conflict occurs within a team and at what stage. This could be used by the project manager to handle conflicts effectively during the storming stage.

Establishing the right balance of roles in any team is crucial in avoiding or resolving conflicts. In a successful team there is a good combination of

different personality types. According to Meredith Belbin a successful team needs the following combination of roles:

The chair – calm, strong and tolerant individual

The plant – an individual who generates ideas

The monitor-evaluator – Evaluates ideas

The shaper – an individual who focuses on the objectives

The team worker – helps create a good working environment

The resource investigator – finds information and resources for the project

The completer finisher – checks details, deadlines, proof reads

The company worker – works hard, similar to team worker (Belbin, 1996)

A good blend of different personality types in a team will help in formation of less conflicts and resolving conflicts faster. According to Patrick Lencioni, lack of teamwork could lead to a) Absence of trust b) Conflict c) Lack of commitment d) Avoidance of accountability

e) Inattention to results which could lead to failure of organizations.

The team consists of individuals with different needs and expectations from the team. Motivation plays a very crucial part in the development of a team and its individuals as discussed in the next section

4. Motivation : To understand the various factors that influence motivation we need to understand the " hierarchy of needs" of an individual. In the late 1940, Maslow suggested that people are motivated according to their circumstances. In this theory is the idea that the employees needs have to be satisfied from the bottom up as shown in Fig. 2. The bottom level consists of basic survival and safety needs. The need for belonging and to be part of a group or a team comes second. The fourth level is about the ego and esteem needs and the final level is the personal fulfillment level. Project manager and project team members need to understand their respective motivations with regards to social, esteem and self actualization (Cadle and Yates, 2001)

Self-actualization
Personal growth and fulfilment

personal growth and fulfilment

Esteem needs
Achievement, status, responsibility, reputation

achievement, status, responsibility, reputation

Belongingness and Love needs
Family, affection, relationships, work group, etc

family, affection, relationships, work group, etc.

Safety needs

Protection, security, order, law, limits, stability, etc

protection, security, order, law, limits, stability, etc.

Biological and Physiological needs

Basic life needs – air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc

basic life needs – air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc.

Fig: 2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Some of the methods employed by project managers to motivate or influence team members to work towards achieving a successful project are:

Authority – PM's right to issue orders

Assignment – allocating duties

Budget – Authorization of funds by PM

Promotion

Money – Pay rise and benefits

Penalty – causing punishment by PM

Work Challenge – such that it motivates the team member

Expertise – PM commands respect from team members based on his special knowledge

Friendship – ability to establish friendly relations

Thamhain and Wilemon found that if project managers depended too heavily on money, penalty or authority, the project was more likely to fail compared to work challenge and expertise which were more influential (Schwabe, 2010)

Some of the factors that affect motivation of employees are as follows:

Environment

Manipulation

Scheduling pressure

Lack of appreciation

Technically inept management

Lack of involvement

Low quality

5. Conflict Resolution and Ethics

The possibility of conflict between team members is always possible unless good communication isn't observed. Some of the common reasons for conflict between team members are as follows

Scheduling

Project priorities

Human resources

Admin procedures

Personality clashes

Costs

Technical opinions and trade offs

Project managers should help identify and manage conflict by using their human resources and communication skills. Project Managers should set an example by leading their teams such that the team members should know how to deal with conflicts, where team members work out small conflicts amongst themselves before elevating them to the higher ups. The project manager must separate people from the problem and use negotiation to resolve dispute. Unethical behavior should be avoided by both the parties. Negotiation amongst project manager and team members such that:

Focus on interests: negotiator needs should keep in mind the interest of the parties to the dispute as against the position the parties have drawn up

Inventing Options for mutual gain: Negotiator should find win-win solutions such that no party compromises on the project objectives

Insist on objective criteria: negotiator should determine the quality of outcomes rather than positions.

According to Meredith and Mantel, negotiation skills are particularly required a) when using subcontractors b) different teams are brought together to work on a task c) during change management. In the event of a conflict, the following principles of negotiation should be adopted:

Without damaging the project objectives the conflict must be resolved

Honest negotiations must take place

All parties should be satisfied by the solution to the conflict (Schwabe, 2010)

Strategies for resolving conflict

Project Managers and team members could make use of the 5 basic modes of conflict resolution as suggested by Krezner in 2003

1. Confrontation: Project managers directly face conflict in the confrontation mode by using a problem solving approach such that affected parties work through their disagreements towards a win-win solution. This is the most preferred method of conflict resolution amongst project managers (Schwabe, 2010)

2. Compromise: Project managers adopt the compromise mode to bargain and search for solutions that bring some degree of satisfaction to the parties in dispute, similar to give and take attitude.

3. Smoothing

Project managers adopt the soothing mode such that they de-emphasize or avoid areas of conflict and emphasize the area of agreement

4. Forcing

Forcing mode is also termed as the win-lose approach such that a competitive or autocratic project manager exerts his viewpoint at the potential expense of another team members view point.

5. Withdrawal

This is the worst conflict-handling mode where project managers retreat from a potential or actual disagreement and hence called the withdrawal mode

6. Collaborating

This is a fairly recent conflict resolution mode called the collaborating mode, where different viewpoints and insights are encouraged by decision makers to develop consensus and commitment

Successful project managers also use collaboration and compromise to resolve conflicts. Smoothing, forcing and withdrawal are hardly used by successful project managers for resolving conflict.

A standard process for resolving conflict could be detailed as follows:

Identify conflict and discuss with stakeholders

Gather information

Analyze solution

List options for conflict resolution

Decide conflict resolution mode

Carry out conflict resolution

Ethical Behavior in dealing with Conflicts

Project Managers and their team members are required to make ethical decisions in personal and professional lives. In terms of conflict resolution too, project management practitioners should conduct their jobs in an ethical manner. According to the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct present on the website, the practitioners should behave in the following manner with regards to professional integrity and conflict resolution

We make decisions and take actions based on the best interests of society, public, safety and the environment

We fulfill the commitments that we undertake – we do what we say we will do

We accept only those assignment that are consistent with our background, experience, skills and qualifications

We inform ourselves about the norms and customs of others and avoid engaging in behaviors they might consider disrespectful

We listen to others points of view, seeking to understand them

We approach directly those persons with whom we have a conflict or disagreement

We demonstrate the transparency in out decision-making process

We constantly reexamine our impartiality and objectivity, taking corrective action as appropriate

We proactively and fully disclose any real or potential conflicts of interest to appropriate stakeholders

We earnestly seek to understand the truth

We are truthful in our communications and in our conduct (PMI Code of Ethics, 2010)