

Acme minerals extraction company management essay



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The team project succeeded in the first plant because of various reasons. First of all Ms. Suzanne Howard had the luck of finding Donald Peterson which was a long time employee who had been working for 39 years in almost all the lines and positions at ACME. Mr. Peterson, due to his vast experience, knew very well the discrepancies between both groups i-e BRAINS AND BRAWNS, so he became the key to solving various problems of ACME. Both, working together, formed a team i-e task force team. A “ task force team” is a temporary team assembled to investigate a specific issue or problem (Team Building Inc., 2001-2007). They were in charge of bridging the gap between both teams and make them successful at work so the first step became encouraging talking across these groups. To do so monthly meetings were scheduled for employees to freely participate to discuss their problems. Like the case study says, in six months’ time the meetings became lively and led to many positive discussions and solutions. They addressed the problems of the company by adopting various team methods which worked quiet well at First plant because of congeniality coming into existence.

The next step was creating SPITS, “ select a problem and implement a tailored solution.” These were multi-division teams that had a limited lifespan and were created ad-hoc to solve a problem that emerged at a discussion meeting. So this led to a very friendly environment for all the employees. They didn’t impose anything on them, instead they provide them a platform to communicate and share ideas with each other. The top executives worked hard amongst the different groups, they encouraged the workers to participate in the decision making process due to which the

employees became more motivated towards their jobs. They started feeling satisfied about their jobs. Herzberg Theory says that the workers who felt good about their jobs tended to attribute their positive feelings to the intrinsic factors such as recognition, responsibility, work itself etc. (Robbins, SP, TA 2011, p. 178). From the free participation meetings, informal meetings came up with employees participating in softball games and social events. Everything Mrs. Howard and Mr. Peterson did worked very well in the first plant.

After the successful experience at the first plant, ACME decided to implement the same team-based approach at its sister plant but unfortunately this time Ms. Howard did not have the support of Donald Peterson. Her team tried their level best but what worked before didn't work at this plant. For a company situations like this Holpp's book reading says that " even though teams could be right for companies, it doesn't mean teams are for everybody and work the same way everywhere".(Holpp, 2000). People always resist change, new ideas and new courses of action, even if the ideas are good for them because they fear to trust someone new or they fear to lose something they value or they may don't want to leave their comfort zone. At the first plant the employees has somebody from their own company to trust. Probably the sister plant employees were feeling the same way or had questions that needed to be answered but they did not have somebody they could trust to ask. Secondly the employees at the sister might not be motivated to their work which led Ms. Howard's team to failure. The other reason could be that Howard's team was not informed with the kind of employees they were going to be working. Top executives forgot

that: “ You can’t simply create teams for changing systems the same way assign individual employees to a new job task. You can’t just make sure your team members have the skills necessary and then expect them to handle the task. You’ve got to anticipate and meet the needs of your team members”. (Holpp, 1999)

Q2. Determine the types of teams that were used in the case and justify whether they were effective in improving the firm’s operational ability.

Suzanne Howard and Donald Peterson initiated functional teams or groups through which they took employees from disputed groups and put them together so as to accomplish a target by arranging meetings. This type of team has a distinct membership and clear boundaries. Members perform regular and ongoing work, usually in one functional area (Deborah L. Duarte, 2006). ACME had three functional groups or teams at the Wichita plant and quoting from the case study: “ operations group”, made up primarily of hourly workers who operated and maintained the extracting equipment; the “ below ground” group, consisting of engineers, geologists, and geophysicists who determined where and how to drill; and the “ above ground” group of engineers in charge of cursory refinement and transportation of the minerals.

Another team which represents this case study is a task force team which was a temporary team made to identify specific issues or problems. By this employees really came up together and started communicating with each other. Monthly meeting was scheduled in which employees were encouraged to participate and discuss about the unresolved problems. Another most

important step taken by the top management was introduction of SPITS (Select a problem and implement a tailored solutions). This is a type of Self-Managed work teams. A self-managed team is a group of people who work together in their own ways towards a common goal which is defined outside the team. They not only make recommendations but implement solutions and take responsibility for outcomes. SPITS were made up of the members from each of the three functional groups to solve problems that emerged at the discussion meetings. Due to the incredible leadership of Donald Peterson, the top management succeeded in organizing the workers in cross-functional teams. In a cross-functional team, individuals from different backgrounds or departments of the organization come together to accomplish a common goal and are responsible to work as a team to improve coordination and resolve mutual problems. A number of benefits can be attributed to the use of cross-functional teams, including: " quality improvement, shorter response time, improved socialization and better sharing of knowledge" (Hong, 2008). All the successful organization like Hewlett-Packard, Coca Cola, Siemens, and Xerox has cross-functional teams to achieve their business goals. The workers at the Wichita plant were empowered to take decisions and elect their own leaders. With the proper authority, goals, objectives, and desired outcomes defined, along with ethical guidelines in regards to showing respect to other team members, cross-functional teams became the key of success for Wichita plant. This lead to employees' satisfaction about their jobs, they felt being more motivated about their work and they started socializing which ultimately solved many morale and productivity problems of the company.

Q3. Describe the best course of action for Suzanne Howard to take to create acceptance in the sister plant.

Mrs. Howard's team did a splendid job at the Wichita plant under the incredible leadership of Mr. Peterson and this was the main factor that led the Howard's team to successfully implement their team based approach in the First plant. Having Peterson as a part of the team made the employees trust more on what the new team was trying to implement. Secondly the employees at the first plant were more motivated and were more open to accept the new ideas and procedures which really helped out the Howard's team in implementing their strategy. After the successful implementation of team based approach in the first plant, the company decided to implement the same plan in the sister plant but this time they did not have the support of Mr. Peterson. Suzanne Howard and her team tried their level best but what worked before did not work at the sister plant. This was because instead of reaching the root cause, Howard and her team directly implemented the Wichita successful approach and started working on it with a belief that employees will feel connected and will surely respond to it. For a company situation like this the Holpp's book states that " even though teams could be right for companies, it does not mean teams are for everybody and work the same way everywhere." (Holpps, 1999)

Change management played a significant role in the failure of Howard's team in the sister plant. People don't like change because they really don't want to be changed and leave their comfort zone, they fear to lose something they value or they might don't understand the change and its implications and they don't think that the change makes sense. Probably the

sister plant's employees felt the same way, they were resisting the strategy which the Howard's team was trying to implement there.

Instead of directly applying the same approach of Wichita Plant, Howard and her team should think about that whenever we are going to implement something new, wherever it is, we need to be well aware of the people that we are going to be dealing. Once you have clear picture of how things are at a certain place, you can get better prepared on how to react to different situations. Before implementing the Wichita plant strategy, Mrs. Howard and her team should have a meeting with the top management of the sister plant in order to discuss various aspects of already implemented plan of Wichita's plant and how to incorporate that plan into the second plant. Secondly give employees time to digest a new idea or plan. As per Benjamin Franklin quote " Be Persistent. Don't expect to win the first time. Your job is just to start the other person thinking". So instead of imposing the plan on the employees of second plant, Mrs. Howard Suzanne should make the strategy more adaptable so that employees can response actively and focus on progressing.

Recommendation

Justification

Employee Motivation by building satisfaction

Build a work environment in the sister plant that attracts, focuses, and keeps talented employees. In other words, they have to be motivated to show up, get committed and perform at a level of excellence.

Give incentives

Offer employees incentives to perform well, either with something small like a gift certificate or something more substantial such as a performance-based bonus or salary increase.

Also, give out “ Employee of the Month” awards. Such tokens of appreciation will go far in motivating employees.

Create More Positive and Adaptive environment

Promote an office atmosphere that makes all employees feel worthwhile and important.

Giving Employees the Responsibility and train them to accept the responsibility

Assign various tasks to employees in order to increase their involvement. Encourage them to attend workshops and seminars related to team building.

Acknowledge Contributions

Howard’s team can make a huge difference in employee morale by simply taking the time to recognize each employee’s contributions and accomplishments, large or small. Don’t take it for granted that your workers know they’ve done well

Develop Trust

At Wichita plant the employees had somebody, from their own “ family”, to trust while the Sister plant employees had only the new “ threat” to trust. So Howard’s team should link up again with Mr. Donald Peterson in order to gain more credibility.