

ABSTRACT

Numerous socio-economic influences within our culture and our organisations have necessitated an intensive investigation into the fundamental components that enable a group of individuals to work together effectively. In light of the tremendous leaps in technology and the advances in the overall capacity to control most operations within an organisation, there is no reason that the manager's ability to release the potential of the team members should not keep pace with such strides being made in the other fields.

Teams are important for a number of reasons. First, much individual behaviour is rooted in the socio-cultural norms and values of the work teams. If the teams, as a team, changes those norms and values, the effect on the individual behaviour are immediate and lasting. Second, many tasks are so complex that they cannot be performed by individuals: people must work together to accomplish them. Third, teams create synergy that is, the sum of the efforts of members of a team is far greater than the sum of the individual efforts of people working alone. Fourth, teams satisfy people's need for social interaction, status, recognition and respect. Teams nurture human nature.

A number of OD interventions are specifically designed to improve team performance. Examples are Team Building, Inter-group Teambuilding, Process consultation, Quality circles, Parallel learning structures, Socio technical systems programs, Grid OD, and techniques such as Role Analysis technique, Role Negotiation technique, Responsibility charting, Survey feedback and Sensitivity training.

Team Building is a relatively recent invention, which grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s with thousands of organisations in public and private sector utilising its theory and methods with great success. Today it represents one of the best strategies for coping with the rampant changes occurring in the market place and the society, and will definitely be the most preferred improvement strategy well into the next century.

In spite of this, it is unfortunate that team development has until now not been given the due importance and status it deserves. Research has shown that team

development is a relatively inexpensive form of intervention for producing major results within a shorter period of time. In interviews many managers have amplified that most of the time they could not get things done themselves, but had to work, not through individuals acting alone, but through a small cohesive group of people.

While studies have been carried out abroad in this field, very little research has been done in team building in Indian industry. Therefore a need was felt to first establish the importance of teams in the present day environment in modern Indian organisations and then to bring out certain unique and interesting organisational, structural and behavioural issues of team development. Subsequently there would also be a requirement to develop peak performance teams for world class results in Indian organisations.

It is with this in mind that this study has been planned and executed. The study has brought out certain crucial lessons for the Indian organisations which when implemented will enhance the output and at the same time increase their effectiveness within the organisation.

A major finding of the study, as may be recalled, is that there is the reluctance among the managers to hand over the control to the team due to the perceived loss of authority. Another finding is that inspite of the fact that teams are felt to be necessary for improving organisational performance; there is a hesitation among the top managerial staff in handing over the authority to teams. This is due to the fact that the top level management feels that inspite of the existence of teams the overall responsibility of running the organisation still is their domain. This finding does not augur well for the managers of tomorrow.

Management education is another aspect which needs to be upgraded, by, including training in teambuilding skills, in addition to providing them with cognitive abilities. Developing these skills may call for a pedagogy which involves role-plays, problem solving exercises in groups, real and mock sessions of negotiations, etc., wherein participants can experiment with interpersonal skills, for example, of how to operate in groups, where, when, how and how much to accept influence from others and also practise

how to be appropriately open to create a trusting atmosphere that facilitates openness from others, which in this study has been found to be lacking.

Although the research has not been very conclusive about superiority over individual work or work groups, nevertheless some very clear guidelines have been laid down for increasing their effectiveness.

A good deal of research evidence has indicated that people will work harder if they are asked to perform are intrinsically interesting, motivating, challenging and enjoyable. This therefore calls for very careful design of the objectives and tasks of teams. In many companies influenced by Japanese management practices, individuals work in relatively autonomous self-managing teams, re-design work themselves to make tasks more meaningful and to improve quality of performance. Teams should be give tasks which are intrinsically interesting, but should also be given considerable autonomy in modifying task objectives to ensure that team's goals help to maintain overall motivation.

The research also indicates that while individual evaluation is given sufficient importance, team evaluation and appraisal is not given adequate attention in Indian organisations. For the same reason that it is important for individuals to have clear goals and performance feedback, so too is it important for the team as a whole to have clear group goals with performance feedback.

Teams are much more responsive to leader interventions at the beginning of their life, or when they reach a natural break in their work, or when the product has been produced or a performance period has ended.

Another question which confronts the HR department is that of seeking external intervention in getting on with changing its way of work. Outside consultants are useful where team members and the team leaders are inexperienced or apprehensive in dealing with group processes. A consultant can also be helpful when the team members are unhappy about speaking up, particularly if their leader is involved, where there is unresolved conflict or apathy in the team.

Some additional aspects which have emerged include the fact that armed forces response has been different from the civil sector (public and private sector) in the questions such as: has the organisation ever organised team intervention sessions, has a failure in the team resulted in an external intervention consultant's involvement, whether external intervention was appreciated within the team and on the issue of out sourcing team requirements.

The main reason for this is due to the fact that Armed forces do not generally out source their training needs nor do they employ external consultant for intervention. However in the interview it emerges that they regularly send selected employees for training to institutes of repute like IITs, IIMs, IISC etc where they are trained. Once they are back into the organisation, they infuse modern ideas into the organisation including OD practises and they also are utilised as interventionists as and when required.