The Science of Team Building

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Team Building

Beaman et al. 1979; Diener et al., 1976
- 25% of ants work outside the nest
- Foraging ants (bring food back to nest)
- Patrolling ants (indicate where foragers should go)
- Nest maintenance (keeping tunnels clear, etc)
- Midden work (waste-garbage detail)

(Beamam et al. 1979; Diener et al., 1976)
Team Building

Are different task groups interdependent?

- Matter to foragers what maintenance workers were doing?
- Matter to patrollers what the midden workers were doing?

(Beaman et al. 1979; Diener et al., 1976)
How do they know what to do?

-Ants use a network of ANTENNAL CONTACTS to figure out what to do

-It’s a pattern of contacts-the rate at which they meet ants of other tasks in deciding what to do

-There is no message they transmit, the PATTERN itself is the message

(Beaman et al. 1979; Diener et al., 1976)
Team Building

Development of the team:

How does experience affect the organization?

(Beaman et al. 1979; Diener et al., 1976)
Team Building

Does this relate to our organizations?

(Beaman et al. 1979; Diener et al., 1976)
Team Building

MIT’s Human Dynamics Laboratory

Used badges to “code” people

The badge would not collect:
- Facial expressions
- Words or content of language in any way
- Anything about skills or knowledge
Team Building

The badge would collect:

- Tone of voice (inflection)
- Body language (arm/hand movements, nods)
- Body position (face people as you talk to them?)
Team Building

What was found to be best indicator of a group's success?

- Patterns of communication accounted for about half of what indicated success
  - more than skills and intelligence and personality combined!
  - the energy and amount of face to face communication was over $1/3^{rd}$ of recipe
Research shows good teams have members that
- use gestures
- face each other when they talk
- They talk, listen and interrupt a lot
- Everyone talks and listens in roughly equal amounts
- face to face communication more than email
- Members connect with each other frequently in “side” conversations
Best team members are “charismatic connectors” -that
- Circulate actively
- engage in short but high energy conversations
- Communicate with everyone equally and connect teammates with one another
  (not extroverts necessarily)
Team Building

What are the main issues causing poor group performance?

They fail to:

- **Build trust** between team members (military-sports-business)
  - consistency
  - Individuals move towards teams mission, not individual goals
- Have a group “DNA” that has the right people in the right positions
  - Team members should compliment each others knowledge, skills, abilities (Diversity)
  - Have proper accountability
    - Not from management, but from other group members
- To have team centered language
  - Should be “we” centered instead of “me” centered
Team Building

What should leaders do to build a strong team?

- Actively encourage “even” participation
- Conduct more face to face meetings
- Support unstructured conversation (Side talk)
- Consider switching out team members or bringing in new blood where communication fails to improve
Understanding Motivation

We assume that pay increases performance
- Give too much weight to financial incentives
- May increase motivation, but will that translate to performance?

• In some cases, some pay may be worse than no pay
  • Changes the way you view the task and your purpose for doing it
  • If pay is less than you believe task is worth, you will be demotivated
  • If pay decreases over time, comparative analysis will demotivate you

• High levels of pay or pressure can increase desire but cause choking under pressure as automaticity in learned activities gets interrupted as you are prompted to think about your actions
• Pay decreases performance on creative problem solving tasks

Dan Ariely, Duke University
Brainstorming

Research into brainstorming shows that a group of people brainstorming individually will come up with more ideas and a wider variety of ideas than that same group brainstorming together.

- People naturally limit themselves in group settings
  - Less creative due to fear of embarrassment or repercussions

Dan Ariely, Duke University
Communication with Groups

Do members of groups “average” their views or tend to the extremes?

Group Polarization—Presence of others triggers Dominant Response

• The presence of others creates physiological arousal—energizes behavior. Happens in all animals, especially similar species—more similar = greater effect (Zajonc, R. 1965, 1980)

• Increased arousal enhances tendency to perform “Dominant Response”—that which is automatic.

• Performance and judgment quality depends on task
  • Easy task = dominant response usually successful
  • Unfamiliar or complex task = dominant response is often incorrect (Lambert et al., 2003; Perk & Catrambone, 2007)
Group Psychology

**Group Cohesiveness** - Forces that push members closer together

- More group related pride
- Engage in frequent and sometimes intense interactions
- Strong similarity features - similar backgrounds - homogenous

Breaking group norms is especially difficult in highly cohesive groups

**Conformity bias** - The power that pushes us to conform to our reference group.
**Communication with Groups**

**Diffusion of Responsibility - Deindividuation** - In a group, we feel that responsibility is shared by all, lessening our role. Also, if something were wrong, someone else would say something.

(Moscovici & Zavalloni, 1969; Myers & Lamm, 1976)
Group Psychology

Groupthink

GroupThink-The tendency to seek concurrence among group members creating a dangerous bias in decision making like a social disease (Janis, 1984)—more likely in:

- Highly cohesive groups that reject deviant opinions and outgroup views (“US” verus “THEM”)
- Groups with strong leader that lacks procedures to review decisions
- Groups with similar backgrounds
- Stressful situations
  - Under stress/ambiguity, urgency overrides accuracy and the reassuring support of other group members becomes highly desirable
Group Psychology
Groupthink

Research into NASA 1986 Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster

- VP of engineering objected to launch due to cold weather
  - Cause “O”-rings in rocket boosters to fail
- Needing unanimous vote to launch, manager told VP to “take off your engineer hat and put on your management hat”. (Framing)
- The pressure worked and the VP changed his vote-sealing the tragic fate of the Challenger and her crew
- Biased Sampling-those who ultimately made decision to launch we not aware of all relevant information about risk of low temperatures
Research into February 1, 2003 NASA Space Shuttle Columbia Disaster

- Team of engineers review video of foam breaking off and hitting left wing
  - May have damaged heat-shielding tiles
- Engineer Rodney Rocha makes more than 6 requests to seek images from spy satellites/powerful telescopes to review damage prior to reentry
- His manager says he “refuses to be a Chicken Little” and Flight Director sends chilling e-mail to Rocha saying further investigation is a “dead issue”.
- Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrates on reentry (Glanz & Schwartz, 2003)
Group Psychology
The Science Behind Groupthink

Reducing Groupthink

• Unspoken norms are more powerful than written codes
• Reduce group pressure to conform by encouraging criticism
• Leaders should NOT take a strong stand early in discussions
• Establish a norm of critical review—“second chance” meetings to reconsider
• Discourage the search for concurrence
• Consult with outsiders
The Effect of Rules and Sanctions

- Narrows our thinking processes
- Control the tendency to act only in our self interest (Self protection-Good Samaritan laws)
- The tendency to focus on the letter of the rule rather than the spirit.
  - Is tendency to interpret rules narrowly due to the characteristics of the rules themselves?
- Principles versus Rules based accounting standards
  - CFO’s less likely to make aggressive accounting choices under “Principles” based system (Agoglia, 2009)
  - CFO’s came to more similar conclusions under principles than rules based system
  - U.S. accounting standards have become so precise as to invite opportunistic interpretation by corporate executives (Agoglia, 2009)
- The mention of sanctions gives a different frame
• Environment that supports critical thinking
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Three kinds of Empathy

- **Cognitive Empathy** - The ability to see the world through another person's eyes
  - A sense of how another person's thinking works
  - Curiosity driven
  - Tells us more than just understanding their point of view
    - How best to communicate with them
    - What matters most to them
    - Their model of how the world works
    - Details down to what words to use or not to use

- **Emotional Empathy**
  - Empathic Concern
Three kinds of Empathy

• **Cognitive Empathy**

• **Emotional Empathy** - The ability to feel what another person feels “instantaneously” through tuning in to a stream of facial, vocal and other non-verbal signs-which is 85% of the impact of communication
  - Depends on turning on emotional signals to automatically “mirror” the other persons feelings
  - Voice tone, facial expressions, noticing a wince or jaw tightening

• **Empathic Concern**

(Beaman et al. 1979; Diener et al., 1976)
Three kinds of Empathy

• **Cognitive Empathy**

• **Emotional Empathy**

• **Empathic Concern** - This is a heart to heart connection not unlike parental love.
  • When a leader let’s people know he/she will support them
  • When people are able to take risks and express their opinion rather than maintain a “too safe” defensive posture.

(Beaman et al. 1979; Diener et al., 1976)