Skills for Team Work & Its Types

Introduction to Skills

According to Herringer (2002), competence can be defined as an individual’s ability to perform a task using own knowledge, skills, qualities and experience. On the basis of employee’s competencies, an organization can accomplish the desired goals (Herringer, 2002). According to Katz (1955) skills has been defined “an ability which can be acquired or developed, not necessarily inherent, and which is manifested in performance, not just on potential. He further stated three types of skills which are required by a manger (Katz, 1995). These skills are as mentioned below;

Human Skills: Various eminent scholars have corroborated that it is imperative for manager to get the things done from other effectively and efficiently. In addition to it, it's also essential to make all the subordinates work collectively and towards the common goal (Fulmer & Wagner, 1999).

Technical skills: For a manager, it is required to have proficiency in the specific field or the task. It aids to provide knowledge and credibility to persuade people to act in the desired way and do certain things in an effective and efficient manner.

Conceptual skills: The next most important skill required by a manager is to have enough knowledge about the organization as a whole. In other words, he must be aware of each and every aspect of the organization including mission, vision, goals and objectives, business strategies etc. Such type of skills is most important for the top level of managers who are accountable for developing the business policies, strategies, decision making and long term planning (Jones and Pound, 2008).

Each of these skills is necessary for the leader, but the amount to each skill varies from a position within the organizational hierarchy. In the contemporary age, good leaders are considered as an enabling force that helps people as well as the organization to develop and perform to achieve personal and business goal (Strange and Mumford, 2002). The traditional concept of leadership of being directing the organization from the top is nowadays inappropriate. According to some renowned authors, in the modern age, good leadership most importantly requires behaviour and attitude which characterize and associate with humanity. According to Greenleaf (1970), the concept of serving is elementary for leadership roles.

A good leader is expected to serve the firm and the people within it. Newer approaches to the leadership and the managerial skills have been built upon human, conceptual and technical skills, but are somewhat different (Greenleaf, 1996). According to Goleman (1998), there are three domains of leadership skills: technical, competencies that exhibit emotional intelligence (self awareness, empathy, motivation, self-regulation and social skills), cognitive abilities and technical skills. He further asserted that emotional intelligence as twice more important than other skills when applied to all levels within the hierarchy (Goleman, 1998).

As well, the study designed by Robbins and et.al. (2001) recognized four leadership skills domain have been identified namely technical, emotional intelligence, conceptual reasoning skills and industry knowledge (Robbins and et.al., 2001).

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Team working skills

Goal accomplishment is a collaborative activity i.e. organizational goals can only achieved by pooling the skills, knowledge and experience of different people and thus channelizing them in the direction that can further lead to success. Merely the people together may not necessarily ensure that they will operate effectively as a team. Effective team work does not happen automatically, it may be impeded by variety of issues such as misunderstanding, contradicting views of team members, poor communication, lack of organization and clarity of goals, inadequate participation, rivalry among members etc. Managers or leaders in order to develop high performing team are required to harness collective skills, efforts and energies of all the members (Barner, 2000).

Leaders must be aware of every tactics and strategies that can be employed with a view to make all team members work collectively as a team. He must facilitate necessary cooperation for the team to perform well. Leader must be also aware of information and the resources required accomplishing the task within the specified time frame. For developing the team work leaders must create supportive and open work environment, should promote mutual respect and trust, loyalty and cooperation as well as blame-free culture (Cottrell, 2010).

He must be able to clearly and specifically define the goals, targets, objectives that are intended to be achieved and allocating or delegating the task properly among team members. Leader is also required to be decisive i.e. able to make sound decisions without wavering or waffling. From the various leadership theories, it can be recapitulated that for leading the people within a team requires certain activities to be performed effectively such as ability providing strategic direction, planning, managing activities of all the team members, collective working. Leaders are accountable for managing the performance of all the team members so as to ensure the goal accomplishment (Herringer, 2002).

Effective communication

Stephen Covey, Leadership expert quoted “Seek first to understand, then be understood”. This rule is the key to sound interpersonal communicate and may lead to success if adhered productively. According to Covey, listening is the most important skill, especially when it comes to leadership. It refers to active listening as well as involving with others so as to overcome barriers to the proper communication by asking questions frequently, removing distraction and the like (Peter and Gitsman, 2009).

Handling criticism

Criticism is an attempt to persuade others to change in their behavior. Most of the people react defensively when receiving the criticism. They may blame others, act hurt, make excuses or may even deny. Leader must therefore ensure feedback to be constructive rather than destructive. Mark Twain stated that “In like criticism, but it should be my way”. No individual likes to receive criticism. The basic and the effective technique to handle conflicts and address criticism is to absorb criticism without being angry or defensive. This involves using the words that admit the other’s viewpoint or perception and acknowledge that it might be true in certain situations (Rawlings, 2000).

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Giving praise

Sometime just the praise, appreciation or positive action towards the members can have the most powerful impact on the group cohesiveness. While appreciating the team members, it is required to be specific, genuine and should be timely and immediate, delayed praise may lose its impact and thus gives the impression of formality. As well, praises should not be mixed with criticism as it will lead confusion in the mind of the individual who is praised (Smith and et.al, 2011).

Understanding behavioral style

Behavior refers to the action and reaction of an individual-verbal and non-verbal. Different people exhibits different type of behavior i.e. his reaction to the particular situation may varies from other reaction. Leader must understand the behavior of each team members and treat them accordingly. Understanding the behavioral style of other members will help the leader to interact and coordinate with other people efficiently (Amabile and Khaire, 2008).

Using persuasion and problem solving attitude instead of criticism: Constructive feedback can prove to be beneficial in enhancing the employee’s performance, continuous personal and professional development, reduction in stress, creation of psychological security, enhancing interpersonal relationship and thus lead to the development of ideal and value-driven organization culture which further helps in attaining the desired team goals (Pernick, 2001).

Two approaches can be undertaken by mangers with a view to give constructive criticism. Problem solving approach which emphasizes on solving the issue or problem by getting all the members involved, listening their views, opinion and depersonalizing the criticism. Second approach is of persuasion; this will show proper understanding of individual’s concern and stresses the favorable outcome (Fulmer & Wagner, 1999).

Networking: Networking just not refers to what you know, it also implies to who you know. It about developing mutually beneficial relationship and interacting with people in order to discuss topics that are of joint interest. Managing and leading organization is becoming more and more complex; competition is growing fierce. In such a business environment, creating interpersonal networks is significant in achieving the success (Wolff and Moser, 2009). Networking is the one of the top skills that large conglomerates are prioritizing as the basic development requirement with their managers. Meaningful and beneficial connections don’t happen overtime; planning activities and thereby anticipating next step leads in building the great relation. Laughing, mixing and socializing with people are just the fun, but it does not ensure effective business networks. Managers need to learn that how to involve and engage with others meaningfully (Langford, 2000). Additionally, networking is the optimal exchange of values whether it is information, talents or time. Manager need to be able to identify what needs to give and what is intended to get. For every leader, effective networking can consequently lead to faster accomplishment of goals and in the desired way.

Diversity: In today’s business organization, diversity has become the most important component. Every company is promoting diversity in its workplace so as to achieve the competitive advantage. That means employees of different skills, qualification, competencies, knowledge, cultural background, experience, age and gender are being recruited by the companies. Moreover, the employees also show divergence in the terms of attitude, views and behavior which some time may lead to conflicts, biasness and unrest among employees (Jago, 1982). Leaders and mangers are required to manage workplace diversity effectively and thus be able channelize effort, skills and contribution towards the goal realization. It is essential for leaders to manage all the employees in a better way and make them work collectively as the team (Eisenbeiss and et.al., 2008).

Stakeholder management: Every individual who is involved or gets affected by any activity of organization is defined as a stakeholder. Customers, employees, providers, investors are the major stakeholder for a company. An organization may fail if its manager is not able to identify who are the real stakeholders are and what impact they have on organization. Given the diversity in interest and backgrounds among stakeholders, broad and flexible skills set are required for their proper management which includes analytical skills, people skills, empathy as well as interpersonal skills (Pernick, 2001). Stakeholder effective management is very critical for an organization as the long term success of the firm greatly depends on them. In this regard, it is significant for manager or leader to manage the diverse interest of all stakeholders optimally to ensure business success.

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