Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

5. Describe team-building activities leaders can incorporate for better managing internal teams and interorganizational alliances.

7. Identify problem-solving approaches to resolving conflict between and within teams.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 6:
Bringing the Four Cs Together: Designing a Team-Building Program

Chapter 7:
Managing Conflict in the Team

Please use the Business Source Complete database in the CSU Online Library to read the following articles:


Unit Lesson

In this unit, we will discuss how to effectively design a team program while minimizing conflicts that inevitably occur on a continual basis. Members of a team must regularly engage in a self-examination process to gain awareness of their own deficiencies as well as to identify other symptoms or conditions that could hinder the team from being its best. Healthy teams understand that conflict will arise, yet actions must be taken to correct matters that will result in low morale of members or low performances.
A team-building program is based on the dynamics of the members of the team, including their experiences, skills, and interests. The first phase entails defining the purpose of the program and introducing each member to the process. If the team leader chooses, he or she can begin the process by (a) having an outside person interview each team member, (b) inviting an outside speaker to visit and talk about the significant role of teams within the organization, (c) gathering data on the level of team effectiveness, (d) discussing team competency in a meeting, or (e) allowing a manager from a different department to come in and discuss previous success stories (Dyer, Dyer, & Dyer, 2013).

The second phase of the team-building program is to create a climate for gathering and sharing data. Hopefully, members will become relaxed and feel comfortable sharing concerns openly. The next phase entails analyzing the data and developing a plan of action in order to solve the team’s identified concerns (Dyer et al., 2013).

Too often, ineffective teams are characterized by the following:

- domination by the leader,
- warring cliques,
- unequal use of resources,
- dysfunctional group procedures,
- a climate of fear,
- lack of alternatives to problems,
- restricted communications, or
- avoidance of differences.

These factors tend to prevent teams from working together to solve problems efficiently as a group. However, once problems are identified, information must be shared with each individual or group. Then, action plans must be established. Afterwards, follow up is critical, including one-on-one interviews and/or follow-up team meetings (Dyer et al., 2013).

One of the most common problems found in teams is the presence of disruptive conflict and hostility. Personality clashes, a violation of expectations, and complex attitudes generally create conflict in teams. At times, the manager can be the problem. It is difficult for most team members to address this type of issue. The team leader must be willing to step aside and question whether or not he or she is the problem (Dyer et al., 2013).
Diversity is also a common source of conflict. When diversity is not managed effectively, differences can split people apart, cause endless arguments and bickering, and result in bitter feelings, resentment, or unproductive work performances.

“In corporate America and higher education, diversity training has become a multibillion-dollar industry, with a wide variety of diversity summits, workshops, toolkits, books, training videos, e-learning programs, executive coaching sessions, and leadership academies” (Canas & Sondak, 2014, p. 3). Often we get swept away with the depth of our diversity conversations regarding race, religion and even sexual orientation. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is often simply referred to as ADA. The act provides some protection from discrimination based on a physical or mental impairment. In 2008, the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) broadened our view of disabilities. The new legislation incorporated less severe impairments and added a completely new category referred to as “major bodily functions, which included (but not limited to) functions of the immune system and cell growth” (Canas & Sondak, 2014, p. 249).

Sometimes, it is actually a problem team member that stirs the pot. Most leaders will find a way to transfer, reassign, or even fire this type of member. Consequently, in some cases, the following actions have proven successful: (a) direct confrontation between the leader and the problem person, (b) confrontation by the group, (c) special responsibility granted, (d) limited participation given, or (e) an external assignment requested.

All team leaders must become cognizant of effective ways to overcome unhealthy conflict. Teams can reduce confusion and conflict by opting to engage in role clarification or the start-stop-continue exercise. By implementing team-building strategies, team leaders will witness improved team performances and more satisfied members.

Ignoring, smoothing, or forcing behaviors are not suggested for quality team-building efforts. Recognizing the value of each member as a key piece of the puzzle creates a more unified approach to remaining cohesive in completing milestones and accomplishing predetermined tasks and deadlines with relief and gratification (Dyer et al., 2013).

References

