WBS 5.6 Lessons Learned, Team Building

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Abstract

Team build involves more than organization, asset and talent acquisition; sometimes it mean building individuals. Allowing members to isolate or work around a team member for what every reason may negatively affect the teams overall performance. It can be easier to just do someone else work for them when they fail to meet the standard. If done the team loses synergy an become a group of individuals.

One of this week's discussion topics was the nature of Virtual Teams. The prospective implementing a virtual team is exciting unless you have communications issues. Many communications factors that can affect the outcome of working within a group are compounded within a virtual team structure. First, there is the problem of the lack of communication, then the miss communications and lastly the time lag between the sender and feedback.

Lack of Communication

In a virtual setting communication is hampered by not having the physical interaction. No verbal communications which we have all become accustomed to do not exist. If team members realize this they can compensate putting greater effort into other forms of communication but without that, other team members are left to develop their own ideas of what messages are being sent. Sometimes a time delay in communication can be just as bad.

When there is little communication people often try to read between the lines. Author Shannon L Alder said, "The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't being said. The art of reading between the lines is a lifelong quest of the wise." (as cited in Quotes About Lack of Communication) Lifelong skills development tends to be fraught with as much failure as success. In a virtual team this can be the difference between a dynamic self-actuating teams or the Keystone Cops; everyone running around, randomly trying to accomplish something but constantly running into, over and around problems never getting anything done.

Miscommunication

Without nonverbal communications it's easier to misunderstand the earnest nature of a person's communication. As a team member submits a product in an actual team, you can glean from their presentation if they felt they put for a good effort or not, even if the product is subpar.

Most people don't mind helping those who are trying. But when its obvious little effort is being employed and the team is suffering for it, tension will mount.

In virtual teams the time between the initial sending of a message and the expected feedback can also cause issues. People tend to perceive things negatively. "Negativity bias and the Prospect Theory advances the idea that people are more likely to choose things based on their need to avoid negative experiences, rather than their desire to get positive experiences."(Williams, 2014) In the virtual team communications process this can mean either a person internalizes that the rest of the team doesn't see the significance in their communication or that there is a conflict in what is being communicated. Without nonverbal communication or timely feedback it's difficult to know if your message was received or how your message was received.

Delayed Communication

The means of communication in virtual teams is less important than how often we communicate. Every effort needs to be made to stay in contact regardless of the medium used to communicate. If a message is sent and the feedback shortly follows it is easy to confirm the proper message was received. Delays can be critical, think if the initial communication was to correct a safety task. Without knowing if the steps were followed lives could be at risk. That maybe a little extreme but in business life or death of a business can be simply missing the timing on a roll out.

Conclusion

This week's lessons learned come in part from working within the structure of the virtual during the course. The communications difficulties that are part of the virtual team experience make me greater appreciate the need to be timely in my communications and feedback.

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