Dealing with People problem at work

SAMPLE

Introduction

People problems are common issues when working closely with people either in families or at workplace. According to Dr. Godwin, people problems are inevitable in any close relationship. It is a problem for organisations to effectively manage their workforce and enhance the performance of employees as well as the organisation as a whole (Godwin, 2011). Often it is observed that in order to manage the problems, people engages in even more problems. Conflict arises from the attempt of solving these people problems (Kreitner, 2003).

In this report, the aim is to unveil a recent people problem that hinders the operational efficiency of an organisation. The report comprises of definition of the problem, analysis of the problem stating the methods to analyse and the formulation of the problem and providing alternative solution to the problem with determination of the players or actors of the problem and the different perspectives of different players on the problem. The report is deemed to contribute towards both academic and managerial perspectives with its rational approach to the current problem.

Definition of the problem

The people problem that would be defined in this section is the issue of having a difficult person in a work team. The main challenge faced by social organisations in the present global scenario is the problem to manage teamwork where people from different nationalities, religion and ethnic origin are assembled to form a team (Atkinson, 2011). In this regards, if any difficult person forms a part of a team, it not only hampers team work due to the effort to manage the person and motivate them but also adversely impacts the overall performance of the organisation.

As per the proverb says, "Two is more than one", organisations are increasingly resorting to teamwork for accomplishing diverse tasks. They are encouraging teamwork spirit in various functional departments as well as in different projects (Jones & Mathew, 2009). Hence, a difficult person in a team may impact the coordination among the team members and hinder the level of motivation and satisfaction of the employees in the team as well as outside the team.

Difficult person here refers to an employee or a team member who lacks management focus and inefficient to cope up with the dynamic work environment. These are people who do not possess adequate interpersonal skills, communication skills and problem-solving skills (Heliriegel, Slocum, & Woodman, 1998). Difficult people are not rude people but they are just hard to get along in a team.

It is common to come across people at workplace who are not ready to collaborate with people around them to achieve a common objective, do not turn up at management meetings on time, burdens other people with tasks which they are responsible of and always sticks strongly to their views and opinions (Chua, 2012). They are the person who frustrates other team members and cannot be trained according to the organisational norms and needs thorough counselling.

Analysing the problem

When a difficult person is included in a team, other members in the team often find it difficult to interact with the person and share their views and objectives with him/her for accomplishing a task. Difficult people are not always rude or abusive but they prohibits effective implementation of a projects processes which further leads to adversely impacts the costs, time and effort of the project or the organisation as a whole.

In much of the small software development companies, the major cause of failure is not the lack of knowledge regarding the information technology but it is the human factor that interrupts their functioning. Gerald Weinberg, who has launched various books on technology of programming, commented that **"no matter what they tell you, it's always a people problem."** (Atwood, 2008)

It is necessary to mitigate such problems by understanding the issues driving the attitude and behaviour of the difficult person in a team. It is not a plausible solution to escape from the difficult person or avoid him/her as it is not feasible for any member to avoid every people who has an opposing opinion or is difficult in a team.

In order to solve the problems related to the people of the organisation, it is primarily essential to analyse the causing factors behind it. The methods to analyse the problems and the formulation of the problem has been summarised in the below paragraphs.

Methods to analyse the problem

It is necessary for the management of any organisation to primarily analyse the elements of "difficult behaviour". In simple words, it can be said that the management needs to be aware of the team outcomes which is a consequence of inclusion of a difficult person in a team and hence in order to identify a difficult person in a team or organisation, the management or a team should decide on the behavioural attributes of a difficult person (Jones & Mathew, 2009). When it is known team members are able to identify the difficult person in the team. For analysing the problem, the organisation or team can track the performance of each employee and undertake performance appraisal by deploying the method of 360-degree appraisal. In this method of performance appraisal, a person's behavioural attributes as well as work performance can be traced from the peers, colleagues at workplace as well as family members (Lobel, 2003).

The organisation can also identify the difficult person in the organisation with the help of setting up grievance boxes in every corner of the organisation. The team members are likely to have grievance on a specific person who prevents the team performance and frustrate others in a team. When anonymous complaints are submitted in a grievance box against a specific person, the management can take corrective measures to deal with the person (Lobel, 2003).

Formulation of the problem

When a team comes across a difficult person or more commonly said to be a problem person, the team has to decide on the nature of the concern. It is critical to the decision of dealing with the problem, to determine nature of the concern to be technical, cultural, political, single incident or on-going. Deciding on the tactics to deal with it also requires to analyse whether the determinants of the problem is internal to the person or external to the individual that may be causing the problem.

It is significant to establish a causal relationship between the behaviours and the driving factors to understand the problem in a better way and deal with the same effectively. Generally, the internal factors which are considered to result in a difficult person can be summarised as (Mullins, 2005):

- Inferiority complex and lacking self-confidence: Inferiority complex and lack of self-confidence may prohibit a person from collaborating with other team members freely and perform their duties effectively.

- Superiority complex: Superiority complex in a person leads to strength of their opinion and not accepting the norms and regulations of the team or the organisation. The superiority complex of the person prevents him/her from mixing with people whom they consider inferior.

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- Unfriendly attitude: The team members possess different personality traits. Some of them may possess an unfriendly attitude towards the team members which may frustrate others.

- Lack of interest in the work: Lack of interest in the work may turn a person to a problem person. A person who does not find any interest in his/her work or the team he/she is placed in, the person tends not to adapt with the dynamic organisational environment, coordinate with the team members and perform the tasks they are responsible for.

The external factors that may drive a person to become a difficult person can be summarised as below (Mullins, 2005):

- Family pressures: Pressure of family sometimes disturbs the work life balance of a person leading to problems in the workplace.

- Work pressure: High work pressure may lead to annoyance in an employee which may further impact the team performance as a whole.

- Bad behaviour of the team members

- Uneven work distribution among the team members

Solution to the problem

Proposed courses of action

The proposed courses of action to deal with such people problem of difficult people in a work team comprises of three steps. These are as follows (Heliriegel, Slocum, & Woodman, 1998):

- **Step 1**: The first and foremost strategy to deal with the problem is to deal with it face-to face and on a one-to-one basis. The team leader may initiate conversation with the problem person by praising him/her primarily and then sharing similar difficult situation faced by the leader previously (Carter, 2004). Then the leader may

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discuss the impacts of such problems on the team performance and explain the advantages of a change in the behaviour. Encouraging them to change their attitude towards work and team members.

- **Step 2**: If the above strategy to resolve the issue does not work, the team leader may consider discussing the problems with the management or the supervisor and in case of a project to the project sponsor. This strategy is undertaken especially when the difficult person is influenced by any other factors out of the workplace; it may be the personal or family matters. In this case, the project sponsor or the supervisor may refer this problem to some other experienced and competent person who can resolve the issue effectively. Hence, the role of an independent counsellor becomes prominent.

- **Step 3**: If the issue still persists in the organisation even after the two steps to resolve it, the organisation or the management needs to consider some other tactics to deal with the problem. In this situation, the difficult person is considered not to be a team player and there exists a clash of personality and goals of the person and the project/team (Kreitner, 2003). The person is then transferred to other project or team where the difficult person can cope up well.

Players/actors of the problem

The players or actors in the process of dealing with such problem comprise of the difficult person himself/herself, the team members, the management or the project sponsor and the counsellor. Even though in a sequential way, yet all the players have certain role in resolving the issue.

Different perspective of different players

These players or actors have different role as well as different perspective on the problem. The diverse perspectives of the different players can be summarised as below (Kreitner, 2003):

- **Difficult/problem person**: Difficult people are highly aware or totally unaware of the problems they create in the team or for the team members based on their intention. When an attempt is made to resolve the issue, the difficult person may feel pressurised if the leader or counsellor is not tactful. Sometimes, based on the attempt, the difficult person may gain confidence and undergo a change of behaviour.

- **Team members**: The team members encounter loss of performance as well as motivation for a single difficult person in a team. Hence, when an attempt is made to resolve the issue, team members support it whole-heartedly. They make attempt to encourage the difficult person to collaborate with them.

- **Management/ Project sponsor**: It is the project sponsor who suffers the financial losses due to a single difficult problem hampering the productivity. If the person is efficient enough, the project sponsor tends to put effort in changing their behaviour and retain them but if not they do not waste their money and efforts on the difficult person.

- **Counsellor**: Counsellor is optionally called for to resolve an issue when it is not mitigated in the first attempt. The counsellor requires being impartial and focused on the issue. Sometimes, the counsellor observes this problem as a case of psychological disorder and attempts to mitigate it by holding counselling sessions.

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