



International Journal of Research Publications

Assertive Communication Training Intervention Design to Improve Effectivity of Commercial Division Team in X Company

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Abstract

This study was aimed to improve team effectivity by giving assertive communication training to the commercial division. The type of this study was action research. The samples were obtained using purposive sampling technique due to specific criteria given for sampling. Sample size in this study was 9 commercial division employees. Team effectivity was measured using questionnaire, interview, and observation. The tool used to collect data was team effectivity questionnaire of "Five dysfunctions of a team" from Lencioni (2002) which comprised of 38 items consisted of five characteristics, i.e. trust, conflict, commitment, accountability and result, with validity and reliability value of α 0.894, which means that all items were reliable in predicting criteria. Data analysis technique used to determine training needs was Microsoft Excel program adjusted to calculation from Lencioni. The results showed that trust and accountability aspects were in medium category, whereas conflict, commitment, and result aspects were in high category. These results indicated that trust and accountability should be developed through assertive communication training. This study is expected to be a consideration for further studies.

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Keywords: Training, assertive communication, team effectivity, commercial

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1. INTRODUCTION

Competition in the business field, especially retail, keep seizing the attention of the community, including X Company which is the biggest store network in Indonesia engaged in motorcycle parts with tires as its main product. This competition requires constant changes in product development according to community needs. One of the division with task and responsibility in regulating and observing product development, identifying new market opportunities, determining optimum price to balance profit and customer satisfaction, and directing marketing activities is the commercial division.

Product development requires effective teamwork to achieve company goal and target. Mulyana (2007) stated that a team is a group of people sharing a common goal who interacts with one another to achieve said goal, knowing each other, and view each other as a part of the group. Lencioni (2002) proposed that not finance, strategy, or technology which provide competitive superiority, but teamwork. In performing its function, teamwork is not free of problems that can hinder the achievement of team goal. Problem solving requires each team member to express opinions and give ideas toward solving their problems.

This was in line with a pilot observation, in which lack of communication interaction between team members, including careful response when asked for opinion regarding peer performance assessment. A survey conducted by Sharon and Sylvia (2000) revealed 3 important characteristics in determining effective teamwork, i.e. can be reviewed from organization structure, self-contribution and teamwork process. A team is viewed as a three-stage system, which uses resources (input), internal process maintenance (throughput) and produce certain products (output).

Team process describes an interaction aspect and organization pattern which changes input to output. Characteristics of team process include coordination, communication, cohesion, decision making, conflict management, social relationship and performance feedback. Communication involved information exchange which can be observed and interaction of power, attitude, and value (Loxley, 1997). An effective team requires reliable communication process, clear responsibility and appropriate delegation (Husting, 1996). Individuals should often listen to each other and collaborated to develop knowledge which can improve communication. Joint decision making and formal and informal exchange can also improve communication (Headrick et al. 1998).

Communication process in an organization is one of the defining factors in achieving effective organization. Through organization. Information, idea and experience exchange occurs. Dynamic communication process can lead to several problems which can affect organization achievement, especially the rise of misunderstanding and conflict. A team group or working team requires communication for good teamwork in achieving company target. The commercial division should repair and develop any problems occurred, so that they can continue their tasks and responsibilities properly and effectively. The aim of this study was to improve team effectivity in commercial division with the result of training intervention design modified according to team needs, which resulted in good, unhindered work.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The population in this study was Commercial division employees in X company. The sample size in this study was 9 people. Sampling technique used was purposive sampling. According to Sugiyono (2013), purposive sampling is a sampling technique of data resources with certain considerations. The considerations include the subjects should be involved in commercial division, both male and female with minimum work experience of 6 months. The type of this study was action research, which is a process in finding solution from real problems faced by an organization by collaborating with clients in collecting data, obtaining feedback from collected data and develop planning for change according to problems faced (Smither, Houston & McIntire, 1996).

Data collection method used in this study was questionnaire, interview, observation and archive. The questionnaire used in this study used team effectivity scale, i.e. five “dysfunctions of a team”, with 38 items consisted of 5 dimensions, trust, conflict, commitment, accountability, and result. Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel program modified with the calculation of Lencioni. To determine the scoring of questionnaire results and validity and reliability test of the questionnaire, the SPSS 22.0 program for windows was used. The measurement tool used passed the validity and reliability test with a score of 0.894, which means all items were valid in predicting criteria and reliable. This scale was used to determine team effectivity, whether there was any problem occurring in the communication division.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Subject	TRUST	CONFLICT	COMMITMENT	ACCOUNTABILITY	RESULT
1	3.87	4.38	4.43	3.71	4.25
2	4.37	5.00	4.57	4.14	4.50
3	4	3.50	3.57	3.43	3.38
4	4	3.88	4.00	3.57	4.25
5	3.50	3.88	3.43	3.43	3.75
6	3.00	4.00	3.71	3.43	3.50
7	3.62	4.13	4.00	3.71	4.75
8	3.37	4.00	4.00	3.86	3.75
9	3.87	4.38	4.00	3.29	3.63
Mean per aspect	3.73	4.12	3.96	3.61	3.97
Conclusion	Medium	High	High	Medium	High

According to the results of questionnaire, the commercial division achieved medium result in trust and accountability, and high in conflict, commitment, and result. It can be seen that trust did not weaken conflict, commitment and result, but affecting accountability.

The results of interview with several employees gave information that the team members lack good interaction, in which each member tend to perform their own task without involving other members due to fear of mistakes, and different responsibilities between team members. Lack of interaction between team

members causes lack of trust. Difficulties or doubt in expressing opinion and team member character assessing also clearly described by questions given, such as “whether the information they gave will be forwarded to their superiors or not”.

The results of observation revealed that the team members lack interaction during work due to different task and responsibilities, which affect the intensity of communication. Doubt in expressing opinion can also be seen from reluctant body movement in expressing opinion, such as allowing the others to speak first, or thinking carefully before talking. According to the results, in order to improve the problems, an intervention design in the form of assertive communication training was required for the commercial division, in which will affect team performance in order to achieve company goal.

Weiner, et al. (2003) explained that general team effectivity is known in various aspects, with emphasize in internal (member satisfaction, team worthiness) and external aspect (productivity, performance), whereas according to Torrington, Hall, and Taylor (2005), team effectivity depends on the goal owned and agreed upon by the team, teamwork method and scenes whereas team members can be open and honest in expressing opinion regarding the work they do and uses conflict constructively. To achieve team goal or objective, a good teamwork is required, and this requires good communication between team members. Harter, Schmidt & Hayes (2002) stated that assertive behavior is a way to self-express with straightforward and clear communication, expressing point of view with polite behavior and avoiding the use of sentences with negative connotations. Assertive behavior can support individuals in solving problems, resolving team conflicts, and preventing individual depression (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Alberti & Emmons (2002) also stated that assertive behavior contains a comfortable feeling, and train individuals in maintaining the right opinion. Assertive behavior training help the individuals to openly behave assertively, honest to themselves and others, able to listen to opinions and complaints of others, expressing understanding to someone in trouble, can make decisions during difficult situations, can act firm, bold in speaking and can position themselves in front of others (Wills & Daisley, 1995). This was in line with a study conducted by Townsend (2009), whereas an impact of assertive behavior training includes the ability to give idea to the participants to solve conflicts, overcoming difficult situations, and share decisions and improve comfortability.

The results of Ninawati (2012) revealed that there was a correlation between assertive behavior and cooperative skills, in which higher assertive behavior, higher cooperative skills, and otherwise. Similar result was expressed by Matthew & Aleksander (2006) who stated that critical team member assertiveness in expressing opinion gave an effect on team performance and work satisfaction. Critical and assertive team members can trigger the development of specialization, credibility, and coordination between team members. In other words, a team can ascertain that resources, information, and special knowledge flow efficiently and effectively between the center and various specialization satellites. Therefore, critical team member significantly increased team effectivity.

The intervention design given to the commercial division was assertive communication training with the aim of improving assertive behavior between team members to create effective teamwork in the commercial division. Assertive communication training was given within two days (morning and afternoon sessions). The procedure of assertive communication training consisted of several stages as follows:

Pretest: The participants were given questionnaire regarding the training that will be given with the aim to determine their knowledge and understanding regarding assertive communication training before the training is given.

First material: An explanation of the basic concept of communication consisting of understanding, process and hindrance in communication with the aim for the participants to be able to understand and explain understanding, process and hindrances in communication process related to tasks and responsibilities in work.

Second material: An explanation of assertive communication with basic materials and characteristics of assertive behavior. The method used was lecture and question and answers to improve participants' understanding on the basic and characteristics of assertive behavior.

Third material: An explanation of assertive behavior techniques and their implementations using techniques of mixed feelings statements, emphatic, confrontative and "I" language statements. The goal was for participants to further understand assertive behavior in its self-implementation and implementation to other team members and organization related to problems occurring in tasks and responsibilities.

Posttest: The participants were given the same questionnaire from pretest in order to determine knowledge and understanding of participants related to assertive communication training after the training was given.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Team performance improvement is needed by every employees in a division or a working team. Team effectivity to achieve goal or team objective is coordinatively performed by each team members, such as support given by each members to others. The commercial division would like to understand whether their team effectivity was considered good or still require improvement to properly achieve company goal or target.

The assessment results revealed two things that should be improved by the commercial division, which were trust and accountability. This was in accordance to the results of interview and observation, whereas while working, team members tend to focus with their own work without the involvement of others due to different tasks and responsibilities between team members. Lack of interaction between team members caused lack of trust, which had an impact on tendency to avoid responsibility in involvement or expressing opinions toward other team members regarding act or behavior, both positive and negative for overall good of the team. Therefore, to fix and improve these, an assertive communication training intervention design was created for the commercial division.

5. During questionnaire filling, the author should accompany the participants throughout the time in order to clearly explain any questions to avoid any bias and the questionnaire can directly be returned to the author. An intervention in the form of training can be conducted in the morning and adjusted to team working hours so to not hinder work. The coach that would be giving the training should be filled by someone with experience in the field. Team effectivity measurement should be implemented to other divisions to improve team performance to achieve company goal.

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