

Introduction:

This paper will suggest some possible solutions for reducing personality conflicts that may inhibit the most efficient and effective functioning of the Abu Dhabi Project. The scope of this paper will include matters that affect the team's productivity, including staff morale and group dynamics, and will suggest methods for improving individual and team cooperation. Included will be discussion of the following issues:

1. Criteria used by Franklin Equipment, Ltd. to assign managers to project teams - efficiencies and problems caused by the selection criteria.
2. Importance of project team members working well together on international projects.
3. Dilemma faced by the facilitator, Mr. Jobe.
4. Recommendations for the Project Manager, Mr. Gatenby.

Situation Summary:

Because of a very hostile relationship between two of the project team members, efficiency of the project may be jeopardized. The persons involved have complementary skills that are critical to the project, yet they do not communicate well or share information. They do not have a "group identity", do not demonstrate respect to each other, and are not committed to helping each other. Deficiencies in training, monitoring and leadership are the probable causes of poor communication, ultimately degrading the individuals' morale and willingness to cooperate on current and future projects. Such differences are likely to manifest themselves in the following manner:

- Inability to collaborate to solve project issues.
- Reluctance to honestly discuss mistakes, weaknesses or needs for help.
- Inability to engage in unfiltered, passionate debate about key issues - inferior decisions may be the result.
- Unwillingness commit to decisions, creating an environment where ambiguity prevails.
- Inability of other team members to fully engage.

Without the implementation of interpersonal, team and leadership training, coupled with new procedures and operating methods, the project team may operate at sub-par levels.

Discussion:

1. Criteria used by FEL to assign managers to project teams:
 - a. Efficiencies
 - Using time availability as a criterion for assigning persons to a project is a very economical use of resources. Avoiding conflicts between projects that may compete for an individual's time is particularly important with international projects, since time zone differences may require team members to work during hours that would create conflicts with domestic engagements.
 - b. Problems
 - By assigning individuals to projects based in large part on their availability FEL has failed to recognize that it is essential to efficient project accomplishment for project team members to work well

together as a unit. A highly effective and efficient team will include individuals who can contribute to the project as a team member, regardless of personal differences.

2. Importance of project team members working well together on international projects such as Project Abu Dhabi:

- A major goal of the project is to build a culture of collaboration that will last after the project is completed. A major problem in international projects is that few of the team will understand all of the cultural and political sensitivities, so a heightened awareness of the need for cooperation and communication among team members is critical.
- If there is one thing that is true of international projects, it is that there must be a high level of rapport between members of the project team, as well as with the client entity. Moreover, high levels of morale and rapport lead to commitment and dedication—key factors for success.

3. Dilemma that the facilitator, Mr. Jobe, faces:

- Mr. Perry currently has no motivation to cooperate with Mr. Rankin; rather, as it now stands, Perry is induced to undermine Rankin, so may end up resisting the project results in hopes that Rankin will be fired.

4. Recommendations Mr. Jobe should make to Mr. Gatenby.

- Jobe can greatly assist Mr. Gatenby, both as a mentor of team-building skills and, if necessary, as an intermediary in discussions between the antagonists. Jobe can remind Gatenby that people are inspired by

what is meaningful to them personally, so the following should be conveyed to the Perry and Rankin:

- Project success depends on the interdependent contribution of both, requiring a high degree of collaboration. Doing so will ensure that everyone involved stands to win with this project; conversely, that both stand to lose their jobs in the event their personal differences cause project disruptions. The success of the group is dependent upon each individual, so by helping each other they can share the joy of achievement or the pain of not meeting goals.
- Additional recommendations Jobe can make to Gatenby include:
 - Get Perry and Rankin to know each other; face their conflicts directly with each other, working through their respective issues with the goal of resolving the problem. Foster team bonding; plan team morale-boosting events and assignments together. Decide on a set of common goals. Complement one another.
 - Establish some ground rules, e.g., code of cooperation that outlines acceptable means of interaction, conduct, and performance. Have all team members develop and sign an agreement of cooperation and performance expectations, to include:
 - Clear definition of roles, responsibilities and expectations
 - Ownership of tasks

- Adoption of proactive approach
 - Methods for handling problems and issues
 - Measurements
 - Methods for Communication (both internally and with the international client)
- Help the team members anticipate possible dysfunctional behaviors and brainstorm about what to do if these should occur.
 - Set up an oversight process to identify early warning signs of trouble.
 - Periodically monitor progress and effectiveness before problems escalate.
 - Provide assessments of teams and team members with feedback.
 - Build both individual and collaborative responsibility (accountability) into the grading process.
 - Produce a competition with mutual incentives & goals that reward collaboration & punish dysfunctional behavior that conflicts with the project.
 - During team meetings, all members - including Perry & Rankin - discuss one or more contributions their mutual efforts have made toward accomplishing their shared project goals.
 - Emphasize areas of agreement.

- Recognize victories & contributions.
- Ensure everyone feels part of successfully achieving goals and milestones.
- Ask team members to review or describe the goals for the team.
- Ask team members to review their code of cooperation and explore what items are not being followed.
- Some resolution techniques the team can employ include:
 - Group discusses the issue and how it affects the project.
 - Team members suggest strategies to address the issue.
 - Openly confront the difference or discuss where the difficulty lies. As a group, define the issue (not the person) at hand. Use constructive feedback.
 - Discuss where the project is now and where it could be if the issue were resolved.
 - Decide on solutions that will be employed to address the problem.
- Provide additional staff training toward working effectively as a team member and resolving interpersonal conflicts
- As a last resort, Gatenby should use his authority to order the warring parties back to work, either with or without compromise, reminding them that both stand to lose their jobs in the event that their differences continue to jeopardize the project.

Conclusion:

Accomplishing each of the above objectives will entail the implementation of several measurable tasks. A crucial success factor will be to improve the morale, team unity, and consequently the productivity, of the employees. As suggested in a recent article in Entrepreneur magazine (Javitch, 2005), some proven methods for increasing employee collaboration include setting measurable goals, implementing recognition and incentive programs with rewards for superior performance against goals, thereby creating a sense of ownership and pride in the job. Achieving the objectives will allow team members to differ at times, yet to do so in a collegial and productive manner, and will also provide management with improved methods for evaluating and improving the project's performance toward meeting its strategic objectives, as well as laying a solid foundation for accommodating FEL's future growth into the international arena.

References:

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