Role of Building Trust in Virtual Teams: Analytical Essay

The advantages of virtual teams:

Retention of employees –Telework is considered as the popular perk at the workplace. It attracts computer-savvy employees. There are a lot of people how they would like to work from home.

Increased productivity – Improves work productivity since employees experience less stress and eliminating travel and allowing some flexibility in working hours.

Environmental and Financial Benefits- From the chapter-1 Cisco system, employees worldwide reduced greenhouse emissions by working telework. Lower office costs by reducing office spaces but also employees save a couple of dollars from travel expenses.

Factors required for virtual teams to be successful- The supervisors should be great leaders and motivating their team by effective communication between members to develop trust. The trust is built by providing useful feedback, responding to emails and other correspondence. Second, virtual teams should have different types of communication and choose what fits for them. For example, some parts of the world have access to new communication technology such as LAN for video conferencing and some areas have WAN. Third, the virtual team needs structure. The supervisors should provide a virtual team with weekly goals, their roles and responsibility, clear company objectives and documented work process. Virtual team members should meet face to face in the team developmental process.

The disadvantages of virtual teams:

Lack of face to face communication –Virtual teams lack everyday non-verbal communication. As defined in chapter one, 'organizations are defined as a group of people who work interdependently towards some purpose. People work interdependently only when they can communicate with each other'. Communication quantity is vital for virtual teams to achieve their goals together by establishing trust and sharing a common ground. Virtual team members lack the everyday social interactions with colleagues and supervisors, thus making them feel isolated and out of the loop with any updates within the workplace, for example, the birth of a child, new hires, having lunch. Virtual team members who feel isolated and detached are less productive and less likely to contribute towards the team, which brings down the overall team effectiveness.

Lack of Trust - trust requires constant face-to-face interaction, the one activity the virtual form eliminates. Trust is built on the responses from the person, virtual team members work from different locations were the reactions are not immediate or not working due to the time differences causes distrust within members. Virtual team members develop trust based on performance.

Cultural Clashes – The language barrier could be a problem in the virtual team since there are different languages spoken from different parts of the world.

When team members speak different languages, they have trouble communicating. People from different cultures misunderstand each other's behaviors.

For example, from chapter two, there is a difference in values across cultures when an Australian manager acquired the firm in India. Where the manager suggested the team share ideas on how to complete the project, whereas the people from India were waiting when he was going to tell them what the plan was. This example shows how there are different expectations and values different from the world.

Behaviors that individual team members can engage in that positively impact overall team effectiveness.

Teams are a group of individuals working together to achieve a common predefined goal. The traditional teams are also known as conventional or co-located, or collocated teams, consist of individuals working in physical proximity, and the virtual teams are refers to a group of individuals who is separated by physical distance but are united by shared goals.

The virtual teams consist of talents across geographies, cultures and time zones.

These interactions amongst the members of a virtual team are mediated by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools.

Both traditional and virtual teams go through these five stages of Bruce Tuckman's model of team development, the dynamics experienced by members of virtual teams are more complex. This is primarily since members of the virtual team relies solely on electronic communication and collaboration technology to facilitate interactions.

Also, cultural boundaries and time zones differences add a complex nature.

The Virtual-teams challenges experienced by a traditional team.

Some of these fundamental differences are between traditional and virtual teams are as follows.

Selection of Team Members - In the case of traditional teams, members are selected mainly based on their functional skills. But performing in a virtual team environment, it's not easy for everyone.

Lack of face-to-face interactions and social focus- In a virtual team settings might lead to isolation and loneliness.

It calls for managing ambiguity, exceptional time, proactive networking, work discipline and management, abilities to learn new technologies.

By having the ability to collaborate functional and across cultural .

In the selection of a virtual teams, there is a need to look into these core competencies, in addition to the necessary functional skills.

Organization Structures Compared to the traditional teams, virtual teams support flatter organization structure with faint lines of authority and hierarchies.

This is also required to survive in a hyper-competitive market, which deliver results faster and encourage creativity - which is the primary objective for forming a virtual team.

Leadership Style - In a virtual team setting, managers cannot physically control the day-to-day activities and monitor each team members' businesses.

We need to delegate little more as compared to traditional teams.

This command and control leadership style of years is giving way to the more democratic and coaching style of today.

Knowledge Exchange & Decision-taking - Many times in traditional teams, information is being exchanged during informal discussions. But in the case of virtual teams, members have limited or no easy access to these data.

Hence, there is a need for frequent updates on project status and building a shared database to provide all the vital information to the team. Considering the time zone differences in the global virtual teams, it becomes challenging to schedule meetings.

Thus, in the case of virtual teams, many times, a delay occurs in fixing a problem or reaching a consensus. In contrast, in traditional groups, meetings can be called at any time of the day can result in quick decisions and problem-solving.

Relationship Building is when traditional team members meet in the workplace every day, the intention is developing close social ties.

They strike a rapport with each other when they interacts face-to-face. In the virtual team, the interactions tend to be more task focused. Further, a lack of verbal cues and gestures in a virtual setting does not allow any scope for a personal touch in communications.

Psychological Contract is the foundation of a psychological contract is more fragile in the virtual environment. Smaller instances of misunderstanding or gaps in communication can result in a violation of the subconscious agreement, which has adverse effects on the teams effectiveness.

Virtual teams also experience difficulties in building trust, commitment and cohesion amongst members.

Considering the challenges posed by the virtual teams, it is necessary to pay special attention to communication, collaboration and cultural issues. Organizations should follow a distinct management approach that focuses on building trust and cohesion amongst the virtual team members. To harness the advantages of a successful virtual team.

Unlike traditional teams that are co-located, virtual teams are geographically separated. This leads to the following challenges.

- Misunderstanding and miscommunication.

- Incompatibility in communication preferences such as time or medium of communication.
- Differences in work ethics and social norms.
- Lack of personal connection and empathy.
- Decrease in productivity due to extra effort diverted towards getting communication correct.
- Lacking a sense of ownership and commitment.

Following are the traits that can alleviate the challenges.

- Excellent communication skills.
- Emotional intelligence and ability to understand others.
- Open-mindedness
- Sense of ownership
- Expertise in delegation

Kind of behaviors that individual team members can engage in that negatively impact overall team effectiveness. Different types of behavior affect negatively on the team, such as:

Accountability –Model of Emotions, Attitudes and Behavior- holding you accountable first and taking responsibility instead of pointing fingers or blaming others when things go wrong, if we do not score the full grade, we find out where the mark was lost, and we would blame that particular individual for bringing the team down instead of thinking how we could do better in the next assignment.

It is keeping Commitments- Integrity –Three Foundations of trust in teams. Repeatedly fail to deliver results and not keeping commitments. For example, in a virtual team, trust is built on delivering results, and when there is no result, it causes distrust among team members.

Fear of Conflict – Due to the lack of trust between members, the work provided is always questioned. Now the issue turns out to be significant problems when the team members do not clarify expectations by keeping quiet.

Absence of Trust - Three Foundations of trust in teams. When the team member is unwilling to admit to their mistake to be open with their teams for feedback lacks the foundation of trust.

4. Outline how you intend to approach participation in your group project, explaining how your plans for involvement will impact your project team. Include an analysis of your results from the Group/Team Skills activity you completed from Module 6 reading.

I intend to participate in the group discussions by clarifying expectations by disclosing and revealing expectations with the team members. I offer to find out what is the important behavior is to people I will provide feedback and be open to criticism. I would effectively build rapport and contribute to delivering results by completing the project within the deadline provided. My overall score was 134. I have scored high in developing and maintaining rapport.

I intend to have open communication with team members with continuous feedback, which is

then followed by displaying sensitive needs to others, Eliciting Ideas, feelings and perceptions to others, and presenting feedback. I have scored low on listening to others, and I could improve by listening well to other team members by asking for clarification and demonstrating concern to the team members.

References:

1. McShane, S. L., & Steen. (2004). Canadian organizational behavior (9th ed.). Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
2. Anonymous (2014). Successful Behaviors for Teamwork – 7 Effective Behaviors You Need to Possess. Challenge Consulting. http://www.challengeconsulting.com.au/announcements/successful-behaviors-for-teamwork-7-effective-behaviors-you-need-to-possess