

Team Management

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Authors Note

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Abstract

Teams are pivotal organizational structures. Their importance has prompted researchers to study what organizations can do to gain a competitive advantage and to better understand their effectiveness. A literature review was conducted to compare and contrast two concepts of team management: balancing conformity and deviance, and relationships. The literature supported maintaining this advantage; groups and teams need the right balance of conformity and deviance to ensure that the group's behavior can be controlled to best optimize high performance and goal attainment. Conformity and deviance have strengths, and they include; decision making, acceptance, increased innovation, and trust-building. Weaknesses are prevalent as well, and they include; too much conformity, low performance, and change toward dysfunctional norms. Another concept of team management is relational, whereby relationships are developed to increase group cohesiveness and organizational effectiveness. Relationships are also an effective concept in the team management process as they can foster a trusting work environment and accountability. These two concepts were then analyzed to provide new insights as they related to biblical scripture and team management in a multi-week expedition setting.

Keywords: team management, conformity, deviance, teamwork, trust, relationships in teams, team building

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Team Management

Introduction

Teams are pivotal organizational structures. (Edmondson 2012; as cited in Maloney, Shah, Zellmer-Bruhn, & Jones, 2019) Their importance has prompted research volumes to understand their effectiveness. (Mathieu et al. 2008; as cited in Maloney et al., 2019) As Jones (2019) suggests, managers in companies, large and small user groups, and teams use proven concepts to enhance performance, increase responsiveness, spur innovation, and motivate employees. (p. 355) Research has been conducted on the importance of the balance of conformity and deviance and the relationship component of attaining a competitive advantage in an organization. For this paper, we compare and contrast the two concepts and define their strengths and weaknesses. We then take it a step further and demonstrate a synthesis of these two concepts as they apply to scripture, particularly that of Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NIV), which says that our God is relational. He made us be a part of a family and members of society. Lastly, we provide new insight as to how these concepts can be applied in this author's work as an expedition leader and logistics manager on multi-week trips with multiple teams.

Balancing Conformity and Deviance

Description of the Concept

Jones (2019) suggests that encouraging a balance of conformity and deviance can effectively help an organization gain a competitive advantage. (p. 369) Conformity has been defined in the literature as an individual's tendency to behave in a certain way after receiving pressure from a social group. (Cialdini and Trost, 1998; as cited in Magni, & Manzoni, 2020) Whereas, deviance has been defined as a behavior which violates institutional expectations, which are recognized as legitimate within a social system. (Cohen, 1959; as cited in Drye, Lomo-

David, & Snyder, 2018) A group or team needs a certain amount of conformity to ensure that it controls the member's behaviors and channel it in the direction of high performance and goal achievement. (Jones, 2019, p. 369) The group also needs a level of deviance to ensure that dysfunctional norms are replaced by those that are more acceptable toward the group's objectives. This balance between conformity and deviance is a critical component of team management and is a well-researched subject in the literature.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Conformity is essential before a group can make a decision. (Zhang, Wang, Chen, & Shi, 2020) A good example is a group that needs to vote on a topic before attempting a task. By having a motivational reason to move forward, the group can have a better understanding of their goals and objectives. (Jones, 2019) Some of the strengths of the conformity model in team management include gaining acceptance from other members in the group, enjoying taking part in group activities, and achieving personal goals that they can achieve through membership. One weakness of the conformity model is compliance—an influencer's power to dole out rewards and punishments.

In comparison, deviance in team management has its strengths and weaknesses as well. The research of Mertens & Recker (2020) studied constructive deviance and found that when it can be stimulated by retail store leaders, through empowering team members while at the same time stimulating compliance to critical organizational processes, improved outcomes. The work of Rijnbout & McKimmie (2012) found that the effects of deviance during group decision making have been shown to lead to increased innovation and creativity within the group. Moreover, deviance has its weaknesses. The work of Dryer et al. (2018) found that deviance is sustained and encouraged by subcultures. Their research is interesting as they studied academic

dishonesty in a university setting. Their work found that if the group induces and absorbs deviant behavior, it becomes the group's norms. (Dentler & Erickson, 1959; as cited in Dryer et al., 2018) If deviance is not neutralized in the academic environment, students will feel empowered to cheat despite its consequences. (Brezina, 2000; as cited in Dryer et al., 2018) Using the model outlined in Jones (2019), managers can take several steps to ensure adequate tolerance to deviance as long as they understand that there is a consequence to their actions. This allows opportunities to replace existing norms with norms that will enable the group to achieve its goals. This same model can be used to examine how effective team management can balance conformity and deviance in an academic setting and any other organization.

Relationships in Team Management

Description of the Concept

Team effectiveness expands beyond the team's time and task boundary and is an essential step toward a better understanding of significance in a complex, dynamic teaming environment (Edmonson, 2012, Wageman et al. 2012; as cited in Maloney et al., 2019) These collective groups generate relationships among members that offer lasting value, even after teams disband. (Maloney et al., 2019) Relationships developed in the team-building process is proven when managers bring groups together to work intensely to achieve a specific or common goal or objective. (Jones, 2019) The research of Slåtten, Lien, Fredheim, & Tuverud Gangnes (2017) argues that a trusting team climate is just as essential and necessary as a factor in forming positive relationships. Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer (1998; as cited in Slåtten et al., 2017) suggest that there are four forms of trust: 1. Deterrence-based trust, 2. Calculus-based trust, 3. Institution-based trust, and 4. Relational-based trust. This relational trust factor focusses on the perception of whether he/she can trust the members of his/her team.

The research of Tørring, Gittell, Laursen, Rasmussen, & Sørensen (2019) took this a step further. It postulated that relational coordination, communication, and task integration could allow teams to learn from their mistakes. This coordination amongst the members of the group highlights the importance of interpersonal relationships. As Ruiller, Heijden, Chedotel, & Dumas (2019) suggest, these relationships' ultimate success depends on sound management practices. When managers develop relationships as a critical component of their team management repertoire, Putnam (1993; as cited in Ahiaga-Dagbui, Tokede, Morrison, & Chirnside, 2020) suggests that these groups will be more willing to engage in social exchanges, cooperation, and interaction. All of these are key components in achieving the goals and objectives that an organization sets forth.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Relationships are complex. When you put a group of people together to form a team, those relationships will develop to form a basis on how successful the team is and what weaknesses can arise. One of the key strengths of a relationship is trust. Rosen, Furst, & Blackburn (2006; as cited in Ford, Piccolo, & Ford, 2017) studied the importance of trust in building virtual teams. They found that when managers can set clear expectations, it sends a clear cue to team members that the organization cares enough to recognize unique challenges. (Ford et al. 2017) When you put a group of people together to form a team, those relationships will develop to form a basis on how successful the team is and what weaknesses can arise. Other strengths of team management relationships are managing conflict well, accountability, being able to work effectively across multiple locations, and being transparent and open with each other. (van Kleef, Heerdink, & Homan, 2017) Emotions are a vital component of every relationship. Managers who recognize the inherent difficulties of working in groups understand

the critical role of emotions in coordinating social exchanges. (van Kleef, Heerdink, & Homan, 2017) These strengths will build interdependent relationships where team members work together to increase participation, group cohesiveness, and develop significant goal accomplishment. (Jones, 2019)

Relationships in teams also have their weaknesses. As Jones (2019) describes, group size can be a detriment to a team's motivation, commitment, and performance. In larger teams, friendship groups can develop. These relationships can provide meaningful interaction, social support, and contribute to people feeling good at work. (Jones, 2019) These informal groups can also contribute to weakness in team management. One area, in particular, is hypocrisy. This "do what I say, not what I do" mentality is toxic in the group's team management and relationships. Cha and Edmondson (2006; as cited in Bharanitharan, Lowe, Bahmannia, Chen, & Cui, 2020) found that hypocrisy perceptions within a group or team are likely to produce disenchantment, anger, disappointment, and loss of trust. This lack of confidence will bring forth further weaknesses in teams' relationships, which include other forms of deviant behavior such as stagnancy, excessive connectivity, and withdrawal by group members to escape their negative emotions. (Martin et al., 2010; as cited in Bharanitharan et al., 2020) Managers have to possess certain values and skills to manage teams effectively. (Shaban, 2016) Having the ability to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the relationships formed in their groups will require managers to alter the values, attitudes, and promote effective group dynamics. (Shaban, 2016)

New Thoughts

A takeaway from the literature regarding team management in achieving a balance of conformity and deviance and relationships is trust. Scripture tells us that we should treat our groups, teams, and employees as you would Christ himself. (Ephesians 6:9) This implies that our

groups should be encouraged to render their service to the Lord, not men. As the manager of many teams in my work as an expedition leader and logistics coordinator, I am always looking at a better way to reach our goals and objectives in the field. Using a balance of conformity and deviance with my teams will incur innovation and develop a greater sense of group cohesiveness. Having the ability to foster relationships amongst my team will allow for trust to develop and bring forth a high level of achievement in an outdoor setting where hostile environmental factors can mean the difference between life and death. Having a better understanding of the team management process, as outlined in Jones (2019), I now feel more comfortable in my decision-making ability moving forward.

Conclusion

Organizations, large and small, use teams to enhance performance, increase responsiveness, spur innovation, and motivate employees. (Jones, 2019, p. 355) The literature is replete with examples of the importance of the balance of conformity and deviance and the relationship component of attaining a competitive advantage in an organization. The work of Zhang et al. (2020) supports that conformity is essential before a group can make sound decisions. Whereby the research of Mertens & Recker (2020) advances that constructive deviance and found that when it can be stimulated by retail store leaders, through empowering team members while at the same time stimulating compliance to critical organizational processes, improved outcomes. This balance of conformity and deviance is important as it allows teams to channel their efforts in the direction of high performance. (Jones, 2019) Furthermore, a relational team-building concept was explored, and the research of Bharanitharan (2020), Shaban (2016), and van Kleef (2017) support that relationships can provide meaningful interaction,

social support and contribute to people feeling good at work while accomplishing their goals and objectives.

These two concepts were analyzed on both a secular level as well as a biblical approach, and it was found that scripture, in particular Ephesians 6:9 (NIV) which tells us that we should treat our groups, teams, and employees as you would Christ himself. This implies that our groups should be encouraged to render their service to the Lord, not men. Lastly, a synthesis was developed regarding team management in this author's work as an expedition leader and logistics manager for multi-week trips in the outdoors and how he can use this new insight into decision-making moving forward.

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