

APPLYING THE TEAM ORGANIZATION IN SLOVAK AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES

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THE paper is devoted to the possibilities of applying team organization in agricultural sector enterprises in Slovakia. The success of applying the team organization is subject to a number of internal and external factors. To the most important internal factors we include the team leader's personality, value orientation of team members and team uniformity. The most important external factors are the company focusing, its organizational structure and corporate culture.

Applying the team organization in present practices has been pointed out in the conditions of research and development in places, where creative work is used especially in innovative processes. In the developed countries in progressive production, services and state administration the team organization is not only the matter of theory, it is a certain practical activity as well. Even in Slovakia the interested employees apply the team organization in solving crucial problems.

Key Words: Team Organization, Internal Factors, External Factors, Slovak Enterprises.

Introduction

Human beings have worked in teams for over 200000 years. During that time, we have honed our teamwork skills through practice in our childhood games and adult team sports as well as in organizations. By working in teams, we have discovered the structure of the human genome, built grand places, explored the beginnings and the outer reaches of our universe and developed instruments to destroy vast numbers of our own species. In the last 200 years we have developed complex diverse organizations that were previously confined to religious and military institutions. (West - Tjosvold - Smith, 2005)

The attributes of the new management model and the managerial work for the 21st century significantly developed a need for a team organization and at the same time created space for its application in the managerial work.

Personal difference and preference can impact organizational ethics in such a way where people can end up getting hurt. Personal difference and preference is one's own way of how they think or how they feel about someone or something. Organizational ethics is the understanding of values of how an organization can integrate morals and main beliefs that differentiate right from wrong in the organization. (Hellriegel - Slocum, 2007)

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Uniting groups of people into teams, whether to solve a company shipping problem or to build a house, takes planning and effort. Team leaders exhibit different styles than those who are content managing a group. Individuals' life experiences and the values they have adopted over the years shape these styles. (*Maddux - Wingfield, 2003*).

Hellrieger - Slocum (2007) state that team building is used to improve the effectiveness of work groups by focusing on any of the following four purposes: setting goals and priorities, deciding on means and methods, examining the way in which the group works, and exploring the quality of working relationships. A cycle then develops; it begins with the awareness or perception of a problem and is followed sequentially by data collection, data sharing diagnosis, action planning, action implementation, and behavioral evaluation. This style is repeated as new problems are identified.

According to *Midura - Glover (2005)* team building is the cooperative process that a group of individuals uses to solve both physical and mental challenges. While using this process and solving the challenges, the group learns how to share ideas, how to praise and encourage one other, how to support one another physically and emotionally and how to start becoming a team. *West - Tjosvold - Smith (2005)* and also *Belbin (2010)* wrote that it is not the individual but the team that is the instrument of sustained and enduring success in management. A team can renew and regenerate itself by new recruitment as individual team members leave or retire and it can find within itself all those conflicting characteristics that cannot be united in any single individual.

The managerial work under present conditions cannot be done without applying the team organization. Even in Slovakia the interested employees apply the team organization in solving crucial problems. The basic reason for the creation of teams in work organizations is the expectations that they will carry out tasks more effectively than individuals and so further organizational objectives overall. At the same time, teams are composed of people, who have a variety of emotional, social and other human needs that the team as a whole can either help to meet or frustrate (*West, 2004*). As mentioned *Pokras (2002)* good teamwork depends on working with others and helping them to their part. Cooperation becomes all important. To oil the wheels of a team, you need to understand, get along with, and respect your teammates. Spending time and effort building working partnership will improve team chemistry, which has three parts: communication, consensus, and contracting.

According to *West - Markiewicz (2004)* teamwork is spilling out across organizational and national boundaries. Introducing team-based working into an organization is not a "quick fix". This process requires deep and wide-ranging changes within organization. Achieving these changes takes time and you should expect that their initial implementation will take at least one year, because team-based working requires change of structure – for example changing the way people work with each other, share information and make decisions – and also change of culture.

People in every workplace talk about building the team, working as a team, and my team, but few understand how to create the experience of team work or how to develop an effective team. Belonging to a team, in the broadest sense, is a result of feeling part of something larger than yourself. It has a lot to do with your understanding of the *mission or objectives* of your organization. (*Heathfield, 2010*)

In real life, team work success rarely happens by itself, without focused team building efforts and activities. There is simply too much space for problems. For example, different personalities, instead of complementing and balancing each other, may build up conflicts. Or even worse, some people with similar personalities may start fighting for authority and dominance in certain areas of expertise. Even if the team goals are clear and accepted by everyone, there may be no team commitment to the group goals or no consensus on the means of achieving those goals: individuals in the team just follow their personal opinions and move in conflicting directions. There may be a lack of trust and openness that blocks the critical communication and leads to loss of coordination in the individual efforts (Time Management Guide).

Fostering teamwork is creating a work culture that values collaboration. In a teamwork environment, people understand and believe that thinking, planning, decisions, and actions are better when done cooperatively. People recognize, and even assimilate, the belief that “none of us is as good as all of us” (Team Culture).

Methodology

The objective of the paper was to consider conditions of successful team organization in Slovak agricultural enterprises. Basic data were obtained from a questionnaire sent to 120 subjects. The feedback of the questionnaire was 47%, i.e. 56 questionnaires - 51 entrepreneurial subjects (11 agricultural, 28 elementary and 12 service providing subjects) and 5 research institutions. The questionnaire was oriented basically on getting information connected with managers' opinion about applying the team organization, optimizing the size of the teams, the personality of the team leader and their qualification for successful accomplishment in this position.

Findings and Results

Neither theory nor practice defines the expression team uniformly. There are many factors that develop the differentiation. It can be the influence of the activity, knowledge that we point out in the team work (knowledge from psychology, theory of organization, motivation, etc.). In our research we consider a group of employees i.e., the team under the following conditions:

- the aim, which should be reached by the group of employees is given,
- the members of the team are responsible for the fulfillment of the aim, even though the rate of responsibility is not specified through the members of the team but through the team as a whole,
- the members of the team are dependent on each other while fulfilling the aim. That is, the fulfillment of the aim is influenced by the mutual interaction between them,
- in regard to the mutual responsibility for the fulfillment of the aim the integration of activity among the members of the team is considered as the individual responsibility of each member,
- the team organization of work is applied in solving complicated issues in which participation of different specialists and authorities is needed. In such cases the structure of the team is interdisciplinary.

Team work, the work of each team member in completing the task or let us say in completing the common aim must meet the given conditions. Otherwise it cannot be considered as the team and the team organization of work.

Team organization of work, inter alia, represents the integration of several styles of leadership. In team work the styles of leadership with a higher rate of democracy, cooperation and motivation are preferred and the participation of team members is preferred. We find the following styles of leadership the most accurate:

- democratic style,
- informal leadership,
- participative leadership,
- advisory leadership,
- motivation leadership,
- dynamic style of leadership.

The results of the team organization are largely dependent on the level of leadership. For the team organization an effective leadership together with a successful leadership is necessary.

Types of Teams and their Classification

In present organizations there are various types of team. We mostly meet the expressions like: executive team, quality control team, international team, temporary team, self-managing team, interfunctional team, permanent team, autonomic team, problem-solving team, flexible team, etc.

We need to classify the given teams according to certain criteria. We consider certain criteria as follows:

- purpose,
- size,
- relation to the formal organizational structure,
- time horizon of the team behavior.

According to purpose of the team building we know:

- production team,
- integrated team, part of which the managers are,
- development team.

We consider the *production team*, the one that manufactures products or provides services.

Integrated team provides only coordination activities in a way that individual processes in the organization create an integrated unit.

Development team neither coordinates activities nor manufactures products and provides service, its goal is to improve the processes in the production and services with the aim to increase the efficiency of these activities.

The given types of team exist in present conditions in classic types of organizational structure. These teams can represent individual units or let us say parts of units as well as such teams that involve employees of various units.

According to size (number of members) we can divide teams into three groups:

- small team (3 to 5 members),
- middle team (5 to 15 members),
- large team (20 and more members).

Work in *small team* is transparent, simple, without the need of leadership within simple tasks and with a little demand on time. Small team is not adequate for solving complicated long-term tasks.

Work in *middle team* enables to solve complicated interdisciplinary tasks.

Large team is cumbersome, leadership is complicated and not transparent. If the tasks demand building large team, it is possible to create a partial team within the large team. This partial team of course has its selected task to solve. Under such conditions how to successfully and in time handle the whole task, the coordination of each partial team headed by the leader of the whole team emerges.

According to relation of the team to the formal organizational structure it is possible to set apart 3 types of teams:

- problem-solving team,
- self-managing team,
- interfunctional team.

Problem-solving team. These teams became popular 15 years ago. They usually consist of 5 to 12 members from common unit who meet each other for couple of hours every week to discuss the ways of improving quality, efficiency, and working environment. In these teams the members share their ideas or provide ideas on how to improve the working process and methods. Hardly ever the team gets the authority to individually finish some of the suggested solutions. The most spread types of problem-solving team in the 80's were so called quality teams. Those are the teams that have their tasks and responsibilities divided, they meet regularly to discuss qualitative problems, look for the cause of problems, suggest solutions. These teams are mostly considered more of a group than team work.

Self-managing team. Teams solve problems as well as realize the solutions and they have the responsibility for the results. Self-managing teams are groups of employees who overtake the responsibility of their former leaders. Usually it involves planning and working schedule, collective controls of individual working steps, decision making and solving problems. Completely self-managing teams select their members and assess the activities of each member. Consequently the position of the team leader is limited. Self-managing teams execute the most of the decisions in a company and they work on their own.

Interfunctional teams. These teams consist of employees on the same horizontal level from different working areas to fulfill the given task. Many organizations used to aim for horizontal teams. For example in the 1960s a large team consisting of employees from different units was created in the IBM to solve the task-establishing highly successful System 360. This team called "Task force" was a temporary interfunctional team. Alike teams consisting of line employees from units are another example of interfunctional teams. In short, interfunctional teams are effective for the activity of various units within the organization as for the exchange of information, finding new ideas, solving new problems and cooperation within complicated projects. Of course handling the organization of these teams is not simple. Their early development stages demand a lot of time while the team members learn how to execute diversified and complicated work. To build trust, especially among people of different origin, skills, and perspective, takes time and effort.

Depending on time horizon of the team behavior we know three types:

- *short-term team*, which finish their activity after solving a simple task,
- *mid-term team* (work from few months to 2-3 years). These teams solve many tasks from a certain area or a complicated interdisciplinary task. The number and the structure of the team members can change partially. The leader and the core of the teams stay the same throughout the team's existence.
- *permanent team* are established for the most significant tasks of strategic importance, their structure can be changed just partially.

Functions and Characteristics of the Team Leader

The first responsible task of the team leader is to define the goal. If the leader does not clearly know what he wants to achieve he cannot start directing other people. Without the clear goal it is not possible to reach conformity in team work. If the goal is set and the team as a whole has already accepted it, the members of the team emerge because they also have to clearly set their individual aims which must contribute to the common goal. If it is possible, the members of the team should participate on determining common goals, to feel that it is as well their own intention. The leader applies the basic leading functions of management while leading the whole team to reach their common objectives. They are:

- *planning-* defining tasks and the goal of the group, providing all the necessary and available information, elaborating a viable plan,
- *explaining-* introducing the plan and the aim of the task to the group, delegating the tasks to each member of the team, setting the standards of the team work,

- *control*- following the group standards, influencing the pace of work, securing that the activity of all the team members aims to the goal, focusing the discussion on the relevant questions and encouraging the team members to action and decision,
- *encouragement*- expressing agreement with the people and their work, encouraging the group and individual members, creating the spirit of the team, decreasing pressure by humour,
- *informing*- clearing the task and the plan, providing the group with new information, collecting information from the group, summarizing thoughts and suggestions,
- *assessment*- controlling realized suggestions, testing the consequences of realized solution, assessing the accomplishment of the whole team, participation of the team on the assessment.

These functions represent the role of the leader and they are not performed only by the leader. Even the team members perform some of these functions and the leader should make sure that they really do. If it is necessary the leader must perform any of these functions on its own. His amount of competence is wider than anyone else's in the team. A chief manager does not automatically become a leader after appointing him if his appointing is not accepted in minds of his colleagues. He must understand them. An effective leader is among the people all the time and meets them. A good leader respects people and trusts them, gives them real responsibility with necessary level of independence. Compliment and criticism used in the right time on the right place are also important. Reasonable praise means a lot to everybody who are proud about their work.

Even criticism is important task of the team leader. Its aim is not to punish but to improve. Criticism must change the behavior of employees and improve the process of the task's fulfillment. The leader should criticize only his immediate subordinates. Interference into others' competence, delegating competences are not desirable. Nor the object of the criticism is willing to accept those words. Therefore the leader must find the way how to overcome this denying approach. The first prerequisite of the success is to arrange contacts. The better the previous relations are the better accepted the criticism is. Requirement is set on the leader of the team. The leader should have certain nature and personal characteristics. He should:

- have perfect and wide memory,
- think logically,
- think holistically, prefer the whole to parts of the whole,
- have analytic and synthetic abilities,
- understand the arts of counting,
- understand the art of comprehension, writing and speaking
- be creative.

Completing difficult and complicated tasks in changing conditions demands good team and good leadership. Under these conditions personal qualities of the leader become crucial. His functional abilities in the area of solved tasks and group leadership represent the top quality.

Not only the leader sets direction and builds the team but he adds inspiration to it. The ability to inspire others is a general characteristic of a good leader. This ability is important especially in situations when the group works in difficult conditions when morality falls.

By emphasizing the leader, the role of the team members decreases. The role of the team members is not contrary to the role of the leader but it is complementary. As for the content of the members' role, they are supposed to perform their functions necessary for the fulfillment of the task, to create and to keep the team, to encourage others and to help their development. The content of the leader's role is to ensure that all the members perform their tasks effectively.

Every leader is the creator of the team. This work never stops because the efficiency of the team improves or worsens all the time. The leader usually inherits the team from somebody, there are only few leaders who have the privilege to compose their own team. Throughout this activity he has certain responsibilities that cannot be omitted and he must respect them. The leader:

- is responsible for the selection of people, has the right to influence it,
- is responsible for providing the team with standards and discipline that lead to accomplishment,
- delegates special responsibilities and controls the utilization of the sources,
- manages the formulation of the strategy,
- takes care of the contacts of the team with other groups and individuals who have something to do with the executed activities,
- must pose claims on the team as a whole as well as on the individual members.

The team leader applies the following criteria when selecting the team members:

- *professional skills and abilities*- professional attitude to work, practical abilities, creativity, etc.
- *sense of cooperation*- ability to work in team, ability to share thoughts, ability to discuss things, social tolerance, etc.
- *personality*- ability to make decisions, flexibility, etc.

In management a certain level of team work is needed to attain the best decision. A good manager integrates its team into solving the problems concerning the common work as much as possible.

He has a motivation reason to apply this policy: the more people contribute to the decision the bigger the motivation within decision making is. Each member brings different experience, knowledge, creativity and opinion into team. The result should be better and more acceptable solution.

The objective of the leader is to introduce the tasks that must be solved. There is no sense in introducing a problem that is not interesting for the members of the team and that members find it useless to deal with. To make solving the problems part of team work the leader must be particular about the relation between the task, the individual and the group. He should be able to keep the morality even when possible problems occur. His task is to constitute creative atmosphere, communication, standards, morality, which make positive climate that stimulates, encourages and develops creative thinking of the individuals.

To achieve development when solving tasks, the team must be balanced.

For the leader to keep a good team on a high level of efficiency it is important to take into account many facts which can influence the operation of the group:

- *Focusing on the main goal*. The leader should never forget that groups are tent to keep together all the time. Every intention and ambition to disjoin the group will be assessed as endangering the unit. The ambition to keep the group regardless of the existing task dominates. Therefore, it is inevitable that the leader, considering this tendency, keeps convincing the group about the existence of tasks that must be solved.
- *Keeping the standards*. Standards are the group norms, mostly unwritten, which largely influence the behavior of the group. In case of very low level of standards laziness and carelessness coming from the fact reveal that the goal was reached easily reveal. It is common that the standards do not change in the group but in its surroundings. The world outside the organization changes, the norms in the field in which the group operates increase. What was sufficient 10 years ago is not sufficient nowadays and seems to be average or even below the

average. The leader can help the group by awakening the competitive spirit, clearing the position in relation to the competition, appealing to the members to think why this situation occurs and elaborating a plan to change this undesirable state.

- *Coping with the conflict.* Conflict is a collision of personalities not opinions. The primary task of the leader in this case is to depersonalize the conflict and to focus on the difference between opinions.

The team leader can solve the conflict by:

- pressure,
- direct confronting,
- compromise between the parts,
- backing up,
- extinguishing the problem.

Basic Differences between Classic and Team Organization in Enterprises

On the basis of comparison of classic mechanical organizational structure and team organization we can specify these basic differences:

<i>CLASSIC MODEL</i>	<i>TEAM ORGANIZATION</i>
The basic organizational unit is the working place.	The basic organizational unit is team.
The relations of the organization with external environment are provided by specialized units or let us say specialized employees.	The organization is a part of web which consists of various organizations from external environment.
It is a vertical flow of information.	It is a horizontal and vertical flow of information.
The flow of information moves upside-down, the decisions opposite direction.	The decision is accepted where the maximum information about the problem are.
Organizational structure is usually high.	Flat organizational structure.
Emphasizing the structure.	Emphasizing the processes.
Emphasizing norms, acts, formula, and order.	Emphasizing the results of the activities.
Fixed working hours are common.	Flexible working hours, large part of partial working bonds.
Employees' career downside-up.	Flexible career within the team.
Standardized assessment and remuneration.	Assessment by customers, remuneration based on the assessment of customers.
Specialized employees.	Specialized is the organization as a whole.
External environment is defined within the country.	External environment is global, exceeds the boundaries of one country.
Organization is usually ethnocentric, that it is mostly or exclusively domestic employees.	Organization is international, that it employs employees from abroad.

Establishing new organization means not only changing the existing organizational structure but also changing the requirements on the competence of the employees. It is special competence together with the requirement on the professional level as well as ability to work in team.

On this basis we can generalize the consequences of applying team organization as follows:

- By the team organization not only we change the organizational structure, we also change the relation with organizations in external environment. The team organization should provide a flexible reaction to changes that occur in external environment.
- The team organization should be self- developing and self- learning organization. That means that by the team organization the conditions for better utilizing of own sources of development should be established.
- The team organization demands high rate of formalization on one hand, especially in the process of its production, and extensive informal cooperation among the team members in the process of its operation on the other hand.
- The team organization requires higher qualification and behavior of the employees within human relations. Good relations among the team members are one of the conditions of effective organization.
- The team organization requires making significant changes within the stock of work.
- The team organization requires significant changes from the managers in their style of leadership. The ability to lead people is necessary for each member of the team.
- The managers are simultaneously the designers of team organizational structure.

Summary

In the practice we have come across the fact that work in some groups is really difficult and nor really copious. Such a long- lasting process with no results leads to destruction of the group before there is a chance to make it an executive team.

There are many reasons why teams break-up:

- The members of the group represent interests of their areas and not interests of their project group.
- It is impossible to set the objectives of the project. The individuals follow their own objectives.
- Individual members of the group find their presence in the group bothering. They proclaim that their basic tasks are more important and they want other groups to encourage them.
- Not all the members of the group accept time and appointment. Some members apologize, come late or leave sooner and fulfill the tasks only partially or not at all.
- There is open or hidden competition between the members of the group.
- The members of the group watch and control each other usually in a negative way. They hardly talk to each other.
- The members are not loyal enough to the group.

As we can see there is a lot to do to make a formally set group an effective and executive team. It is important that:

- interests of the individual members are harmonized,
- the goals of the team are defined clearly and they are accepted by all the members of the team,
- work in this team is preferred to all of the other duties,
- the commitment of tasks and schedule increases,
- inner competition disappears,
- inner communication improves,
- group loyalty increases.

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With this list we have also named the important attributes that distinguish effective teams from almost undeveloped weak groups.

On the way to making a highly effective team from a group it is important to:

- cooperate the way that leads to accepted goals on the basis of accepted work organization,
- build trust and loyalty in the team.

Even though this is still not enough to have top rated accomplishments.

- There is one common interest and goal- to survive.
- The group and their goals have absolute priority.
- Inner competition is held back.
- Communication is oriented on the goal and intention.
- Trust and loyalty to the group are the same as the loyalty to each other.

These are the most important conditions for the existence of a successful team. Success or failure of the team, nevertheless, depends on knowledge and abilities of the team members. If the following conditions are given:

- organization (goal and course),
- qualification (knowledge and abilities),
- cooperation (trust and loyalty),

we have the right synergic potential for a successful team. Accomplishments of the individual members do not just counted together they increase the potential of the group as a whole thanks to the synergic processes. On this basis even qualitative accomplishments are possible.

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