Business Issues ITTI will Address

The following business situations and contexts highlight when and how the deployment of the ITTI can make a major contribution to team performance:

Remote teams

This is a team that consists of people within the same organisation but working together from different parts of the world, or from different countries or even from different parts of the same building.

Remote teams face multiple challenges such as accommodating different time zones, with colleagues not always being available when required, and different cultural practices, national or organisational, getting in the way of team effectiveness and efficiency. By far the most consistent team challenges tend to centre round communication. Team members might not get to meet each other in person and that can create a sense of working in a vacuum, without the benefit of regular team discussions and the sense of working together towards a common goal. These challenges can sometimes get in the way of good team practice and build a barrier of distrust between virtual team members.

Communication breakdown

The causes of communication break down among team members can range from the methods of communication being used, even text-based communication can be misunderstood, to the technology employed to communicate, which at its worst can be unreliable. If team members have difficulty communicating on a regular basis and if they do not regularly regroup to understand the issues facing the team they will gradually find themselves unable to fully trust one another.

Low productivity

When a team which has worked together well in the past begins to show signs of a slow-down in productivity there will inevitably be an impact on team morale and motivation. There could be many reasons behind this: stretched resources or a lack of commitment or the feeling that you are 'just another number'. Often the team at this stage suffers a breakdown of trust whether it is in the other team members or in the team leader or even in the organisation itself.

Change management

Change management brings with it a number of challenges and can create a sense of displacement within the organisation. High levels of distrust arise especially when the change is coming from an external source, perhaps in the form of a company take over or merger. These changes can be difficult for people to accept and can affect performance negatively, which in turn has a knock-on effect on organisational income.

Team is stuck / Lack of innovation

Lack of innovation within the team or the sense of being stuck in a rut may arise from a breakdown in trust – team members not sharing new ideas in case someone else takes the credit. In other instances the team may have hit a brick wall creatively and may need an internal shake-up. It is worth investigating what

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each team member is contributing to the team effort, and what he or she perceive they are receiving back from the team. This could help to highlight the issues that are stemming the creative flow.

Departmental complacency

The sense of departmental complacency is most often seen in teams that have worked together for a long period of time. The team is too comfortable and nobody is willing to rock the boat, even if refusing to do so might be detrimental to long-term productivity, growth and organisational development. An in-depth examination of the trust issues each team member is facing can often bring to the surface long-held concerns. This can pave the way towards a fresh approach and recommitted attitude amongst team members.

Internal cliques / Political groups

Internal cliques and political groups are formed within a team when like-minded individuals take against other team members, leaving those not within the group feeling alienated and excluded. Trust is often a big issue here. Performing an exercise in which these trust issues are addressed helps to break down the cliques and removes the antagonism within the sub groups

The "us and them" syndrome

When team members begin to feel that there is a distance or lack of understanding between them and other branches of the organisation, trust between different teams is one of the first things to go. This leads to teams feeling isolated which in turn can be counter-productive. Tackling the low trust levels helps previously isolated team members realise that everyone is working towards a common goal.

High staff turnover

High staff turnover is sometimes the sign of an underlying problem of low trust. If trust is lacking team members will opt out of the team or simply leave the organisation. Either way it will substantially reduce the productivity of the team, local knowledge will be lost and the resources available to the team will be diminished, at least for a time. In addition a new person will have to be found, recruited and brought up to speed.

Conclusion:

Stimulating high levels of trust in teams increases an organisation's competitive advantage. The benefits of having a committed group of individuals all striving to achieve a given target cannot be over- stated.

Consistently checking the trust "temperature" of a team throughout its various stages ensures a high level of performance amongst all team members and a good return on investment.

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