

Soft Skills III: Teamwork

PA017 SW Engineering II → Aspects of SW Development
Management

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Healthy Organizational Culture

Good workplace relationships = critical company success factor

- good work effectiveness
- low rate of human error
- good employees' satisfaction and quality of life
- low level of employees' sickness rate
- low level of employment fluctuation (retention of experienced team-members, lower costs for training)

Building-up and maintaining a team

Team spirit

Positive cooperation based on good interpersonal relationships, transparent and fair rewarding, open communication

Positive motivation – by reward:

- creating stimulating environment: focus on achievements, appraisal, growth possibilities, positive self-perception, maintaining narcissistic equilibrium

Negative motivation – by punishment:

- fearful atmosphere, lack of trust, restricted communication, frustration, aggression – cycles of attack and defense

Building-up and maintaining a team

Appreciation for achievement

Material – money

- is limited, often cannot be changed due to legal aspects

Non-material – appreciation

- does not cost money (!)
- shall be done publicly, as often as possible
- highly motivating, improving perceived self-value (priceless)

Narcissistic Equilibrium

Perception of own value, capabilities, qualities

- is supported (by appreciation, positive emotions) or damaged (by critique, negative emotions)
- is recharged by enjoyable activities ("*wants*")
- is discharged by fulfilling duties ("*musts*")
- long-term negative disbalance leads to burnout syndrome

Rules of criticism

- Suitable place in privacy (not public)
- Specific description course of events, be considerate, acknowledge good intentions
- Understanding core reason of undesired outcome or behavior
- Hear out opinion of the criticised person
- When explaining potential sanctions, use realistic and commensurate sanctions; sanctions must be executed once explicitly mentioned
- "Feedback sandwich" model – appreciation / criticism / appreciation
- Transform error into learning moment, not into harm
- Looking for solution or remedy together with criticized team-member
- Appreciate improvement

Symmetry & Asymmetry

Symmetry

- equal position, balanced partnership
- potential problem: lack of leadership or revocation of responsibility

Asymmetry – Complementarity

- Unequal position, hierarchy, dominant and submissive roles
- Competence of person in dominant role should be evaluated and eventually questioned, if leading to undesired outcome
- On the other hand, even clear and formal definition of asymmetry does not give an adult person in submissive role a right to revoke responsibility for own behavior

In case of dysfunctional communication, the remedy is to introduce complementarity into symmetry, or vice versa

Conflict

- The initial trigger might be something trivial
- If unsolved or overlooked, the situation will escalate
- Tension leads to frustration, frustration leads to aggression
- Looking for a victim is an easy solution
- However, interpersonal conflicts are rarely caused by a single party
- Human communication is cyclic by nature, driven by mutual feedback

Solving Conflict

1 Passive indirect strategy

- Ignoring conflict, waiting for it to dissolve
- Downplaying problem, pretending it is not serious
- Tolerating problem as "*necessary evil*"
- Joking around, indirect comments, nonverbal responses (faces, gestures...) but remaining silent
- Showing explicit weakness – submissiveness, malleability (despite disagreement)

Solving Conflict

2 Strategy focused on individual

- Rejecting own responsibility, attributing fault to one party (victim)
- Requesting change of behavior with various intensity
 - from assertive to aggressive persuasion
 - enforcement
 - threats, application of sanctions

Solving Conflict

3 Integrative strategy

- Discussing the conflict, "*non-zero sum*" solution
- Understanding the nature of conflict, showing interest into opinions, motivation and feeling of the other party
- Looking for alternative solutions that would work for both (all) parties

Pathological Phenomena

Discrimination

- restricting or creating unfavourable condition for certain group of people (race, gender, religion, age...)
- affecting: career growth, types of tasks, salary

Harassment

- Creating hostile environment
- Retaliatory harassment
- Sexual harassment
- Bullying

Pathology in a team

Mobbing

- Hostile group pressure on an individual
- Compared to bullying, it is more sophisticated, lacks apparent signs of aggressive behavior:
 - Spiteful behavior
 - Sabotaging cooperation
 - Ostracizing from team
 - Withholding information, "disappearing" documents or materials
 - Gossiping, mocking
 - Assigning victim with unappreciative or challenging tasks, waiting for failure
 - False attribution of responsibility

Pathology in a team

Who is mobbing?

Aggressive individual

- compensation of inferiority complex
- motivation: envy, desire for power, vision of profit, fear of competition

Aggressive Group

- a few aggressive individuals, or group of people supporting an aggressive individual, yet they will not be aggressive on their own
- motivation is similar to that of aggressive individual

Pathology in a team

Bossing

- Aggression performed by a boss on a team-member
 - Assigning inferior tasks, or very challenging tasks
 - Frequent non-constructive criticism
 - Task overloading, threats of being fired
 - Denying right for breaks (lunch, toilet...); careful countdown of remaining time left...
 - Manipulating others for own profit
 - Manipulating others on victim's account

Pathology in a team

Staffing

- Aggression performed by a team on a boss
 - Mass disobeying of rules of intentional exceeding of deadlines
 - Belittling or making boss insecure
 - Intentional non-reporting of problems or errors found during work processes

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