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TEAMBUILDING

Organizational Development for Improved Treatment Effectiveness

By

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Do you have deficiencies in the following areas? Check those that fit your organization.

- Establishing goals and objectives.
- Staff commitment to goals and procedures.
- Effective use of leadership and authority.
- Know when to make decision through command, consultation, or consensus.
- Effective problem solving.
- Implementation and follow-through on action plans.
- Role definitions and role overlap.
- Effective utilization of staff.
- Managing staff conflict and developing cooperation.
- Trust between staff.
- Effective work relations between your organization and other organizations, or between your work group and other work groups.

The above is not an inclusive list. But it is a significant list. A deficiency in any one area can mean a serious problem for your organization!

If you found yourself checking many of the items above, don't feel badly. You have a lot of company. You are in company not only with other people involved in private or public Homes for Children, Halfway Houses, or community based Social/Treatment Agencies, but also with business and industry, volunteer organizations, correctional institutions, etc. Any time two or more people get together to achieve some goal through a cooperative effort, problems in these areas are likely to surface. They are an inevitable part of organizational life. Simply because these deficiencies are inevitable, however, does not mean that we must live with them. Appropriately, we should be developing and implementing methods for resolving these issues. Unresolved problems typically result in unachieved organizational goals. You may survive as an organization, but what will you achieve? Many organizations perceive the list above as either insurmountable problems or unattainable ideals. They are not! They can be achieved through an Organizational Development/Teambuilding process.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK

Before we present what Teambuilding is --the purpose of this article--let's first examine why teamwork is important.

Whenever an organization is faced with the objective of solving complex and unique problems, whether routinely or periodically, a team approach is the best

way. Certainly, nothing is more complex and more dependent on the cooperative effort of highly skilled individuals than helping your clients or residents to develop. People are very complex.

Teamwork is an acknowledged given in Halfway Houses or other Social/Treatment Agencies and this was recently conceptualized as the teamwork primacy. You will probably find that there are very few people who will disagree with this. Yet, how much time is actually spent in developing team skills in these organizations that are so dependent on teamwork? Very little time is spent, if any at all! The usual thinking seems to be that if you have competent individuals, you will automatically have an effective team of people. Not true! Or, another line of thinking is that if you hold a group of people equally responsible for results and allow them time to meet to discuss problems of mutual concern, then an effective team will develop. Again, not true! It is possible, but not very probable.

Think of it this way. A football coach, or a coach in any sport, recruits the best talent that is available. All of the players are highly skilled. Then, how much time does it take to develop these individuals into an effective team? There are weeks of concentrated practice before the season begins and then there is daily practice throughout the season. All of this is geared towards having the best team on the field for only one hour of actual playing time each week. The football players that win games--achieve results--are the best team. And, winning the game is not totally dependent on just having the best players. Winning depends on how the players are organized and their ability to work together as a team towards one goal.

Working in Social/Treatment Agencies is more complicated than a football game. We have many more goals to achieve, our goals are often in conflict with each other and are usually poorly defined. But, this does not negate the fact that teamwork is necessary. If anything, it makes teamwork more important. Yes, teamwork is important and it is a learned skill with which many of us are not really familiar.

It is important for the manager to recognize that the concept of people working together interdependently is a new idea for many. We have not been taught that way. In our schools and universities we have emphasized competitive, noncollaborative behaviors as a means of accomplishing tasks. Problem solving is done by the person along; regards are given to individuals rather than the group work-group; students are trained not to share or ask for help, especially from one another; goals are set by others and most decisions for a workgroup are made by others. Small wonder then, that whatever collaborative behaviors our tribal ancestors had seem to have, have been lost!

Yes, teamwork is important. Most of use would agree. But when is the last time that you, and those who work with you, took the time to concentrate solely on determining how well your team is functioning in relation to its goals and then decided upon ways to improve team effectiveness?

TEAMBUILDING

Teambuilding is a strategy to develop those skills and behaviors that foster team functioning. It has had a long history of success in improving the effectiveness of work-groups. Surprisingly enough, since the middle 1950's it has been used predominately in business and industry. Actually, teambuilding is just one of many strategies within the general technology known as Organizational Development. Organizational Development is usually defined as a planned and sustained effort of applying behavioral science knowledge for improving organizations. It is based on the scientific method and the underlying values which broadly embrace the concepts of democracy, open investigation, and experimentation. The goal of Organizational Development is improving the quality of life in organizations, solving work related problems and the achievement of results.

Underlying Premise of Teambuilding: The underlying premise of teambuilding is that each organization, or sub-unit within an organization, has within it the resources, knowledge and skills to solve its own problems. The task of Teambuilding is not so much of creating these resources, but of unfreezing and utilizing them. Teambuilding takes a positive approach to human behavior in organizations. It assumes that people are capable and motivated to improve their own organization. It accepts as inevitable the conflicts that exist between the needs of individuals, between the needs of work-groups, and the needs of the organization as a whole. But, Teambuilding advocates confronting these conflicts openly, when staff have the necessary team skills to do so constructively, and using these conflicts as a catalyst for creative problem solving. A specific goal of Teambuilding is to maximize the solving of significant work related problems through the best use of the organization's human potential.

The Process and Key Elements: Teambuilding is a planned change process that takes place over time. It is not a "one shot deal." In effect, Teambuilding is a series of brief, but carefully planned interventions into the ongoing dynamics of an organization. The phrase, "carefully planned" cannot be emphasized enough. A "hit or miss" approach can do more harm than good. Each Organizational/Development/Teambuilding intervention must be designed specifically for a particular team or organization. No two teams or organizations are alike, even though they perform the same function. The overall structure of an Organizational

Development/Teambuilding intervention may be the same, but the content and strategies within each phase of the intervention may be different.

There are a variety of ways to do Teambuilding. What follows is a brief outline of a model we are currently using for a major Organizational Development/Teambuilding effort for the State of Michigan's Halfway Houses under the direction of the Department of Community Residential Care Services (CRC). This project involves key State Department administrators, county administrators, field placement specialist, Halfway House directors, Halfway House staff and residents. It should be understood that the decision to involve all of these people in a major Organizational Development/Teambuilding effort was not made because the Halfway Houses were not doing well. On the contrary, they were reasonably effective. Deciding to get involved in this process was based on a desire to do even better. Getting involved in Teambuilding does not mean that one has to be experiencing major operational problems. The phases of Teambuilding used in the Michigan CRC Project are as follows:

I. PLANNING AND ENTRY

Executive Development Workshops were conducted with the administrators, directors and field placement specialist before any work was started in the houses. Two major objectives were: (1) to design the total intervention in collaboration with the consultants, and (2) to participate in the same activities that the Halfway House staff would experience. The latter was done to insure that these key people would know exactly what would be done and that they could be supportive. After the initial planning meetings, these key people were involved in their own Teambuilding sessions concurrently with the Teambuilding in the houses. It would have been foolish to develop the "bottom" without developing the "top".

II. STAFF ORIENTATION

A session with the staff of each house was held in order to give them an understanding of the entire design, the objectives, and their role. Modifications in the design were made based on staff input.

III. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

The staff in each house was directly involved in identifying key problems within their own organization. This entailed the following:

- A. Staff completed a survey related to how they perceived their program functioning and how they would like it to function ideally. This same survey was also given to the residents of each house. Examples of areas measured are relationships between and among staff and residents, treatment program, and the quality of the organization.

- B. Staff completed a survey related solely to organizational climate, team functioning and leadership.
- C. Each staff person was personally interviewed by the consultants in order to gather data and information not included in the surveys and to insure that each person's individual views, needs, and objectives were known and included.
- D. While these interviews are being conducted, the consultants had an opportunity to observe program operations. These observations served as another source of data.

IV. TEAM CONCEPTS WORKSHOP

The staff of each Halfway House, including the director, participated in a Team Concepts Workshop. This was an experience-based learning laboratory. The purpose was to have staff experience how an effective team functions and learn personal and team related skills so that they would be able to manage the data collected in Phase III. Staff were involved in experiences related to such concepts and skills as leadership, decision making, problem solving, competition versus collaboration, team member roles, etc.

It should be noted that the Concepts Workshop, taken by itself, can be an effective training session. It can also be used as a method to make a decision as to whether or not to get involved in Teambuilding. But, taken by itself, it is not Teambuilding.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Soon after the Concepts Workshop, staff participated in another workshop. At this session, the data collected in Phase III was fed back to the staff of each house. There was no confidentiality! The objective of this session was for the staff to analyze their own data (to find the meaning that it had for them) and to identify and agree upon the significant problems that they must solve in order to become an effective organization.

VI. PROBLEM SOLVING

After analyzing their own data and identifying significant problems, staff at each house was involved in a series of meetings with and without the consultants. The objective was to methodically solve each problem and develop action plans to implement the solutions. It was at this time that the skills developed in the preceding phases were put to use.

VIII. REASSESSMENT AND RE-EVALUATION

After implementing the action plans, staff then got reinvolved in re-assessing and re-evaluating the results. Much the same procedures outlined in Phase III were used again. With new data and information the process begins over again starting with Phases V and VI and possibly Phase IV. This is done with little or no assistance from the consultants. What the staff has developed with the aid and expertise of the consultants is now an integral part of the organization. Team and organizational development continues.

The entire process for each house, beginning with Phase II up to Phase VII,¹ collecting new data and feeding it back to staff, took sixteen (16) days over an average time span of three months.

This was a very brief outline of a very complex process. It is not within the scope of this article to give a complete understanding of the content of each phase of the intervention or what staff and consultants did between each phase. The significant learnings should be that Teamwork is a learned skill and that Teambuilding is carefully planned, with objectives unique to each organization or team. In addition, staff get directly involved in assessing their own organization and working realtions, and work together to solve problems that are significant to them and the effectiveness of their organization. This is the process that builds an effective team.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes that can be expected from a successful Organizational Development/Teambuilding effort is the achievement of those areas listed at the beginning of the article. In effect, a better organizational climate where staff derive greater job satisfaction, where problems are perceived as opportunities for improvement, and where change and adaption become an important dimension of organizational life for staff.

But, you may say that the goal of your organization is not to make staff's work experiences more satisfying. You are correct. The goal is to help residents to make a satisfactory adjustment in the community. Therefore, let's look at the major outcome of Teambuilding as reported by staff who were involved in the Michigan Project. The major outcome was almost immediate behavior change on the part of the residents and greater commitment on the part of residents to the program and their own development. This resident growth was the actual goal of Teambuilding. As staff developed into effective teams and problems were solved, residents also changed without ever being the direct object of modification.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

What does all this mean? Why were there behavior changes on the part of residents when staff were the ones who received direct services? One meaning, or conclusion, is that a large part of inappropriate behavior on the part of residents or clients in our Social/Treatment Agencies is a direct result of the organization itself; how it is managed and how staff work together. Therefore, should the first object of modification always be the residents? Should we always be looking for those "treatment programs" that are going to solve "all" of our

problems by controlling residents in order to have them conform to an organizational structure that may be causing the problems in the first place? Or, if you are experiencing problems with resident behavior and the achievement of your goals, should not the first object of modification be by the organization? If you do develop your organizations and teams to be the best possible, then any continued inappropriate behavior on the part of residents is that which should be treated through specific treatment programs or procedures.

Another meaning of all this, as reported by staff involved in Organizational Development/Teambuilding, is that the residents do what the staff do and not what they staff say they should do. That is, behavior changes in the residents result from modeling staff behavior! Are some of your goals to have residents develop trust in other people, work constructively through conflicts that they encounter, help and care for people, work cooperatively with others, and be committed to continued growth throughout their lives? Then, what better way to achieve this than for residents to observe staff behaving this way towards each other daily. Residents do model staff behavior.

Two other less complex conclusions are: 1) through Organizational Development/Teambuilding, staff finally have the opportunity and skills to solve some major operational problems and 2) as staff develop into cohesive teams and agree upon goals and procedures, it becomes more difficult for residents to manipulate staff by playing one against the other.

CONCLUSION

The technology of Organizational Development/Teambuilding has much value for our work in Social Treatment Agencies. Business and industry had recognized this value 20 years ago. We are only beginning. Through this process some inherent organizational problems can be dealt with, staff can be developed, innovative programs can be designed, and the organization can achieve a capacity for continued growth in an ever changing environment. All of this means improved treatment effectiveness.

Many of us have had the opportunity to be involved in major changes in programs where we currently work, or even to have been involved in the starting of new programs, units or organizations. What we remember is how energetic and committed staff were, how staff looked forward to coming to work, and how creative solutions were generated to solve difficult problems. We remember how exciting everything was. But, as time went on and stability often referred to as organizational rigor mortis, was achieved these rewarding experiences diminished. We

tend to blame this phenomena on changes in staff, not being able to find as qualified staff as in the "good old days", changes in the type of residents, and beauracratc and legal constraints. These may have contributed to some degree. But, what was missing from our original planning was building in some mechanism or procedure in the organization that would continually revitalize and renew the organization. Something that would maintain the organization in a youthful stage of development and thereby prevent it from becoming stagnant and inflexible. This mechanism or procedure is what Organizational Development/Teambuilding is all about --continued organizational renewal. It is a process to be used when starting new organizations, developing new programs, modifying existing programs, and for revitalizing organizations that have been in operation.

REPORTED CHANGES

The basic intent of the Organizational Development/Teambuilding Project for the Halfway Houses in Michigan was to intervene in the on-going processes of each house in order to bring about change desired by both Staff and Residents. As mentioned, the targets for changes were the organizational structure and the staff teams. Below is a list of changes reported by the staff of the six Houses involved in the Project from February 1976 to February 1977.

1. Acting-out behavior on the part of youth decreased.
2. New residents are easily assimilated into the program and get off to a better start faster than before the Project.
3. Residents seem to be more responsive to all staff and not just responsive to a select group of staff.
4. Staff is assuming more of a treatment role with residents. Staff has taken over responsibility for developing and implementing treatment plans.
5. The counseling role is more evenly spread among all staff.
6. Agendas for staff meetings are prepared in advance.
7. The working relationship between County Supervisors, Field Placement Specialists and House Directors has improved.
8. Treatment plan formats have been developed and implemented.
9. There is greater input from staff at the staff meetings.
10. Staff has greatly improved in their ability to implement action-plans for problems to be solved. Before, decisions would be made and then nothing would come of them.
11. There has been an equal distribution of the work-load.
12. There is more personal sharing between staff.
13. Disruptive humor and comments has decreased during staff meetings.
14. Staff members are listening to each other more and are becoming aware of the difference of opinions.
15. Problem-solving and planning skills have improved.
16. The Directors are able to delegate more tasks and the staff is assuming the responsibility.
17. The staff has developed a genuine concern for program improvement.
18. Staff has become more sensitive to each other's feelings.
19. Staff has implemented ways to get more resident involvement in program and decision-making.
20. Shift schedules are being worked out for better programming for youth as opposed to staff convenience.
21. The amount and wuality of staff interaction has improved greatly.
22. There is more teamwork within staff. People work together to solve problems.

23. All staff are voicing more opinions instead of sitting back and letting things go by.
24. Differences of opinion are accepted and conflict resolution has been legitimized.
25. Staff members are volunteering their own time more often to help the youth outside of their regular work schedule.
26. More experienced staff are training less experienced staff.
27. Staff has learned the procedures for solving problems and are using the procedures.
28. Staff members are providing each other with more positive feedback and reinforcement as they work together.
29. Residents recognize that the staff is becoming a team.
30. As staff has begun helping each other more, the residents have also begun to help each other more.
31. Residents have ceased playing staff off against each other.
32. The verbal and written communication between shifts has greatly improved.
33. The job has become easier because staff members are making more use of information in the log.
34. Staff has learned that there are many alternative solutions to any problem.
35. Staff members are trusting each other more.
36. Staff has learned to take leadership roles in staff meetings.
37. Staff has revamped organizational goals and policies.
38. All program rules have been evaluated by staff and residents. Those rules no longer functional have been eliminated.
39. The residents are more relaxed.
40. Group meetings with youth are of a better quality.
41. Residents are invited to attend staff meetings.
42. Staff members are overlapping in the performance of their roles.
43. Staff finds work more enjoyable and they look forward to it every day.
44. Staffs' family relations have improved.
45. Staff can use various decision styles and are becoming skilled in consensual decision-making.
46. More communication between directors and staff.
47. Directors making more and better decisions.
48. Directors get more feedback from staff.
49. Staff understands how good teams work and are able to maintain the process.
50. Group decision making is more constructive and of a better quality than individual decision making for complex problems.
51. Staff now perceives problems as opportunities for improvement.
52. Able to make program changes based on goal evaluation.

53. Staff is able to accept input from residents about program changes.
54. Staff shares more information with the residents.
55. Staff has become aware that there is an interdependence between them and the residents.
56. Program activities are better organized.
57. Staff is beginning to feel important on the job.
58. Each staff person has better insight into his/her own behavior and feelings.
59. Staff is becoming more career-minded.

It should be noted that this is not an inclusive list. Many other changes have been reported by staff in the six houses.

END