

Modeling Group Emphasis

R. T. Hans, N. D. Chuene and C. K. Lepota

Abstract— This paper purports that if project teams are encouraged through the use of rewards and recognitions to practise certain behaviours which are aimed at meeting individual employees' needs, such behaviours should lead to cohesive teams (that is, promote group emphasis). The paper presents a Group Emphasis through Reward Criteria (GERC) model, which is based on two existing models, namely, the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model as well as the model of Team Effectiveness. It argues that group cohesion can be achieved through the application of the GERC model. It is concluded that some of the encouraged team behaviors may seem to be social activities which have little to do with the actual desired final project product or service, but are necessary for building a cohesive productive project team.

Index Terms— Project management, Reward criteria, Group emphasis, Behavior, Model

I. INTRODUCTION

Every organization has a culture. An organizational culture can either hinder or promote successful project management.

Schwalbe [17] defines organizational culture as follows:

"A set of shared assumptions, values and behaviours that characterize the functioning of an organization."

Furthermore, [17] states that an organizational culture that promotes both reward criteria and group emphasis is conducive to successful project management. Once more, [17] defines reward criteria and group emphasis as follows:

Reward criteria - *"The degree to which rewards, such as promotions and salary increases are allocated according to employee performance rather than seniority, favouritism or other non-performance factors."*

Group emphasis - *"The degree to which activities are organized around groups or teams, rather than individuals."*

There are numerous studies in human resource, leadership and organization management literature on the use of rewards to motivate employees to be more productive by rewarding top performers [14], [1] to address recruitment, retention and development issues [11] and to drive organizational success [6]. However, little if any, research has been done on how to use rewards in building cohesive project teams to achieve project objectives and thereby organizational objectives. This research paper seeks to develop a conceptual model that shows how reward criteria may be used to promote group emphasis based on

Maslow's Hierarchy of [3], as well as the model of team effectiveness by [15] with the aim of building inclusive project teams. By using Maslow's Hierarchy theory of Needs as the basis for the development of abovementioned model, this paper is in line with other current project management body of knowledge theoretical developments which have used theories from different disciplines such human resources, finance and marketing to develop tools and techniques applicable in managing project [5]. According to Maslow's theory of motivation, people are motivated by unsatisfied needs and therefore this paper is aimed at leveraging some of these needs in order to build cohesive project teams.

This paper does not discuss merits and demerits of rewards – it is written from the premise that rewards are generally regarded as one form of motivating employees [4], [6] to achieve a specific goal, and that specific goal in this case is promoting project team unity. It also does not discuss any particular forms of rewards that should be used in building cohesive project teams. Furthermore, this paper does not follow Maslow's hierarchy of needs in its strict hierarchy, but rather leverages the needs identified by the theory in different levels to promote group emphasis.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW: REWARDS AND PROJECT TEAMS

Rewards and recognition are generally regarded by managers as one form of motivating employees [4], [6] and as well as way of rewarding them for meeting set goals and objectives [1]. In support of this general belief of usefulness of rewards, [4] state that there are several studies that have established a positive link between performance and contingency rewards. Furthermore, rewards can be used to encourage team work, encourage and reinforce certain behaviors, as well as inspiring skills development and learning of employees [6]. Gill [11] goes further and state that rewards should be used for staff development as well as for driving business success. Moreover, in organizations where skilled employees form the basis for their competitive advantage, appropriate policies for rewards is a must have [9]. Furthermore, [18] states that an effective reward system should consider key issues, namely, the behaviors, outcome wanted, motivation and organizational conditions that support such a system. Zobel [18] states that while there have been many studies done on the efficacy of group (e.g. departmental) related rewards, such can't be said with regard to team related rewards.

A project in its nature is carried out by a team and therefore it is important that team members should work as a unit in order to successfully complete a project. Clark and Colling [9] also support this contention and emphasize that team members (human resources) are to contribute to achieving project objectives. The ever changing demands of businesses are also better met by teams [18]. The following statement by [13] sums up the importance of team work:

"It will take teamwork to cure a cancer, maximize all students' learning, invent what comes after the television, and create peace"

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throughout the world. The truly committed co-operative group is probably the most productive tool humans have."

One of the responsibilities of a project manager is to keep the project team members motivated [3] in order to perform at their peak so as to complete the project within its constraints, which includes time, costs and scope. To be able to keep project members motivated, there is a need for project managers to strike a balance between organizational needs and employees' needs, so as to ensure that the interests of both stakeholders are satisfied. Baber and Warn [1] is in agreement with this assertion and state that a project manager should be both task-oriented and people-oriented. A task-oriented project manager endeavors to produce quality work, completed in time and within budget. This will be achieved by using initiating structure leadership skill set [16], where a leader will provide direction for people to perform their tasks. On the other hand, a people-oriented manager makes sure that employees' needs are taken into consideration in the process of pursuing organizational goals. Moreover, project managers should find a way of motivating their project team members to focus beyond their immediate individual self-interests but rather to focus on the success of the entire team [4]. In every project phase, a project manager would set goals to be achieved and specify rewards, if any, for successfully achieving those goals [2], [12]. Once such objectives or milestones have been met or achieved, a wise project manager would want to keep the project team motivated and willing to achieve more by rewarding the team members accordingly.

Whatever forms of rewards that are used, they should be meant to achieve at least two things. Firstly, they should be meant to reward good performance [14], [1] with the aim of motivating the recipient to perform even more in the future. Secondly, rewards should be aimed at building a cohesive and inclusive project team. Cacioppe [6] agrees with this contention and states that managers should base their rewards on team effort in order to encourage team work. There is a need to understand how rewards can be used to promote group work or project team work in order to meet project goals as well as to achieve organizational objectives. The next section describes a model used to develop a cohesive project team.

III. GROUP EMPHASIS THROUGH REWARD CRITERIA (GERC) MODEL

In the above section it was pointed out that rewards should be aimed at achieving two things. One of those things is to build a united, cohesive and project vision-oriented team. The key question is how to build a cohesive project team using rewards?

Firstly, in order to build a cohesive team, an organizational culture which is conducive and supportive as well as inclusive [14], [6] for this should exist. Such culture should include, a supportive leadership style, such as a firefighter leadership style [1], project vision [7] which unites stakeholders to achieve project mission, an appropriate reward system aligned with human resource strategy [9], [14] which is aimed at rewarding excellent project work as well as promoting team work, and finally, other critical factors which are important for project success.

Furthermore, [15] have developed a team effectiveness model, which depicts some key competencies and behaviors that should be in place for a team to be effective.

Secondly, project managers should clearly articulate and communicate project objectives, milestones to be achieved, success criteria to be used, rewards that are linked to project work performance as well as criteria to be used in distributing the rewards [18]. Thirdly, it is imperative that a project manager should continuously identify project team members' needs in order to line up team members' behaviors to meet such needs with an overall objective of building a cohesive successful project team. Brewer and Dittman [3] agree with this assertion and state that understanding how people behave and their current needs, as stated by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, is important in keeping employees motivated.

Based on the above discussion, this paper suggests a Group Emphasis through Reward Criteria (GERC) model, which is aimed at creating a cohesive project team. The GERC model is based on two existing models, namely, the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model [3] as well as the model of team effectiveness by [15]. According [15], for any team to be effective and successful certain competencies and behaviors must be in place. On the other hand, Maslow's theory of motivation asserts that employees are motivated by unsatisfied needs.

The GERC model, see Fig. 1, purports that if project teams are encouraged through the use of rewards and recognition (that is, use of reward criteria) to practise certain behaviors which are aimed at meeting individual employees' identified unsatisfied needs, such behaviors should lead to cohesive teams (that is, promote group emphasis). The aim is two-pronged, firstly to satisfy employees' needs and secondly to leverage such needs for the promotion of project team cohesion.

Covey [10] emphasizes the importance of having the end results in mind right from the beginning. The GERC model enforces this – the end result is to create cohesive project teams and therefore the designing of the rewards system should be aimed at achieving this right from the beginning. According to [3] Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model consists of five levels, see Figure 1 below. The three upper levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs are the ones that are leveraged in this paper with the aim of creating a cohesive and inclusive project team. The lower two levels of needs do not seem to present individual needs that can be positively exploited for the promotion of group emphasis and therefore were not considered in the development of the GERC model. Brewer and Dittman [3] identify the three upper levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as consisting of the following: belonging, togetherness, approval and group inclusion (all in Social level), reputation, recognition (both in Esteem level) and need to perform to ones best (in Self-actualization level). Hereunder is the discussion of the GERC model based on three upper levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs as well as [15] team effectiveness model.

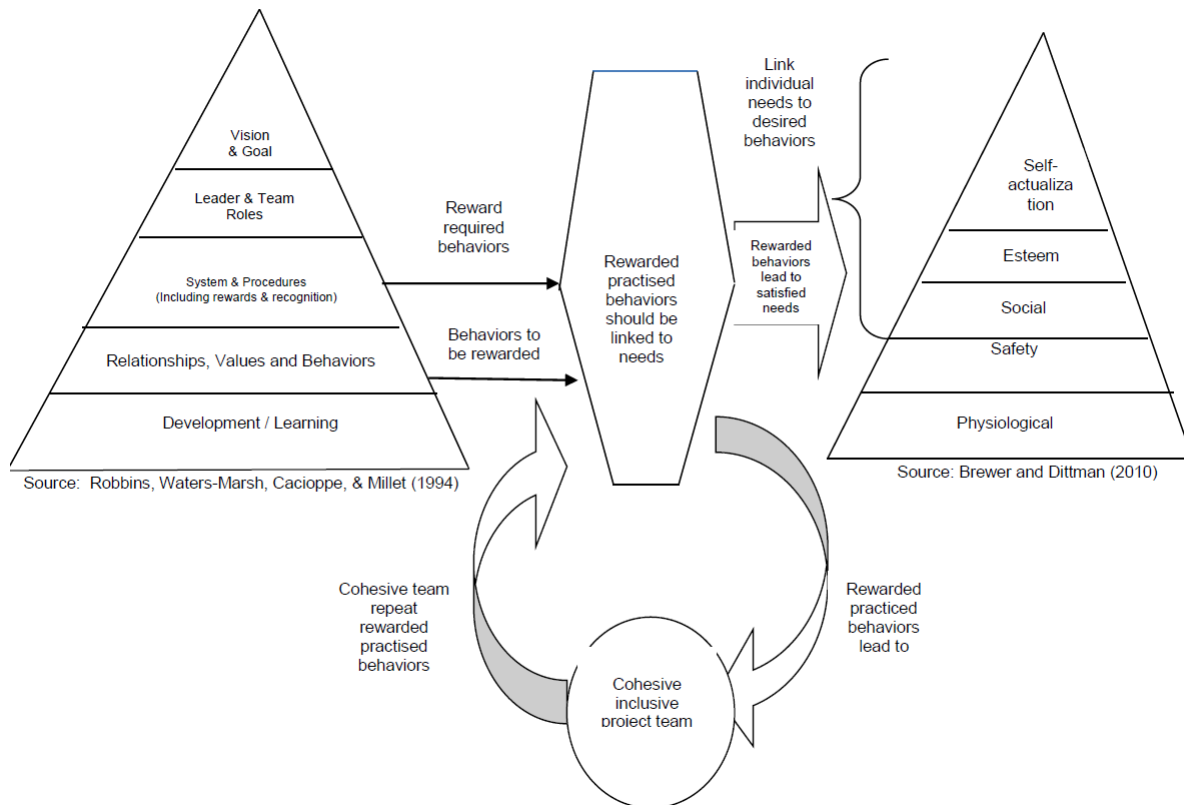


Fig. 1. Group Emphasis through Reward Criteria (GERC) model

Social level: On this level an employee's needs include *belonging, togetherness, approval and group inclusion*. It is important that team behaviors, values and relationships (from team effectiveness model) that promote team cohesion be encouraged, through the use of rewards and recognition. The rewarded behaviors, values and relationships practiced by team members should demonstrate that individual team members have a sense of belonging (satisfying the belonging need), the members have a sense that they are working together and collaborating (satisfying the togetherness need) as a team in achieving project results, and members perceive the team as an inclusive unit that promotes collectivism (satisfying the group inclusion need). The need to reward teams for behaviors that support cooperation, collaboration, teamwork and collective efforts is also supported by [18] who states that such rewards should be directed at team initiatives and not at individual efforts. High task interdependence would, for example, promote team work instead of individualistic efforts. The key here is that rewards should be aimed at encouraging certain behaviors [12] which, if practiced, will achieve two important things, namely, promotion of team work and satisfying individual needs at social level. People respond to what is measured [12] and rewarded through rewards. One thing that is less desirable at this level is to use rewards to encourage individualism by rewarding only 'shining stars' using subjective methods.

Esteem level: On this level an employee's needs include *reputation, and recognition* – the degree of importance. The required team behaviors, values and relationships which are linked to an employee's needs at this level include act of valuing and appreciating each member's contribution to the project. The team should be rewarded for recognizing and appreciating each team member's role and contribution, which by so doing will cause a team member feel valued and thus contributing in building the member's self-esteem. When the team is rewarded and recognized for such behaviors, one is demonstrating the importance of linking rewards to desired work results [5]. It is natural that anyone would

like to be recognized and appreciated for one's contribution in the team. If this does happen it will then boost the morale of the team member and motivate him/her to want to contribute more to the group effort in order to receive more recognition and also to want to remain as part of the group that appreciates his/her contributions. This reactive behavior by a team member will lead to a cohesive productive team which continuously values and recognizes each team member's individual effort. Moreover, such encouraged team behaviors, values and relationships will ultimately satisfy each member's needs at this level.

Self-Actualization level: On this level an employee's needs include *challenging work assignments*, evoking one's creative skills. The project manager should strive to assign tasks to project team members according to their capabilities, abilities and interests. Such tasks should be meaningful and challenging enough for team members so that they enable team member's creative and innovative skills. Graham and Englund [12] agree with this assertion and state that project managers should encourage creativity and eliminate fear of taking risks from team members. When team members are encouraged to use their creative abilities to solve project challenging problems, this contributes to the project success and also signals to team members that their skills are valued and appreciated in the project. Moreover, when team members feel their skills are valued and are put to good use they would want to continue to be part of the team and contribute to its success. Again, this reactive behavior by a team member will lead to a required cohesive productive team. The required behaviors from the project manager are directly linked to an employee's needs at this level and should positively contribute to employee's self-actualization needs. The project manager should be rewarded for recognizing, appreciating and using each team member's skills and talents to the betterment of the team.

It is important to point out that the behaviors that lead to group cohesion depend on both team members and project managers, that

is, some behaviors depend on team members and others on project managers. Therefore rewards and recognition should be aimed at the correct people on whom such behaviors depend. Some of the encouraged team behaviors may seem to be social activities which have little to do with the actual desired final project product or service [3], but are necessary for building a cohesive productive project team. If rewards are aimed at encouraging certain good project team behaviors, with the aim of, firstly, building a cohesive team, and secondly with the aim of satisfying identified individual project members' needs, then such rewards should not have a negative impact on individual performance as alluded to by [6]. Actually rewards send a clear message to employees as to what management regard as important in their behaviors and therefore wish to encourage it [6]. Furthermore, [6] goes on to say that rewards are what keep project team members together. Moreover, whatever is measured and rewarded, will turn to influence employee's behaviors. Zabal [18] supports this assertion, and states that the way employees perform their work correlates to the rewards they receive for the work done.

IV. APPLICATION OF THE GERC MODEL

Cacioppe [6] maintains that rewards serve as a tool for motivation as well as communication because they send a clear message about what the organization consider as important. The rewards can be given based on a team effort or individual effort. The GERC model based on the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model as well as the model of team effectiveness by [15] enables different forms of rewards to be used with the aim of encouraging good performance and building coherent teams. The model shows how rewards can be used to encourage certain behaviors which are linked to individual team member's needs to produce a coherent goal-focused project team. Moreover, the application of the GERC model enforces the link amongst rewards, team behaviors and individual members' needs. In the application of the GERC model, the dynamic process of team behavior should be borne in mind. There are general patterns that describe the evolution of teams; those patterns would involve different stages [6]. A five-stage development model involves formation, then comes a process of low performance, followed by storming then a high performance period and lastly adjournment. A punctuated-equilibrium model has groups showing long periods of inertia, combined with drastic changes triggered by members' cognizance of time and deadlines. Irrespective of the pattern used, as teams progress through the different stages in a particular pattern, "issues" are likely to arise which may cause the project team involved to regress; in such instances the GERC model can be applied in the different stages to identify the causes of those "issues" and at the same time address those causes. The application of GERC could align rewards with each stage in a team/project life span; that would therefore serve the purpose of recognizing and giving the teams or individual members encouragement throughout the different stages of a project.

V. CONCLUSION

Some of the encouraged team behaviors may seem to be social activities which have little to do with the actual desired final project product or service [3], but are necessary for building a cohesive productive project team. Furthermore, the GERC model developed in this paper emphasizes a need to link desired team behaviors to individual team members' unsatisfied needs with the aim of both satisfying such needs and also promoting team cohesion. Measuring and rewarding desired team behaviors will turn to influence employee's behaviors and resulting in cohesive project teams.

VI. FUTURE RESEARCH

The GERC conceptual model developed in this paper should be tested for its practicality and benefits that are claimed to accrue from its use. Another possible research opportunity presented by this model is the consideration of suitable rewards that would promote cohesive inclusive project teams.

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