

How Chinese Enterprises Effectively Establish Self-management Team

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Abstract

Since the 50s in the Twentieth Century, malpractice of traditional hierarchy organizational structure has been thoroughly exposed. Ever since then, team has become a basic brick for constitution of an organization with its flexible features, and self-management team is the optimal condition of team. Gradually, team has become a focus of attention and there have been a lot of studies about this organization pattern. At the time when this paper makes a preliminary exploration in the concept and features of this organization pattern, it also makes a further analysis in issues deserving attention in establishment of self-management team.

Keywords: Self-management team, Characteristics, Establishment, Team construction, Countermeasures

1. Introduction

In the past several years, organizational pattern of team has aroused great attention. The so-called team refers a small group of people who possess complementary skills, dedicated to a common goal, a group of common performance targets and a common method and take responsibility for the dedication. In China, theories and statements about team establishment and team management are mostly introduced in the form of advanced foreign theories and successful experiences. Especially under the great background when learning organization and enterprise reengineering theory is pervasive all over the world, as a new type of management model, self-management team has also been extensively studied and promoted. Experiences about self-management team of Japan are mostly introduced. The pattern of self-management team is helpful for an organization to better employ talents of its employees, and meanwhile, the organization may make a timely response to rapidly changing external environment. Then, how to establish self-management team in an effective way in Chinese enterprises to further enhance the overall strength of Chinese enterprises and reinforce the competitive advantage of Chinese enterprises in the international market seems especially important.

2. The Concept of self-management team

Understanding of the concept of self-management team is established on the basis of former experiences in European and American teams and is also influenced by the quality circle originating from Japan in Western organizations. At present, there are the following several definitions for self-management team:

Dennis Coates and Martha Miller (1998) thought a self-management team was a working team, and it didn't need any manager in its operation. Generally speaking, leadership and administrative functions were assigned to members in the team. Former leaders employed training and direction without any supervision or had a typical role, absorbed into a team as a production member. Members of the team conducted self-management and they decided how to construct a role and push forward working procedure and completion of a task. Stephen M .Ram Irez, M .S (1999) defined self-management team as a group of individuals with high level training who finished a definitely defined target with their obligation and authority. They stood for a new type of commercial mode, in which top managers hardly conducted the role of management and let the team itself attain and exceed an established target.

The above academics proposed the definition of self-management team from the perspective whether there is the role of manager. Their common viewpoint is that self-management team has a definite target, but it doesn't have a specific manager. Or rather, it basically doesn't need any manager.

Mohsen Attaran & TaiT.Nguyen (2000) put forward the definition of self-management team from the perspective of individual behavior of members in the team. According to them, self-management team was a complex

constituted by independent individuals and these individuals took responsibility for the task they burdened (however, these tasks were either correlated with final products or connected with lasting production or marketing progress). In addition, these individuals possessed a lot of skills and meanwhile continued to learn new skills to add to the flexibility of the team and the value of the team to enterprises and the society.

An overall consideration of all above definitions, this article proposes that self-management team refers to a team in which all members manage themselves, make a decision by themselves, supervise each other for realization of a common target and possess high decision making power in a state without any fixed manager. Self-management team requires an external leader to offer direction to the team from the strategic perspective who doesn't intervene in the decision making or behavior of the team.

Self-management team is a necessary choice in the process of corporate development and is the optimal state of the team. Self-management team emphasizes human-based management and regards employees as the center of the organization and the master of the enterprise. Compared with teams in other forms, self-management team possesses greater decision making power. After self-management team sets up an established target, it has sufficient decision making power to make a decision and may even frequently determine composition of the team, select its members and set up a system of mutual evaluation among its members.

3. Features of highly effective self-management team

A highly effective self-management team has the following several features:

3.1 Definite target

Self-management team should have a clear idea about the target it is going to achieve and be firmly confident that this target contains important meaning and value. This target coheres all the team members together and individual targets are integrated into this target. In this team, all team members are willing to do their level best for realization of the team target.

3.2 Excellent skills

Self-management team members possess skills and competence necessary for completion of a task. Besides, we also believe that, in addition to excellent skills and competence, members of the team should also have perfect personal quality. Only based on this precondition can we achieve the standard of a highly effective team.

3.3 Mutual trust

Mutual trust among members is a magic weapon for a successful self-management team to gain victory. Members of self-management team have high sense of mutual trust.

3.4 Consistent commitment

In order for the team to succeed, members of the team should exhibit high loyalty and commitment. The loyalty and commitment is a consistent commitment of members to the team. According to psychological research, the more the sense of identity team members have to the team, the more dedicated they are to the target of the team and the more they are willing to mobilize and tap their maximum potentials to realize this target.

3.5 Good communication

Without doubt, good communication is an indispensable feature of self-management team. It is an important condition for communication of team members for team members to have long term exchange by means of all sorts of speeches and non-verbal information. Through communication, misunderstanding may be eliminated between managers and team members and through communication, team members may come to a consensus. In this way, functions of self management of the team may be given a full play.

3.6 Good internal support and external support

In order to set up a self-management team, the indispensable condition is its supporting environment. From internal supporting conditions, the team ought to possess a rational basic structure. This includes appropriate training, a set of assessment system that is easy to understand and is used to evaluate the overall performance of employees and a human resource system that plays a role of support. Appropriate basic structure is able to support and intensify behaviors of employees so as to achieve high performance level. From external conditions, the managerial level should provide all kinds of resources that are necessary for completion of the task by the team.

4. The status quo and challenges of Chinese enterprises to use the pattern of self-management team

4.1 The status quo of Chinese enterprises to use the pattern of self-management team

The status quo of Chinese enterprises to use the pattern of self-management team is follows: firstly, the number of self-management teams actually established by enterprises is limited; secondly, development of quite a lot of self-management teams is confined to corporate inherent model and corporate culture; thirdly, self-management teams that have already been established have not got enough protection and support from the top level of the organizations.

4.2 Challenges of Chinese enterprises to establish self-management team

Due to the particularity of Chinese enterprises, enterprises might be encountered with more and more challenges and problems in many aspects in the process of establishment of self-management team. We believe that, at the time when we carefully analyze the feasibility of implementing self-management team, enterprises also have to carefully study all varieties of obstrcts and problems in implementation of self-management team so as to encourage enterprises to take corresponding specific measures to try to establish good environment for operation and running of self-management team.

4.2.1 Challenges of organizational structure

Although it is true that some enterprises in China have achieved considerate achievements in innovation of organizational structure, still a large majority of enterprises, especially large-scale corporate groups, adopt traditional hierarchical bureaucracy system or pyramid structure. This kind of structure generally has the following problems: (1) traditional hierarchical bureaucracy system or pyramid structure restrains development of self-management team; (2) traditional information transmission method obstrcts free flow of information necessary for self-management team; (3) the consciousness of self isolation of departments also brings hindrance to development of self-management team.

4.2.2 Challenges of corporate culture

In many Chinese corporate cultures, employees distrust each other, leadership of managers to the subordinates is mainly supervision and control, and the degree of authorization is poor. The consciousness of the mater in quite a lot of employees and the sense of self-pride is flimsy and the competence of creation and adaptability is generally poor. In order to set up self-management team, we have to boldly change the culture that does not fit with this kind of organizational pattern.

4.2.3 Challenges of managerial level

Managers in Chinese enterprises have already been accustomed to the decision making power, so once they give sufficient authorization to the employees, they are worried that their employees might not have totally free ability to employ authority and formulate correct decisions. However, the pre-condition to set up self-management team is the sufficient authorization of the managerial level. Besides, it is required that managers gradually give up the power of decision making and delegate the power to employees of the self-management team.

4.2.4 Challenges of human resources

Quality of self-management team members is the critical factor that affects the overall performance of the team. In addition to strict control over establishment of self-management team in its initial stage, continuous training on quality of team members and competence in all aspects is also quite important. Many Chinese enterprises do not pay attention to training on their employees and are too conventional in the methods of training. In terms of the state of mind, some entrepreneurs are worried that after the capacity of their employees is enhanced and they get “fully fledged”, they may leave their working position. Thus, these entrepreneurs are reluctant to make any investment in training on employees. As for a large number of enterprises, even if they have conducted training, they tend to rush for quick results in their establishment of the training target and implementation of the training. Some enterprises even regard training as a burden, but not an investment. All the above situations objectively cause enterprises to, on the hand, be eager for high quality talents to establish a team to improve the corporate efficiency, and, on the other hand, be unable to find a correct way out.

4.2.5 Challenges of employees

Employees in enterprises have already been accustomed to working under the mode of traditional command control, and most authority and responsibility is possessed and burdened by managers. Thus, some employees actually have not the quality and competence required for self-management team. However, when they are faced up with this new type of organizational pattern, namely, self-management team, they not only need to adjust

themselves in their cognition and state of mind, but also have to improve themselves accordingly in knowledge reserve and competence training. Especially, general absence of independency, initiative and creation brings lots of challenges to effective establishment of self-management team.

5. Issues deserving attention for Chinese enterprises to establish self-management team

Self-management team is not accomplished in one action. Thus, in implementation of self-management, Chinese enterprises have to attach importance to the following several aspects:

5.1 Definite the target of team working

To set up definite and clear-cut team working target means a lot to the work of self-management team. This can not only guarantee that the team acts in the way that is related with the team target, but can also ensure the efficiency and effects of the team work.

5.2 Size of the team

The size of the team is another important factor that affects performance of self-management team. Supposing that the size of the team is too large, the normal operation of the team might be affected adversely. However, a limited number of members might cause the whole team to lack sufficient experiences and ideas, which might further cause impossible completion of the team work as a result of absence of sufficient team members. Specific team member number ought to correspond with the team target.

5.3 Diversification of the background of team members

According to quite a lot of researches, the diversification of the background of team members is strongly correlated with creation of the team and efficiency of decision making. In the team, we have to make an attempt to change the diversified backgrounds of team members into the competitive advantage of the team, but not an inferior disadvantage. Simultaneously, we also have to pay attention to unification of ideas in the process and gradually add to cohesion force of the team.

5.4 Support of the managerial level

Support of the managerial level is one of the necessary conditions for effective work of self-management team. The managerial level ought to offer guidance to self-management team, provide all sorts of conditions necessary for the work of the self-management team and allow self-management team to propose some innovative resolutions that are different from current practice. In the meanwhile, the managerial level should recognize the working achievements of the self-management team and stimulate self-management team to play a more and more important role in the organization.

5.5 Determination of income and rank

As for the members of self-management team, we think that team members should have relatively equal rank and be equally treated in the team.

5.6 Performance evaluation system

A team performance evaluation system should be set up that is different from other employees in an organization, and this evaluation system will take more consideration of working performance of the self-management team and fulfillment of the target of self-management team. We believe, in performance evaluation, evaluation on individual evaluation should give place to the overall evaluation on the team, with the purpose that competition between team members may not affect the overall performance of the self-management team.

Generally speaking, a highly effective self-management team is the result of continuous team establishment by organizations. Starting out from their own demands, the organizations formulate comprehensive self-management establishment or re-construction program, recognize working principles of the team through continuous training, impart the concept of self-management team and provide training about problems solving, communication skills and team establishment, etc. Top executives in the organizations make a public and free communication with self-management team and different self-management teams and internal self-management team also have unimpeded communication. The organizations attempt to keep the universality and publicity of information exchange and sufficient trust in team members is the precondition for establishment of self-management team.

6. Countermeasures of Chinese enterprises to effectively use self-management team

6.1 To establish a flattening organizational structure to support self-management team

High information sharing, high decision making power and high participation of self-management team decides

that the organizational structure required by self-management team is a flattening organizational structure. Meanwhile, introduction of self-management team is also helpful to stimulate flattening of organizational structure.

6.2 To strengthen the ability of the team to learn to construct the core of the enterprise

In order to construct the core capacity of an enterprise, an effective method is to advocate learning in the team. Team learning is also an important attribute of self-management team. Team learning is a skill to improve collective thinking in learning organizations, which can create a environment of mutual communication and mutual trust. In the environment of team learning, organization members exchange with each other and their ideas and creation collide and are enlightened here, which helps organizational members to convert implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge, realize knowledge sharing in the team and fulfill new combination and creation on this basis. Core capacity is integration of numerous skills and technologies, which can only be realized under collective efforts. Team learning provides the most fundamental condition for the core capacity of establishing organizations.

6.3 To establish supporting organizational culture

An organizational culture that is helpful for self-management team ought to be positive organizational culture, a culture that encourages employees to take part in decision making and in which all members convert their role, a culture that switches from commanding play of individual capacity to commanding play of team capacity, a human-based corporate culture and a tolerant culture that is able to encourage reform. Such a culture can easily get identification of team members and easily mould good mutual trust of self-management team and atmosphere of self-management. Such a culture can unify will of employees and enable employees to work around the overall target of enterprises and fully tap their potentials, integrate and coordinate their own work with its charisma, cohesion force, stimulating force and adjusting force.

7. Conclusions

Since the concept of self-management team is put forward, it has received more and more attention from organizations and enterprises. For the time being, in face of challenges of economic globalization, implementation of self-management team in Chinese enterprises seems especially important. In the meanwhile, with aggravation of the market competition and changeable environment, self-management team constituted by employees with creative power, high intelligence and result-oriented employees can better adapt to changes of the environment and can effectively fulfill the target of the enterprise, which is the key to long term survival and development of Chinese enterprises.

However, quite a large number of Chinese enterprises have not had a clear idea about establishment of self-management team, and meanwhile, are lacking in specific practice methods and theoretical direction. This paper has made a preliminary exploration in the concept and features of self-management team, how Chinese enterprises effectively establish self-management team and issues deserving attention in establishment of self-management team, with the aim to provide some opinions and references for Chinese enterprises to set up and implement self-management team.

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