

The Impact of Organization Development Intervention (ODI) on Teamwork and Communication and the Relationship with Employee Commitment, Work Engagement, and Job Satisfaction: Action Research of Family-Owned SME Transportation Company, Thailand

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Abstract

Change is inevitable in today's business practices. Through the ongoing pressures leading to these changes, firms must undergo several transitions between industries, lifecycle stages, and business strategies. Company X, under the examination here is competing within a growing transportation and logistics industry, so it needs to draw on every resource available to cope with challenges and competitiveness of the industry. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of organization development intervention (ODI) on teamwork and communication and the relationship with employee commitment, work engagement, and job satisfaction at Company X. Mixed research method was used to examine the current situation and changes in employee perception after intervention. The action research was employed to design an intervention responsiveness to the organization's context, needs, and goals. In conclusion, the ODI process was successful as it did make a statistically significant difference in employee



commitment, work engagement, and job satisfaction. Although the difference in teamwork and communication was not statistically significant, interviews from participants revealed some areas of substantial improvement, including interdepartmental coordination and interpersonal communication. Following the study, recommendations for further training and development program to the focal company was addressed.

Keywords: organization development, organization change, family business

Introduction

Thailand's tourism industry is bolstered by an efficient, convenient, and cost-friendly intercity bus industry. This network of commercial bus and coach firms allows tourists and Thai people travel cost-effectively and rapidly around Thailand (Discovery Thailand, 2016). However, the industry is plagued by road safety problems, which translates to the perceptions that intercity buses are dangerous and managed inappropriately (Addley, 2011). As evidence shows that Thailand is ranked one of the highest in the world in traffic fatalities, with numbers showing that in every 100,000 deaths 36.2 are caused by road traffic accidents (James, 2015). This risk perception makes safety and efficient employee performance a critical aspect of firm reputation in the bus industry. The focal company of this study operates in the road transport services sector, which is particularly important for tourism industry. A Thai transportation company, Company X, is one of the leading family-owned coach transportation companies in Thailand. Although the company is currently well-managed it still faces several challenges; like most SMEs it struggled with growth due to limited resources. Organization analysis including the McKinsey 7S framework, STAR model, SWOT analysis, and SOAR analysis were used in the preliminary diagnosis steps to identify key problems

of Company X. The analysis indicated that Company X differentiating factors includes safety processes, service processes, operational efficiency, and brand differentiation. However, its organizational structure is highly centralized, layered and fragmented. At the same time company continues to operate as a traditional family-run company, with top-down management styles, seniority-based promotion, and widespread sales network with little communication and interaction between groups. These lead to low level of teamwork and internal and external two-way communication in the company.

Purposes

The purpose of this research is to improve the level of teamwork and communication at Company X, through organization development interventions (ODI). The ODI, activities designed with the organization to affect the desired change and cement it within the organization (Yeager & Sorensen, 2009), was used to develop a supportive environment, improve staff and management communication skills, and engage in team building exercises to help employees and departments work and collaborate more effectively. Additionally, the aim of this paper is to describe and explain the action research would take within the organization. Thus, evaluates whether the approach was successful at improving teamwork and communication level

or not as well as to investigate its effects and relationship with employee commitment, work engagement, and job satisfaction in the company.

Hypothesis (if any)

Overall, the study focused on 11 hypotheses. Hypothesis 1-5 based on evaluated the mean difference between pre and post ODI while the other six hypothesis (hypothesis 6-11) based on the relationship between variables. All hypotheses were as followed.

H1_o: There is no significant difference between pre-ODI and post-ODI in teamwork.

H2_o: There is no significant difference between pre-ODI and post-ODI in communication.

H3_o: There is no significant difference between pre-ODI and post-ODI in employee commitment.

H4_o: There is no significant difference between pre-ODI and post-ODI in work engagement.

H5_o: There is no significant difference between pre-ODI and post-ODI in job satisfaction.

H6_o: There is no statistical relationship between teamwork and employee commitment.

H7_o: There is no statistical relationship between teamwork and work engagement.

H8_o: There is no statistical relationship between teamwork and job satisfaction.

H9_o: There is no statistical relationship between communication and employee commitment.

H10_o: There is no statistical relationship between communication and work engagement.

H11_o: There is no statistical relationship between communication and job satisfaction.

Benefit of Research

The main significance of the study will be for Company X itself. The company has several

significant issues that are currently confusing its operational, management, and leadership strategies. The action research project will be undertaken with a goal to improving the firm's operational performance and capabilities through its employee's teamwork and communication effectiveness. This will help to improve Company X's operating position and its long-term flexibility and resilience, as well as improve its employee experience and relationships. The firm's employees will also benefit, since their working environment will be improved. The study will also affect the firm's leadership and management. Ideally, Company X will reduce its dependence on the top-down leadership style, one-way communication and seniority-driven management, which will increase its ability to fully benefit from its employees' skills and knowledge. The study will have some significance to the broader transport and logistics industry in Thailand, since it will help improve the position of one of the major ground transport operators. This could affect the position of competitors. Finally, the study will have significance for OD research, since it will demonstrate application OD principles in a developing country family business context, which is unusual in the literature.

Research Process

To achieve the purpose of the study, mixed methods and intervention-based action research methodology were employed.

Population and Sample

This research was designed as a case study of Company X. Thus, the subjects of the study were employees of the company. The participants in the study were selected based on the observed



organizational programs, including the seniority-based promotion system, low internal coordination and poor communication. The emphasis was placed on back-end office operations rather than customer-facing roles (bus drivers, hostesses and bellboys) because back-end departments often work in more isolation meaning that they would benefit more from introduction of the ODI. Both managers and line employees, were selected with a final sample size of $n = 84$.

Instruments

Quantitative Instrument

For the quantitative research, data were collected using a standardized questionnaire. Teamwork and Communication were based on straightforward practice-oriented instruments developed by Clark (2016) and PeoplePulse (n.d.) respectively. The instrument used to measure Employee Commitment was the Allen and Meyer (1990) three-dimensional employee commitment instrument. The main source for Work Engagement was the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). Job Satisfaction was measured using Spector's (1997) Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). Cronbach's alpha was used to measure instrument internal consistency. There was no standard acceptance threshold for Cronbach's alpha, but a rule of thumb was that measures above ≥ 0.7 were acceptable for non-diagnostic research (Babbie, 2008). The result of reliability test indicated that all items for each variable were reliable with overall reliability result equal to 0.954.

Qualitative Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was used for the qualitative interviews. Purposive sampling was used for the qualitative research of the study.

The participants were selected based on their position, knowledge and experience. The qualitative sample included 10 managers and 10 staff members, for a total sample size of $n = 20$. The topics participants were generally asked included: their work experience with the company in terms of teamwork and communication; overall commitment, engagement, and satisfaction. Unlike the questionnaire instrument, there was no easy statistical way to test the reliability and validity of the qualitative interview guide. Instead, content and face validity was used to assess the qualitative content of an instrument. Content validity related to whether the instrument or items were corrected from a theoretical perspective while face validity related to whether the instrument made sense from a common-sense perspective and was understood by the participants. In this study, content validity was assessed by expert reviews and face validity was tested through practice interviews and peer review (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Action Research

The general research design of this study is action research. Action research is the methodological approach of organizational development (Cummings & Worley, 2015 ; McLean, 2006). The purpose of action research is not just to derive academic knowledge from study of an organization, but to effect change in the organization and to meet the organization's needs (McLean, 2006).

The planned interventions included three stages starting from "Travel from the Unknown" (Pre-ODI), "Embrace the Journey" (ODI), and "Every Ending is a New Beginning" (POST-ODI). Under this model individuals will gradually move from the current situation of unknown self to improve

themselves during the ODI activities and relearn the new things for continuous self-improvement. The desired post-ODI stage included higher levels of teamwork and communication. With the results of these changes, it is expected that the level of employee commitment, work engagement, and job satisfaction will also be higher.

Two activities conducted during the pre-ODI stage included kick-off meeting and assessment. Quantitative questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were conducted to assess current situations of teamwork, communication, employee commitment, work engagement, and job satisfaction of the company.

The ODI was conducted over a period of three months. The OD process was planned as a series of three intervention activities, each of which focused on a separate area of development. The ODI began with “Know Yourself to Win Yourself Workshop” to set a platform for learning and future training sessions. This workshop was designed to provide an insight into the participants’ learning styles and to show how this affects their commitment,

engagement, and satisfaction. It was also intended to encourage individuals toward self-knowledge, better self-understanding, understand how other people think and how this affected their workplace performance.

The second workshop was “Stronger Together Workshop”. In this workshop, special attention was paid to group work in building up collaboration and communication at all levels of the organization. The purpose of this workshop was to lower individual barriers and ego, build up spirit, encourage connections, building communication, employee commitment, and work engagement.

The third activity of the ODI was “Let Me Hear Your Voice Workshop”. This workshop was designed to encourage idea sharing and communication throughout all work functions and organizational levels. Objectives included developing an understanding of the importance and effects of communication and building two-way communication by focusing on effective mechanisms for workplace communication.

Four months after the final workshop, which

Table 1 Paired Samples T-Test: Descriptive Statistics Outcome

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean Error
Pair 1	Pre Teamwork	3.7548	84	.42721	.04661
	Post Teamwork	3.8190	84	.35753	.03901
Pair 2	Pre Communication	3.5887	84	.45979	.05017
	Post Communication	3.6577	84	.42259	.04611
Pair 3	Pre Employee Commitment	3.6567	84	.63431	.06921
	Post Employee Commitment	3.8085	84	.56130	.06124
Pair 4	Pre Work Engagement	3.9381	84	.56120	.06123
	Post Work Engagement	4.0873	84	.53972	.05889
Pair 5	Pre Job Satisfaction	3.4298	84	.43484	.04745
	Post Job Satisfaction	3.6140	84	.43219	.04716

Table 2 Paired Samples T-Test: T-Test Outcomes

		Paired Differences				T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper			
Pair 1	Pre – Post Teamwork	-.06429	.41664	.04546	-.15470 .02613	-1.414	83	.161
Pair 2	Pre – Post Communication	-.06905	.38573	.04209	-.15276 .01466	-1.641	83	.105
Pair 3	Pre – Post Employee Commitment	-.15179	.45278	.04940	-.25005 -.05353	-3.072	83	.003
Pair 4	Pre – Post Work Engagement	-.14921	.39699	.04332	-.23536 -.06305	-3.445	83	.001
Pair 5	Pre – Post Job Satisfaction	-.18421	.43050	.04697	-.27763 -.09079	-3.922	83	.000

allowed participants to assimilate the information communicated in the workshop, the post-ODI meeting was held. The aim of the post-ODI meeting were to collect information about the ODI and its outcomes, using storytelling, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The target respondents for both questionnaire and interview were the same as pre-ODI. At this stage, results were compared to the pre-ODI period to determine whether expect results were met.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

To investigate the difference between pre and post ODI in teamwork and communication, employee commitment, work engagement and job satisfaction, paired sample t-test at confidence level of 95% ($p < 0.05$) was used to determine a statistical significant change.

The descriptive statistics (Table 1) showed that there was a positive mean difference between the pre-test and post-test conditions for all five scales. The highest mean difference was observed in Job Satisfaction (0.1842 points increase) followed by Employee Commitment (0.1518 points increase),

Work Engagement (0.1492 points increase), Communication (0.069 points increase), with the lowest increase in Teamwork (0.0642 points increase).

However, in order to test whether the mean differences between pre and post ODI were statistically significant or not, paired-sample t-test (Table2) was used which showed teamwork and communication outcome to be ($t(83) = -1.414$ and $p = 0.161$) and ($t(83) = -1.641$, $p = 0.105$) respectively. The result did not pass the threshold of $p < 0.05$ for significance. Therefore, there was no significant difference in perceptions of teamwork and communication between pre and post-ODI.

Nevertheless, the results for the other three scales were different. The t-tests indicated that employee commitment ($t(83) = -3.072$, $p = 0.003$), work engagement ($t(83) = -3.445$, $p = 0.001$), and job satisfaction ($t(83) = -3.922$, $p = 0.000$) did pass the threshold of $p < 0.05$ for significance. Therefore, there was a significant difference in perceptions of employee commitment, work engagement, and job satisfaction between pre and post-ODI.

To answer further research question of whether there was any statistical relationship between these variables or not, Pearson correlation

Table 3 Correlation Table for Organizational Processes and Outcomes (Post-ODI)

	Employee Commitment	Work Engagement	Job Satisfaction
Teamwork	.262 (.016)	.512 (<.001)	.419 (<.001)
Communication	.550 (<.001)	.677 (<.001)	.593 (<.001)

analysis was used to examine the relationship outcome. The correlations were assessed from the post-ODI results, showing the relationships identified at the end of the process.

The correlation table summarized in Table 3 showed that all six relationships tested were significant. The strength level suggested by Evans (1996) indicated that there was a weak positive statistical relationship between teamwork and employee commitment, whereas relationship between teamwork and work engagement and job satisfaction was at moderate. Regarding communication variable, the correlation outcome stated that there was a moderate positive statistical relationship between communication and employee commitment and job satisfaction. Whereas, relationship between communication and work engagement was at strong.

Qualitative Analysis

The comparison between pre and post-ODI interviews, showed that participants had positive changes in nearly all areas, whilst leaving some criteria unimproved. Teamwork, especially cross-departmental collaboration was substantially improved indicating a better understanding of the organizational structure, departmental responsibilities, and knowledge of contacts for specific tasks. Participants showed strong affective commitment driven by passion for their work and

encouraged by opportunities for advancement and trust. A common trend in the responses was that although the company was not perfect, the relationships and atmosphere created pride and enjoyment in coming to work. However, there was no substantial factors identified on normative and continuance commitment during the interview. Work engagement was improved with attention being paid to develop human resources. Job satisfaction had improved in areas of job challenges, positive relationships with co-workers, recognition from others, and a clearer promotion path. There was also dissatisfaction with pay and benefits, especially perceived inequality in benefit distribution. However, ODIs did not address issues of pay and benefits, so it was not surprising that this would be dissatisfactory. Thus, it could be stated that the interview identified another areas for further improvement in job satisfaction.

While interpersonal communication strategies and practices was improved, there were some problems related to use of LINE (a mobile instant communication application), two-way communication gaps, and problems with communicating with external organizations. However, this action research process focused only on the organization level and did not accurately target the identified communication problem. Therefore, communication continued to be a challenge, especially at the organizational level for Company X.



Conclusion

The result of the study revealed that the ODI process was successful in overall. ODI did make nine out of eleven null hypotheses of the study rejected as follow.

- **H1_o** was failed to reject indicated that there is no significant difference in teamwork.
- **H2_o** was failed to reject indicated that there is no significant difference in communication.
- **H3_o** was reject indicated that there is a significant difference in employee commitment.
- **H4_o** was reject indicated that there is a significant difference in work engagement.
- **H5_o** was reject indicated that there is a significant difference in job satisfaction.
- **H6_o** was reject indicated that there is a weak statistical relationship between teamwork and employee commitment.
- **H7_o** was reject indicated that there is a moderate statistical relationship between teamwork and work engagement.
- **H8_o** was reject indicated that there is a moderate statistical relationship between teamwork and job satisfaction.
- **H9_o** was reject indicated that there is a moderate statistical relationship between communication and employee commitment.
- **H10_o** was reject indicated that there is a strong statistical relationship between communication and work engagement.
- **H11_o** was reject indicated that there is a moderate statistical relationship between communication and job satisfaction.

Although the difference in teamwork and communication was not statistically significant, the interviews revealed some areas of substantial improvement, including interdepartmental

coordination and interpersonal communication.

Recommendation

The ODI succeeded not just as a one-time activity, but as a development process to enhance the firm's activities moving forward. Therefore, recommendations for Company X for further improvement were suggested as follows;

- Improves teamwork by incorporated SCHOOL Model, a model gained from an intervention, into their future training and development activities. The model is focused on six areas including strong job enrichment; cooperation & teamwork; home & family (creates the sense of belonging). opportunity & growth (challenging by task); organizational support (resources); and leadership (monitoring, coaching, compliments and feedback).
- Improves communication through communication processes and channels. The company should improve and diversifies a new communication channels that enabling a two-way communication between executives and employees, as well as among teams.
- Improves employee commitment through organizational culture. The company should build on it culture of highly supportive atmosphere, good co-worker relationships, and high loyalty. Thus, make it explicit by integrating employees as family members.
- Improves work engagement through engagement program. It was recommended that the company should develop a formal work-engagement program, which will help improve level of employee engagement and subsequent outcomes.
- Improves job satisfaction through standardizing human resource management system and practices. The HRM system should be

standardized and focus on job enrichment, career path development, and provision of opportunities and growth.

Additionally, a recommendation for further study emerged from this research. As OD was a constantly changing field with a seemingly endless supply of new approaches to intervention and many previous studied on intervention efficacy

focused on single organization case studies. This meant that any particular interventions have little practical or empirical guidance on how effective it was and what kind of organizational situations can be best applied. Therefore, there is an opportunity for further study on broader of intervention practices, their effectiveness and contextual appropriateness.



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