Exercise: Team Problems
The Digital Home Case Study

Team Problems Exercise

Scenario

In early August of 2010, HomeOwner Inc. (the largest national retail chain serving the needs of home owners) established a new DigitalHomeOwner division that was set up to explore the opportunities for equipping and serving "smart houses" (dwellings that integrate smart technology into every aspect of home living). In August and September of 2010, the Marketing Division of HomeOwner conducted a needs assessment for a DigitalHome (DH) product that would provide the computer and communication infrastructure for managing and controlling the "smart" devices into a home to best meet the needs and desires of homeowners. The Marketing Division produced two documents: the DH Customer Need Statement and the DH High Level Requirements Definition (HLRD).

Using the documents developed by marketing, DigitalHomeOwner has launched a pilot project (called the DH project) to examine and assess the technical and developmental issues of the smart house concept. A five person team was assembled for the project in late Spetember 2010.

During the project launch, Jose Ortiz, the Director of DigitalHomeOwner Division, wanted to build a strong team that would work well together. Since none of the team members had worked together in the past, he designed a team activity where team members would discuss teamwork problems that they had experienced in previous projects. The team problems described at the end of this booklet discuss some of the past problems experienced by the DH team members and ask questions about resolving the problems.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this exercise students will have increased ability to:
* describe some of the personnel problems that may be experienced by software project teams
* develop solutions to team personnel problems
* appreciate the need for project team members to work together effectively

Reading Assignment

Read the below Case Study Artifacts:
* DH Background Scenario
* DH Team Biographical Sketches
* DH Customer Need Statement
* DH High Level Requirements Definition (HLRD)
* DH Launch Process

Exercise Description

1. As preparation for this exercise, read the Case Study Artifacts listed above.

2. You will be assigned to a small team. Each team is assigned one of the team problem descriptions in this booklet, which describes a team personnel problem.

3. The team meets and discusses the problem and answers to questions about the problem. Then, they decide on various approaches that might be taken to solve the problem.

4. Each team summarizes its discussion and conclusions in a team report. Choose one member of their group to report to the class on the team's discussion and conclusions.

Georgia Magee's problem: Don't worry your pretty little head.

While working at Volcanic Power Company, Georgia served on a project team to develop a power regulation product. One of Georgia's teammates was a young software engineer named Kevin: Kevin had been writing programs since he was in middle school, had graduated with honors in computer science from Cornegie Mullon University, and was considered a real whiz at constructing software. The Team Leader, Roy, is an easygoing fellow that just wants to get through the project without making too many tough decisions. During project launch, Kevin argued strongly that he was best qualified to be the development manager (responsible for managing system analysis and design). Without consulting with anyone else, Roy designated Kevin as the project Development Manger. So far, in the first development cycle, Kevin has completed the whole design by himself (without consulting with anyone) and written nearly all of the source code. The team is ready to go into system test and Kevin has told everyone not to worry, he is great at testing software and he will handle it. Georgia was assigned the role of Process/Quality Manager. She complained to Roy that because Kevin is doing everything, the team is not really following the Company's established development process. Roy tries to convince Georgia that things are going great, Kevin is doing a great job, and not to worry her pretty little head about such things as "design' and "coding" and just concentrate on the process stuff.

Suppose you are the VP of Information Technology at Volcanic Power and Georgia brings her complaints to you. What would you do?

Massood's problem: Slacker on the loose.

While attending the University of Central California (UCC) Massood was enrolled in a senior design project course, which involves development of an autonomous chemical sensing robot. The design team was made up of computer science and computer engineering majors. One of the team members, Burt, has spent more time in his life trying to get out of work than actually working. He seems to really enjoy concocting schemes for avoiding labor of any sort. He is bright enough, and this has allowed him to stumble through three years of a CS program at UCC with a C minus average. Unfortunately, he is now enrolled in the senior design course and has been assigned as a programmer on the project team. Each week, Burt is suppose to submit a report on his work (tasks completed, time spent on the project and a description of any problems incurred) to Massood, who is the project Planning Manager. Massood became really fed up with Burt. Burt's reports were always late and incomplete, and they look like they were made up minutes before submission. Massood discussed this with the other team members, and they all agree that Burt was a slacker and had contributed next to nothing to the project. They urged the team leader, Juan, to discuss this with the teacher. They would like to get Burt off their team before he does too much damage.

Juan met with you, the teacher, explained the situation, and asked that Burt be removed from their team. If you were the teacher what would you do?

Disha'S problem: It's time to make some changes.

On her first project at *SoftMedic* Disha was a member of a team for which Sally was the Team Leader. Sally was intelligent, hard working and very ambitious; but she had never led a project of this magnitude. After the first cycle, the *SoftMedic* Quality Assurance Director gave the team an average overall assessment. Most would consider Sally's team "average". They worked fairly hard, but were a technology oriented group and did not aspire to move up the corporate ladder, like Sally. Sally wanted the team to be viewed as outstanding and made this clear to her teammates. In the second cycle, Sally has taken a firmer hand and has now given direct orders to each of the team members about how and when they should do their work. If work is not completed the way she expects, she will berate a team member in the weekly team meeting. After the cycle 2 design inspection, Sally stated "It's clear to me that you guys just don't care about this project, and I think it is time to make some changes! From now on, we will meet every evening at 6, and I expect each of you to make a daily report on what you have been doing." The team, mostly a mild-mannered group, doesn't dispute Sally's proclamation and walks off mumbling to themselves.

As the VP of Development, one of the team members comes to you to complain about the situation. What should you tell the team member? What should you do with Sally, if anything? How should you handle the situation?

Yao's problem: Double Trouble

Yao's last project at HomeOwner involved development of an inventory application that could be embedded in checkout scanners and handheld devices. Yao was designated as the Design Manager and he looked forward to the project. However, two of the team member caused problems: Greg and Whitney just don't like each other; they had been involved in several run-ins in the past. They were both excellent engineers, but just could not get along. Greg was the Requirements Analyst and Whitney the Planning Manager. The team had just completed the requirements phase and was starting the design phase. During the requirements inspection meeting Greg and Whitney had a big disagreement about the way one of the requirements was written, and almost came to blows. In the first meeting about the design, Yao presented a preliminary design architecture. Greg and Whitney proceeded to spend almost the entire meeting bickering over every detail of the architecture. Finally, Harry, the team leader, said "Enough! We can't do anything productive until you two stop acting like children". After the meeting Harry met with both of them, separately, and tried to resolve the problem, but he could not make any headway.

Harry comes to you, the Division Head, for help. What do you do?