OD INTERVENTIONS TO DEVELOP COMMITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT IN SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT TEAMS

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Abstract: *This paper presents some of the OD interventions to develop Commitment and Engagement in a software development company. It is based on the study of Preudhikulpradab, S. (2011) "Organization Spirituality: Commitment, Awareness, Readiness, and Engagement (C.A.R.E.) for Organization Development and Transformation: A Case of ABC Co., Ltd. This paper presents only the business practices, processes, and recommendations related to Commitment and Engagement in the focal system of the research.*

Key words: *commitment, engagement, team performance, organization development interventions*

The focal system is a Thai software and professional services company. It is a relatively young company established in 1991. The company has undergone re-organization which included the change of management. Fast turnover rate and low level of commitment are some of the issues they were confronted with.

People play and important role in the continual and successful functioning of an organization. Organizationally, they help maintain the direction and focus exploring and pursuing a higher level of achievement, self-fulfilment, and actualization at the personal level. Organizations should recognize that there will always be exciting human potential which could be tapped and developed. It is inevitable to acknowledge that the 21st century employees are those who choose whether they want to work, stay, or leave the workplace. It is no longer purely a matter of fulfilling psychological needs (e.g. money, shelter, food, medicines, etc.) alone that motivate employees to stay in their workplaces. Presently, members of the organization stay for a more essential reason: they find their life's purpose and meaning in their work and these are manifested through the level of their

Commitment and Engagement. Their level of commitment and engagement are basic elements in improving the performance and delivery of teams.

Vivaldi and Thorman (n.d.) mention that software development today claim they use "teams" in the workplace cite the characteristics of an organization with a well-functioning team, as the following: (http://www.addalot.se/upload/files/TBD-PAP-B.pdf)

- Commitment: within the organization, project tasks are treated as agreements which implies higher job responsibility and job satisfaction
- Empowerment: teams are empowered to find and implement creative solutions to the problems they encounter
- Goal Driven: clear and explicitly stated goals enable participation and common understanding
- Quality: early detection is a key to reach higher quality
- Humanity : the teamwork process ensures that we focus not only on technical aspects but on the human aspects such as personal goals, self-esteem, values, trust and feedback.

In the study, Commitment was defined as an "experience that individuals firmly accept and analyse all sources of knowledge, data and information and

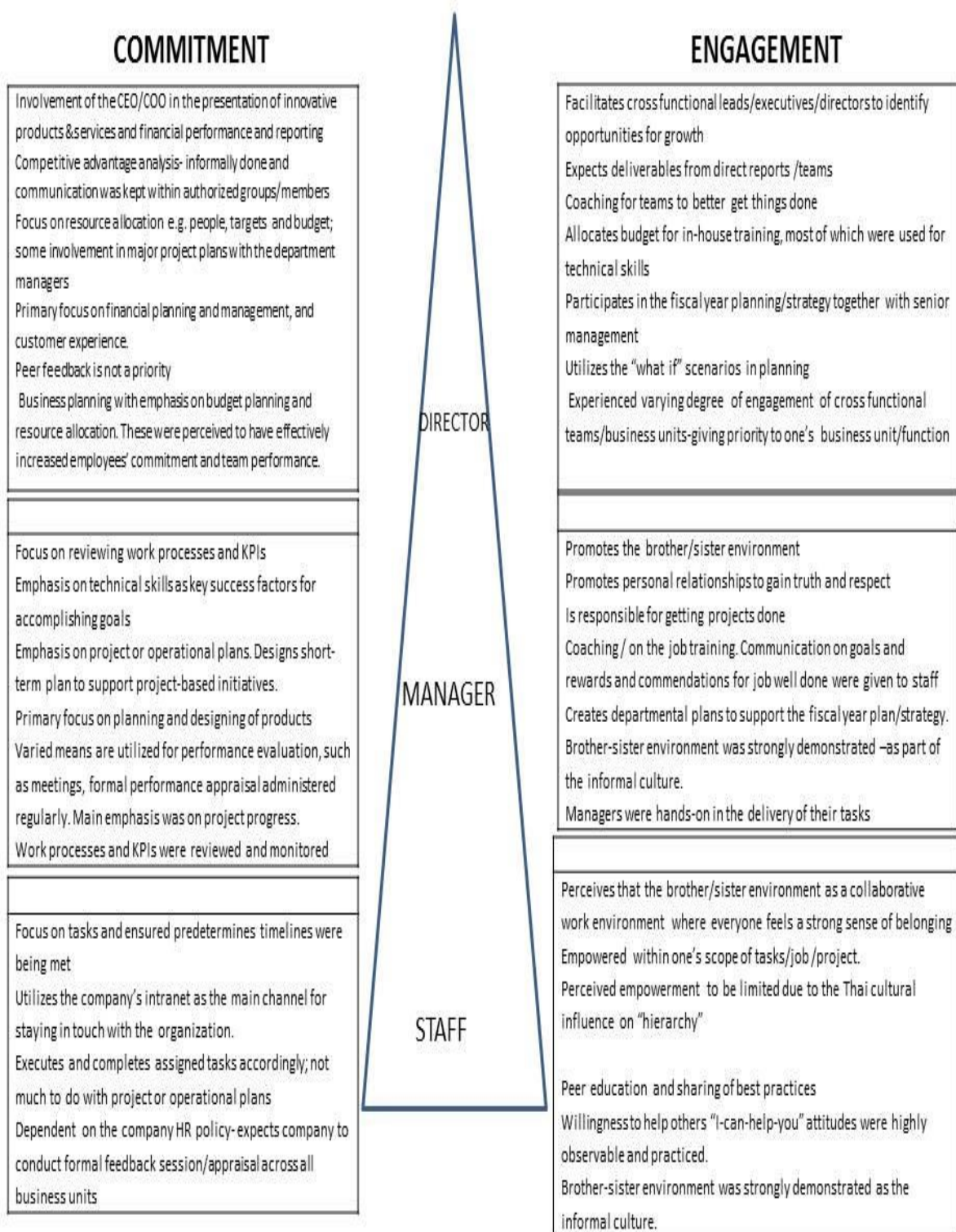[1]Sirichai Preudhikulpradab, Ph**.**D**..** He is MMOD Program Director and Lecturer, Assumption University of Thailand
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conversations with internal counterparts, customers and stakeholders, then plan and design how they can make a difference to increase the level of organization competitiveness and finally evaluate the achievements of desired performances and outcomes. Commitment indicators involved accepting, analysing, planning& designing and evaluation as shown by the following practices:

- o Accepting involved acknowledging that the organization is evolving and changing , periodically reviewing and understanding the organization's vision, mission, strategy, KPIs, structure, work processes and HR practices as a process of internalizing and understanding what role one can play in fulfilling them.

- o Understanding that innovative products and services, empowerment of people, a culture of quality, communication and internal and external collaboration are important to the organization, and necessitates that stakeholders ask questions and learn about how effective the company is in delivering innovative products and services, empowering people, demonstrating a culture of quality, communication, and internal and external collaboration.

- o Analysing data from multiple sources to find out how the organization is performing in terms of vision, mission, strategy, structure, KPIs, work processes, and HR practices so that one's knowledge and skills could contribute to support the organization's vision, mission, strategy, structure, KPIs, work processes and HR Practices.

- o Putting together project plans or business operational plans and allocating organizational resources that could impact organization team performance and delivery.

- o Collaboration and monitoring team members through regular follow ups, feedback with team members to monitor how things are progressing and developing and promoting innovative products & services, the culture of quality, communication, and collaboration .

These indicators were concretized in the following tasks as revealed by the findings. Findings based on the data revealed that there was significant difference in the practices and approaches in terms of Commitment and Engagement.

COMMITMENT

DIRECTOR

Involvement of the CEO/COO in the presentation of innovative products & services and financial performance and reporting

Competitive advantage analysis- informally done and communication was kept within authorized groups/members

Focus on resource allocation e.g. people, targets and budget; some involvement in major project plans with the department managers

Primary focus on financial planning and management, and customer experience.

Peer feedback is not a priority

Business planning with emphasis on budget planning and resource allocation. These were perceived to have effectively increased employees' commitment and team performance.

MANAGER

Focus on reviewing work processes and KPIs

Emphasis on technical skills as key success factors for accomplishing goals

Emphasis on project or operational plans. Designs short-term plan to support project-based initiatives.

Primary focus on planning and designing of products

Varied means are utilized for performance evaluation, such as meetings, formal performance appraisal administered regularly. Main emphasis was on project progress.

Work processes and KPIs were reviewed and monitored

STAFF

Focus on tasks and ensured predetermines timelines were being met

Utilizes the company's intranet as the main channel for staying in touch with the organization.

Executes and completes assigned tasks accordingly; not much to do with project or operational plans

Dependent on the company HR policy- expects company to conduct formal feedback session/appraisal across all business units

ENGAGEMENT

DIRECTOR

Facilitates cross functional leads/executives/directors to identify opportunities for growth

Expects deliverables from direct reports /teams

Coaching for teams to better get things done

Allocates budget for in-house training, most of which were used for technical skills

Participates in the fiscal year planning/strategy together with senior management

Utilizes the "what if" scenarios in planning

Experienced varying degree of engagement of cross functional teams/business units-giving priority to one's business unit/function

MANAGER

Promotes the brother/sister environment

Promotes personal relationships to gain truth and respect

Is responsible for getting projects done

Coaching / on the job training. Communication on goals and rewards and commendations for job well done were given to staff

Creates departmental plans to support the fiscal year plan/strategy.

Brother-sister environment was strongly demonstrated –as part of the informal culture.

Managers were hands-on in the delivery of their tasks

STAFF

Perceives that the brother/sister environment as a collaborative work environment where everyone feels a strong sense of belonging

Empowered within one's scope of tasks/job/project.

Perceived empowerment to be limited due to the Thai cultural influence on "hierarchy"

Peer education and sharing of best practices

Willingness to help others "I-can-help-you" attitudes were highly observable and practiced.

Brother-sister environment was strongly demonstrated as the informal culture.

Figure 1. Tasks and responsibilities in commitment and engagement

Engagement was defined as "an experience where individuals actively participate in the individual and group processes: from collaboration, empowerment, and enhancement to self-management with their peers, subordinates, bosses, customers, and stakeholders. Engagement was achieved through collaborating, empowering, enhancing, and self-managing.

- Consulting with my team members about operational goals to ensure alignment
- Enhancing the organization's collaborative working environment
- Quality collective involvement of the team members results affects the quality of innovation and delivery of products
- Team members feel empowered to set personal goals as long as they are aligned with those of the organization.
- Team members could also venture into new projects, establish standard procedures that could add value to the organization in coordination with supervisor and not needing any close supervision
- Team members are involved in peer education to improve team performance, innovation and delivery or products and services.
- The team involve themselves in identifying the "what ifs/what else" scenarios before determining specific sets of operational goals and actions which could contribute positively to innovation and delivery of products & services, empowerment of people, improve the culture of quality, communication and collaboration.

The summary of the findings of the study implies that Engagement (collaborating, empowering, enhancing, self-management) enables growth by learning teams and collaboration for the delivery of service and targets. Engagement and involvement are terms that are often used interchangeably (Robbins,2010) to describe a participative process that enables full capacity of employees and is designed to increase the level of Commitment to the organization. The presence of employee Engagement and involvement increase employee morale, motivation, productivity, and satisfaction.

To better improve the levels of Commitment and Engagement to enhance team performance, the following recommendations were made:

1. Develop the company's core values to create an integrated culture and identity
2. Focus more intensively on the human resource development planning at the corporate level to align with organizational core values with human resource development plans;
3. Simply the current structure for clarity;
4. Increase communication on organizational scorecards and to include considering programs for work-life balance

The research also presented the ODT model called the S=5 [CARE] (Figure 1). Part of the model includes a spiral journey which targets the individual development, a transformational change that is aimed at the most important area of development and change –the mind-set.
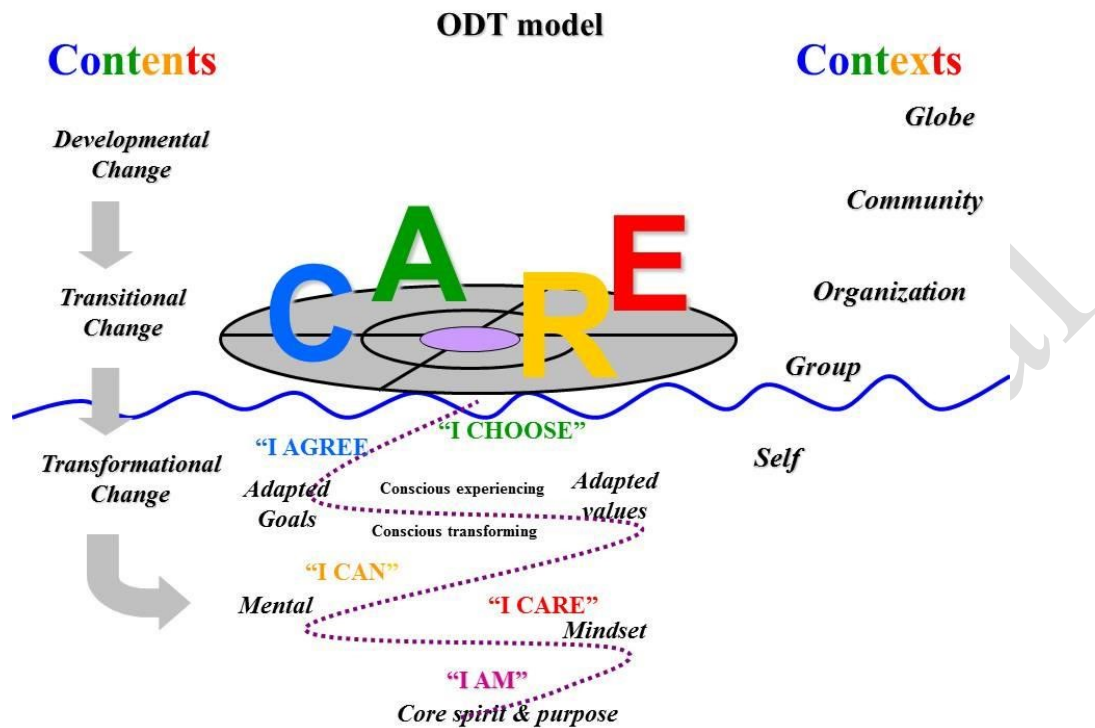
The stages are as follows:

Figure 2 . The OD and Transformation Model S=5CARE
(Source: Preudhikulpradab, S., 2011)

- **I AM**: the point where the individual reviews one's existence or defines one's present state
- **I CARE**: as the person realizes and increases appreciation of one's being, he/she begins assessing one's mind-sets and develops a sense of becoming. It is the stage that allows the individuals to discern the levels of mind-set competencies and to identify key barriers that may require recalibration and elevation. It is important to be honest and to articulate these matters before one proceeds with the journey.

- **I CAN:** the stage where the individual starts aligning self-adapted values, mind-sets and purpose while fulfilling the expectations of others (family, organization, community, etc.). These are then made visible through one's choices, goals and behaviour.

In aiming at the deeper level of change (transformational change), these OD interventions not only enhance the roles, tasks, and the work that individual and teams perform. They also enrich what Pratt and Ashforth (2003) "fostering meaningfulness in working" which they presented through a quadrant that typifies organizational practices that attempt to foster meaningfulness by enriching tasks and membership (Table 1) which we can align to Commitment (membership) and tasks (engagement).

Table 1.
 Meaningfulness in Work Grid
(Pratt, M.G. and Ashforth, B.E. 2003)

Focus on Enriching Membership	Focus on Enriching Tasks and Roles	
	Low	**High**
Low	**Fostering Worker Alienation** *Meaningfulness in and at work comes from individual –not organizational- initiatives*	**Fostering Meaningfulness in Working** *Meaningfulness comes from doing a specific type of work, not from where the work is done*
High	**Fostering Meaningfulness at Work** *Meaningfulness comes from one's membership in the organization, not from what one does*	**Fostering Transcendence** *Meaningfulness comes from both what doing and being in the organization*

At the organization level, adapting the concept of the 3-I's (I-am; I – care; I- can) requires human capacity building strategies, such as: on the job training, professional development training programs, performance management and evaluation among others. These strategies provide organizational members the proper competencies and/or skills that are necessary for completing tasks. Transition change programs such as re-arrangement of teams or structures, change of team lead and creating a new set of corporate strategies should also be considered.

The model presented is not about skills development program. It is a movement to a desired condition requiring transformation change. Many organizations invest millions of cash in skills development and training programs yet they are unable to attract and retain talented employees. The organization is encouraged to respond positively and creatively to nurture the core of the human person by creating organizations characterized by high levels of Commitment and Engagement (plus Awareness and Readiness).

Lastly, commitment and engagement can be viewed as input and output from views of systems thinking expert. There is no starting and ending, both of these variables are equally interdependent to one another. The organization must attend to any people development program by seeing beyond the interest of the organization itself and opening up the opportunities for employees to craft their visions of possible inputs for possible outcomes that would eventually bring about greater productivity , a happier workplace , better performing individuals, teams, and organization.

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