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Deadlines Meeting Challenge in Leaders

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper looks at the concept of deadlines meeting challenges by leaders and how this problem affects performance and goal attainment in organizations. Deadlines may be defined as prescribed or expected timelines for task accomplishment and submission. It forms a framework within which a task or assignment should be performed so as to succeed in goal attainment. The paper focuses on why deadline meeting has become such a huge challenge to leaders in organizations and the challenges this problem poses to performance in work places.

Materials and Methods: It was assumed in this presentation that there seems to be no proper connectivity and meaningful

engagement between those who make task deadlines and those who are expected to carry out tasks and meet deadlines.

Findings: The paper will then proceed to suggest best practices in dealing with deadlines so as to promote goal attainment.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: The paper concludes that lack of proper task accomplishment systems and implementation of best deadlines meeting practices are the major causes of failure to meet deadlines by most organizational leadership.

Keywords: *Deadlines; Organizational Leadership; Goal Attainment, Task Accomplishment; Performance*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper explores challenges faced by organizational leaders in meeting deadlines, the impact which the problem has on their health and consequently how the challenge affects goal attainment and performance in work places. Deadline meeting is a critical component of success in organizational goal attainment. The concept of deadlines meeting is informed by theories Job Demand Control (JDC) which was propounded by Karasek and Theorell (1990) and the Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (ERI) Job demand Control model postulates that low control and high demand at workplaces lead to most job strain. The Effort Reward Imbalance model postulates as the name would suggest, that imbalance between the perceived effort put forward by the employee and rewards that the employee receives cause stress (Siegrist, 1996). These theories have been criticized by authorities like, (Kain and Jex, 2010) for not taking individual difference into account. Not much research has however been done specifically feasibility of tasks and impact thereof on affected persons. The little research conducted by (Regulies, Martin, Garde, Persson and Albertsen, 2012) show that deadlines were associated with poorer sleep quality and high stress level as stated by Herreto and colleagues (2012).

This paper is a culmination of the review of selected literature on deadlines meeting challenges. The purpose of the review was to establish how failure to meet deadlines impacts on performance in organizations and the general workplaces. It is within this framework that the paper explores causes of failure to meet deadlines and possible best practices that can be applied by leadership to mitigate the deadline meeting challenges. The vast amount of deadlines that are being missed despite the fact that meeting them is regarded as vital to project success urges for a better understanding of the factors influencing timely project performance. Organizations increasingly rely on team-based arrangements, such as project teams, task forces, quality circles, autonomous work groups, and cross-functional teams as a means to gain competitive advantage and improve the experience of work for their employees (Guzzo & Shea, 1992; Thompson, 2004).

The literature shows a growing interest in temporal issues, but only a few studies have explicitly addressed meeting deadlines in work groups (Gersick, 1988, 1989; Gevers, Rutte, & van Eerde, 2006; Gevers, van Eerde, & Rutte, 2001; Waller, Giambatista, & Zellmer-Bruhn, 1999; Waller, Zellmer-Bruhn, & Giambatista, 2002). The findings of these studies point towards two crucial factors for teams working under deadline conditions. First, attention to time is identified as a crucial factor in effective group pacing behaviour (Gersick, 1988, 1989; Waller et al., 1999, 2002). Second, evidence suggests that a lack of consensus about the use of time in task execution (i.e., temporal consensus) inhibits the ability of teams to finish work on time (Gevers et al., 2006). The focus of this presentation still stands after identification of attention to time and lack of consensus about use of time. Amount of work given to individual person to accomplish irrespective of their self-efficacy remains an issue to deadline missing tendency. It appears there is no cooperative decision making between those who set deadlines and those who are supposed to meet the deadline. It appears the implementers of deadlines meeting are viewed as objects or tools that must be used to fulfill the intentions and goals of the owner.

The Concept of Deadlines Meeting in Organizations

Deadline meeting is a non-negotiable issue in workplaces and organizations. The vast amount of deadlines that are being missed despite the fact that meeting them is regarded as vital to project

success urges for a better understanding of the factors influencing timely project performance. The literature shows a growing interest in temporal issues, but only a few studies have explicitly addressed meeting deadlines in work groups (Gersick, 1988, 1989; Gevers, Rutte, & van Eerde, 2006; Gevers, van Eerde, & Rutte, 2001; Waller, Giambatista, & Zellmer-Bruhn, 1999; Waller, Zellmer-Bruhn, & Giambatista, 2002). The findings of these studies point towards two crucial factors for teams working under deadline conditions. First, attention to time is identified as a crucial factor in effective group pacing behaviour (Gersick, 1988, 1989; Waller et al., 1999, 2002). Second, evidence suggests that a lack of consensus about the use of time in task execution (i.e., temporal consensus) inhibits the ability of teams to finish work on time (Gevers et al., 2006). Its either you meet the deadline or you face consequence of failing to meet the deadline. Implementers are not given any space of expressing their viewpoints regarding the feasibility of tasks under question. This is a tricky situation since it is associated with shocking effects on work performance of those affected. Authorities however seem to be turning a blind eye on this issue and continue to further institute harm on the already wounded victims of failure to meet deadlines on workplaces persons. While it is a fact that deadline meeting ensures task accomplishment and goal achievement, it becomes a worry where all other factors amounting or leading to task accomplishment are ignored when coming up with judgment.

The Principle of Deadlines in Workplaces

The principle is taken as a measure of ensuring task accomplishment in workplaces. It's one way of monitoring and supervising employee productivity at workplaces. Naturally, the principle is top- down in nature with employees and subordinates being expected to comply with supervisor orders and instructions. Issues and concerns affecting task accomplishment are primarily not taken into account during the task accomplishment time. They may only come in when employees are ordered to write reports to account for their failure to complete given tasks within the given time frame. Lientz and Rea (2001) indicated that deadlines are often missed irrespective of hard work and commitment. Tukul and Rom (1998) conducted a survey among 91 project managers of whom 56% indicated that deadlines were often exceeded or missed. Missing deadlines have far reaching negative consequences for all parties involved. One then is forced to question the notion of using damage control measures as a last resort when some damage preventive measures would have been applied in the first place.

Causes of Deadlines Meeting Failure in Organizations

This paper has established that while failure to meet deadlines at workplace is not a good practice towards performance, there is a lot that goes unattended regarding this practice and its effect on affected persons is often taken for granted. Failure to meet deadline in workplaces may be a result of many factors among which are lack of planning, procrastination, disorderliness, lack of self-efficacy and overloading only but to mention a few. This paper stresses the need to explore how work overload and feasibility of tasks at hand contributes to failure in meeting deadlines by most leaders. The timing of deadlines meeting has also been considered. A lot has been written on effects of failure to meet deadlines on the health of the victims such as work related stress. The World Health Organization (WHO) (n.d.) defines work related stress as “the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope”.

This is critical because most leaders in organizations find themselves failing to cope with work demands due to task volumes and task deadlines. There are only two ways its either you work to meet the deadline or you face the music of failing to meet the deadline which in most cases is defined as work incompetency. The question to ask would then be to say, how feasible was the task at hand given the time frame? Does the person who crafted the deadlines know the nature and complexity of tasks the leaders at the bottom are going through? Let me site the example of a school principal who is both an administrator and a teaching practitioner. Obviously, you would find out that either the administrative duties or instructional duties would be compromised due to work or task demands.

Action theory as propounded by (Hacker, 2003) argues that people do not perform tasks as they are given, but that they redefine tasks according to personal preferences and perceived constraints and opportunities. This brings in another dimension. The subjective task resulting from this process is the goal that drives and directs an individual's task activity. In organizations, the problem of discrepancies between the objective and the subjective task is complicated by the fact that organizational members may arrive at different redefinitions of the task, also concerning its temporal requirements. Consequently, organizational members may work towards different goals (or deadlines), they may place unequal importance on meeting a certain deadline, and they may have different perspectives on the appropriate use of time in order to meet the deadline. This theory however does not go anywhere nearer to meeting deadline failure due to workload and deadlines timing.

Little has been done by researchers in trying to address dealine meeting failure due to lack of meaningful engagement between those who make deadlines and those who are supposed to carry out the tasks and meet deadlines. Among the researches are ,(Bartel & Milliken, 2004) individual difference in perceptions; (Gevers et al., 2006) pacing style; (Conte, Landy & Mathieu, 1995) time urgency and (Janicik individual team members may show very different reactions to an approaching deadline, because of individual differences in time perception (Bartel & Milliken, 2004), pacing styles (Gevers et al., 2006), and time urgency (Conte, Landy, & Mathieu, 1995), or because they hold different norms concerning punctuality, speed, and adherence to deadlines (Janicik & Bartel, 2003).

Impact of Deadlines Meeting Pressure on Leadership

This pressure is causing untold suffering among leadership who often find themselves facing adverse reports from authorities. Some leaders end up getting sick, stressed, depressed, loosing work morale or even dying out of stress and depression related to work. Working against tight deadlines has been found to relate to stress (Herrero, Saldana, Rodriguez & Ritzel, 2012). The pressure to have tasks accomplished in order to meet deadlines often result in strained workplace relations among supervisors and supervisees resulting in poor quality of task performance. The general staff morale is negatively affected by pressure emanating from this deadline meeting issue among employees at workplaces. We end up with half-heartedly done tasks that are only meant to meet the deadlines but lacking the quality they deserve. It then becomes irrelevant to talk about production without considering the quality of the products. The average level performance has become the order of the day at workplaces. Instances of production of high quality products are hindered by deadline meeting system which stresses meeting time prescripts even at the expense of task perfection.

Best Deadlines Meeting Practices in Organizations

- Cooperative approaches where end users of the system are afforded an opportunity to decide on feasibility issues of tasks before deadlines are drawn.
- Clear long term plan of routine activities that are not often changed at will without the consent or input of the end users.
- Constant reviews of the principle of deadlines meeting to ensure their validity.
- Use of a collegueship approach to get details of one's failure to meet deadlines.
- Introduction of workshops and awareness campaigns on dealing with the challenges of failing to meet deadlines at workplaces or organizations.
- Creation of space for the voiceless victim's deadline meeting failures to air their views, share pain and or opinions regarding the problem they find themselves in.

2.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has shown that deadline meeting is really a thorny issue in most organizations but is not taken serious. The effects of accountability to meeting deadline failure have far reaching consequences on the lives of the affected members. Performance in organizations is drastically impacted by this principle which not only affects the mental aspect of implementers but their emotional and physical well-being. There is need to come up with turn- around strategies in addressing this principle of meeting deadlines in order to mitigate the challenges that are encountered as a result of this problem.

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