

Assignment 1

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Social Services Sector

Overview

The social services sector has made good progress thus far over the course of period 1 and period 2. There have been many challenging and critical thinking situations that have come up. This sector has put forth every effort to solve problems collaboratively to the best of its ability. Johnson and Johnson (1990) analyzed the differences between individuals and the overall group working together. Interestingly, each group member interprets information differently, but the overall sector has been in agreement of what is best for Centerville as a whole. The strengths and weaknesses of each of the group members help to balance the overall sector itself. The social services sector works with the fire, law enforcement, and healthcare departments. Since these three areas impact other sectors, it is important that our sector pay close attention to details; considering every option and analyzing the pros and cons has assisted our sector with making the best choices for Centerville. By preparing for the future, the social services sector may continue to be successful and contemplate solutions to issues in upcoming periods.

Current Issues

The social services sector faces two current issues. The first issue is sustaining the strong team ethic that we have developed over the remaining four periods. Within our group's first meeting, we were able to establish ourselves as a cohesive team with a strong sense of shared leadership. We moved through the forming and norming stages of the team life cycle within the first period, acknowledging our shared purpose, determining how we will work together, and establishing our network of communications (Clawson, 2009). Now at the close of the second period, we are moving into the performing stage and becoming comfortable with the work to be done. However, the performing stage is also where complacency can set in. As a team, we must

strive to maintain the performance standards that we have achieved and re-energize ourselves in each period ahead.

The second issue facing our sector is making decisions collaboratively. Each period, we must come together as a team to make decisions about our sector and make recommendations to the city council of Centerville. During our discussions, the team has made a conscious effort to explore our options from multiple perspectives, ensuring that we are making logical, data-driven decisions. As Clawson (2009) states, both data and logic are needed to develop “a strong and robust argument” (p. 245). Each member of the team provides her own point of view, and together we formulate rationales not only for our decisions and recommendations, but also to explain why we voted against other decisions and recommendations. Throughout the remaining periods, our team must continue to hold thorough dialogues to ensure that we are making the best decisions for our sector and for the community as a whole.

Strengths

From the first time the social services sector met to discuss our roles in the simulation, we exhibited a level of strength that gave us all the feeling of success. We all knew starting this course that we were a group of professionals committed to reaching one common goal and supporting one another throughout the simulation. We immediately came together as a team in order to plan our methods of communication, our goals, the division of responsibilities, and our plans on how to handle difficult circumstances.

The social services sector planned our methods of communication. We created threads on the discussion board in order to communicate our thoughts and share completed sections of the simulation for the group to review and respond to. We decided to establish a regular weekly meeting time with working agendas. The social services sector meets every Monday evening at

9:00 PM with a working agenda that allows each of us to come prepared to discuss the issues at hand. We respond to the discussion board on a regular basis and are open to and supportive of one another's ideas and decisions.

The strength of our sector that stands out among the rest is the common goals that we are all working to meet. We strive for excellence throughout this course. In order to ensure the success of every member of our group, we divided the responsibilities of the sector amongst the group in a fair and balanced way. Each of us will have the responsibility to complete every required section of the simulation with the support of the entire team. It is apparent that each member of the social services sector is striving to become effective leaders and already exemplify leadership characteristics. As team members, we see the importance of team work and support the success of every member. "Real teams always find ways for each individual to contribute and thereby gain distinction" (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 20). A responsibility calendar was created for our sector that keeps every member organized and prepared for their next responsibility. The weekly assignments were divided in order to give everyone an essential role that contributes to our final product. We all feel valued and we know that our efforts towards the final product each week is noticed by the group. This has given our team the strength that it needs to achieve excellence.

Professionalism is a character trait that is exemplified by each member. We talk through our differences, listen to one another during our Wimba sessions, and offer support to one another when we are unsure of a situation. The scenarios have been discussed in depth among our group, and the deliberation of the team has allowed us to come to quick and unanimous decisions regarding the city of Centerville. We understand that our team is only as strong as our current weakest member and we know that we will experience weeks that are challenging and

stressful. In order to ensure success and not allow our teammates to fall behind, we have promised to work with each other by establishing back up plans for anticipated emergencies and circumstances that are out of our control. An alternate for the period will help any member of our team that may be unable to fulfill their duties. We know that our common goal of success is the most important, and we will do all that we can to ensure that every member of our sector understands that we are in this together.

The social services sector has been a natural team since our first meeting. Our dedication demonstrates the true meaning of teamwork. Team members “shape a common purpose, agree on performance goals, define a common working approach, develop high levels of complementary skills, and hold themselves mutually accountable for results” (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 20). Our team has covered all of these areas and is on its way to finishing this simulation strong, intact, and ready to continue as leaders.

Weaknesses

During our first sector meeting, a vision was formed and everyone made a commitment to support each other in order to complete the simulation successfully. There are several qualities and practices that are required in any simulation, class, or group. It involves constant communication through various forms, including Wimba sessions, telephone conversations, the discussion board, and e-mails. Sometimes the scheduled Wimba sessions were not convenient for the group as a whole because of time constraints or other prior commitments; however, the group still held the meetings as planned. Throughout these procedures, policies, and situations the team is able to plan, prepare, and execute the various elements of decision making and running of the simulation.

In order to complete the mission of the social services sector, members need to possess effective decision making skills. At times, members were a little hesitant or not as cooperative in volunteering information regarding the assignments and council meetings. Some observed weaknesses in the group were that some members were unprepared for the sector meetings, they were not making decisions based on what was asked, and they deferred to the consensus of the group. Edwards (2010) found that it is important to know how to operate within a community that facilitates the learning process. Such a community is known as a learning organization since that may rely on a team-based structure, open sharing of information, and empowered employees who make decisions and solve problems.

Opportunities

The social services sector has many opportunities to learn and collaborate with each other. Since we are a high-functioning group, we have the opportunity to increase our professionalism and take our communication and interactions to a higher level. Being prepared prior to our meetings helps us decrease the meeting length, makes the meeting more productive, and is a more effective use of our time. Gostick and Chester (2007) wrote about four main areas of leadership: goal setting, communication, trust, and accountability. Our group has the opportunity to take our experience in this course to a higher level by continuing to set goals ahead of time, improving the effectiveness of our communication, keeping our team informed of progress, trusting each other, and holding each other accountable for team deliverables.

To a certain degree, we already encompass all four areas of leadership; however, the opportunity lies in maintaining the group's enthusiasm and professionalism. We will have a chance to encourage each other and collaborate more by providing deliverables ahead of time to the team and providing constructive feedback to one another. The biggest opportunity we have is

giving each other recognition and appreciation for being such a high performing team. According to Gostick and Chester (2007), recognizing the contributions and efforts accelerates team engagement and performance. Encouraging our team to collaborate and work cohesively is an ongoing opportunity that our sector will face throughout this semester.

Potential Recommendations

Teamwork is a powerful and global approach for managing organizations. A team's success stems from unifying talents and knowledge. Social services sector members displayed an array of leadership traits during the semester thus far. To distinguish potential recommendations was a challenge. This team has shown many strengths, including being organized and communicating effectively. The sector came together with determination and confidence; our priority is to ensure that the community receives the services and leadership they deserve.

The potential recommendation proposed is to develop team innovation. West and Sacramento (2006) stated that developing team innovation will improve an organization's ability to transmit and focus resources effectively, respond to demands for change, and make suitable changes at a local level. The relationship between team tasks, configuration, organizational context, and the team's process will define us. In order to avoid dissention, the team members must come to meetings prepared to discuss differences of opinion and willing to accept decisions that support what is best for the community of Centerville.

Each member of the team brings a different perspective to the group. The team configuration is very diverse; we have two human resources members, two adjunct instructors, and two reading educators in the K-12 arena. Our group has a range of ages, professional training, knowledge, experiences, and skills. The team has an opportunity to learn from each other by sharing their knowledge and experiences. More leadership needs to be shown by some

members of the group. The team should develop a plan for resolving conflict when it occurs. By having a strategy in place, the team can effectively deal with issues that arise. These recommendations will help operate successfully throughout the simulation, achieving the best outcomes for the social services sector and for the city of Centerville.

Conclusion

The social services sector has successfully communicated and collaborated to complete the first two periods of the simulation. We are all professionals with varying expertise and knowledge that we bring to the table to better the social services sector as well as the community of Centerville. Each member of the group is learning how to be a better leader and team member by contributing to the final sector decisions. The success of our sector relies on many factors such as the individual and overall sector's strengths, weaknesses, communication skills, and ability to complete work in an effective and efficient manner. In order to be a successful group, each member should do the following: "1) get to know and trust one another, 2) communicate accurately and unambiguously, 3) accept and support one another, and 4) resolve cooperatively" (Johnson & Johnson, 1990, p. 2). It is not about striking success on the first try; instead, the focus is on collaborative decision making to achieve sector goals.

References

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