

COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN CROSS-CULTURE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: With the development of global economy, more and more projects in construction and real estate are carried out under the circumstance of international cooperation. In such cross-culture project management, the variety of team members leads to the complexity of the employee management and motivation. Due to the different culture background, location and historical environment of each country, the effective motivation expectation for team members varies with the management ideology in different nations. In this article, the different management ideology in China, Japan and U.S.A. will be discussed and the team member motivation method in cross-culture project team will be further compared and discussed.

Key words: Cross culture; Project management; Employee motivation

1 Introduction

With the development of global economy, more and more projects in construction and real estate are carried out under the circumstance of international cooperation. In cross-culture project management, the variety of team members leads to the complexity of the employee management and motivation. Due to the different culture background, location and historical environment of each country, the management ideology in different nations leads to the various effective motivation expectation for team members (Chen,1999), which could be found in the management of employees. Chinese, Japanese and American employees are selected in this article to show how different it is when motivating them in the multi-culture environment.

2 The Connotation and Meaning of Management Ideology

The term of “Ideology” first appeared in the works of famous Greek thinker, Plato, which means that belief and notion. The management ideology refers to the whole value system during the process of enterprise operation (Chen, 1999).

Management ideology plays an important role in the development of the whole enterprise, which not only acts as the principle and goal of enterprise operation, but also includes a clear and obvious enterprise culture and value. To the enterprise itself, it is a flag representing the direction, image and strength of enterprises and showing the consolidating force of employees, while to the outside world of enterprise, it is a symbol to identify the enterprise (Zeng, 2003).

With the globalization of world economy, traditional culture influences the enterprise and management ideology. The absorbing and innovation of the essence of the traditional culture by management ideology makes the enterprise culture become a new culture and make it a new phenomenon to be focused on.

3 Comparison of Management Ideology Among Japanese, American And Chinese Enterprises

Management involves three must-be-answered questions: management objective, management measures and management dependent (Dessler, 1999). That is to say, successful management must fully depend on the strength of whole employees, set up management rules and orders, control operation and development direction, take up corresponding measures, and realize the management objectives. Fully depending on the strength of whole employees relates to the problem of emotion management and emotion investment; Setting up management rules and orders is the issue of rules and regulations; Grasping laws, taking up measures and realizing objectives must rely on the spiritual force (Chen, 1999). Therefore, it could be found that basic framework of management mode is constructed with three elements, namely, emotion, rationality and law,

and the degree of three elements manifests the different level and degree of management. Chinese, Japanese and American managers have respectively different ways of combination of the three elements.

3.1 Japanese management ideology

3.1.1 Formation of Japanese management ideology

First of all, historically speaking, Japan is a country mainly undertaking agriculture, whose first characteristic is collective cooperation, therefore, Japan is a collectivism society, in such kind of which coordination among members and role of technology are more valued than individual capability, and each member in this society should contribute their fidelity to the group so as to obtain the protection from the group (Su, 1987).

Secondly, stability comes from the stable farming activity, which also brings about Japanese belief in the “fidelity” and “solidarity”(Zhang, 1994).

Thirdly, Japanese are quite successful in the modernization of Confucius thought. Japanese establish the five character doctrine---fidelity, courtesy, bravery, risk, credibility--- with fidelity as the core, and set up social culture ideology with “benevolent” as the central idea (Yan, 2000).

Generally, the essence of Japanese management is “harmony, identity and fidelity”(Shen,1993). The harmony spirit requires the interpersonal relationship in the organization to be close, dependable, trustworthy and harmonious. Guided by this ideology, most of the management measures in Japanese enterprises concentrate to delete antagonism relationship between labor and capital and to narrow the gap between the white-collared and the blue-collared and the disparity between the employer and employees. Therefore, in Japanese enterprises, the key objective Japanese pursue is to maintain the harmony, cooperation and consensus in organization.

3.1.2 Mode of Japanese management mode: with “rationality” as the core

Firstly, in the pursuit of harmony doctrine, Japanese only treat harmony as a method and tool, aiming at compete more effectively with others not belonging to the group, so it is not surprised to find that when competing with outsiders, Japanese are more easily to obtain uniformity.

Secondly, relationship between individualism and collectivism is perfectly dealt with. Japanese emphasize personal development and improvement of personal capability, provided that the individual should obey the requirement of the collective. Japanese have the spirit to strive to sacrifice own interest to the group (Yan,2000).

3.2 American management ideology

3.2.1 Formation of American management ideology

The following three factors act in the formation of American management ideology.

Firstly, historically speaking, the economy in America went through several stages, such as the colonist economy, the plantation economy in the South, and the mass production industry in the North. During the whole process, the doctrine of “individual ability decides all” has been carried out, making American people be in strong belief of individual ability (Zhao, 1994). Compared with Japanese collectivism, American admires “individualism”, emphasizing on distributing according to the various ability.

Secondly, America is a “melting pot” with immigrants from various countries in the world. American people like to change constantly, which is quite different from Japanese people.

Thirdly, American people are very proud of their achievement in the management field, Taylor’s scientific management, Ford and Sloan’s standardized management, Mayo’s human relationship and the systematic management in 1950s, all of which make the American people attach great importance to efficiency, creativity, innovation and utilitarianism (Yan, 2000).

3.2.2 Management mode of America: “law” as the core

The features of American management mode is shown below:

First, the management mode with law as the core relates with the western culture background. Western culture pursues excellence, realization of self value and welfare (Harris, 1978). Therefore, in western countries, the independent individuality can be formed, which is the base of contracted society and society of “rule of law”. Usually, being the reflection of “rule of law”, standardized management especially put emphasis on setting up rule and regulations, strictly executing and seeking profit from system (Chen, 1999).

Secondly, contracted capital forms the modern enterprise system. In order to protect the shareholders’ speculative motive, a series of relationship such as agency, restriction and motivation are formed in the enterprise, which in the end evolve into enterprise administrating structure (Hu, 1995).

Thirdly, the thought of “original sin” provides necessary culture base for the system construction in enterprise. Since people are borne with sin, “intention of being lazy” and “thumbing a lift” are protected to appear in the management (Rohner, 1984).

Therefore, the law-centered management mode emphasizes the individualism and belief of machinery social organization. Americans organize modern enterprise, clarify the respective right and duty and satisfy both the need of individual and enterprise through contracted relationship.

3.3 Chinese management ideology

3.3.1 The formation of Chinese management ideology

China is a country with long history, from which the Chinese management ideology originates from. Greatly influenced by the Confucius thought, Chinese management ideology has the following characteristics. First, harmony, stability and group sense are emphasized to effectively distribute and utilize limited resources and avoid conflict among group members (Zhang, Fang, 1995). The Confucians attach great importance to the personal obligation to the family, collective and nation, putting the individual value into social value and evaluate the individual value with the personal contribution to the society and state. Secondly, Chinese like to adopt distribution policy narrowing the disparity and pursuing equal result; Thirdly, strength of group and leaders are greatly emphasized (Wan, 1996).

However, it is quite easily to be found that this kind of management ideology has its shortcomings. First of all, “rule of man”, instead of “rule of law” makes the rules and policies in enterprise exist in name only and differ from man to man when being executed. The professional and standardized degree is very low. Moreover, the “equalitarianism” and “seeking good relations with all and sundry at the expense of principle” neglect the difference among employees, affecting the satisfaction degree of good employees. At last but not the least, the doctrine of “The benevolent loves others” encouraging the informal organization in enterprises affects the formal operation of formal organization.

3.3.2 “Emotion” as the core

Chinese culture belongs to the kind of ethics, good at coordinating interpersonal relationship and pursuing harmony of group (Zhang, Fang, 1995). Most eastern people have the features of social man, valuing group relationship, group phenomenon and status and role of individual in the group. In eastern people’s eye, individual’s duty and contribution to the group and the care and support of group to individual are both emphasized at the same time. Therefore, Chinese economy is ethical market economy, Chinese culture is ethical culture, Chinese management is the ethical management paying attention to emotion investment. Different from that of western standardized management, management in China is instructive, that is, through some special ways, employees accept the ethics and doctrines and then are able to manage themselves. In a word, the management in China is the one with “emotion” as the core.

4 Comparison of Motivation Method For Employees From U.S.A, Japan And China

4.1 Requirement of a successful project manager in a cross-culture environment

The best way to understand the characteristics of a project manager is to compare it with a functional manager. A functional manager usually is a specialist in charge of a specific function department, such as marketing, engineering or financial department. Being specialists, they are good at analyzing and familiar with the details in their departments. Their functions are to clarify who and how to finish the task and decide how to allocate resources. However, a project manager usually starts from a specialist in a certain field. Sometimes, they are promoted very quickly without enough preparation. A good project manager must grow up from a specialist into a multi-functional leader (Matson, 1998). A successful manager should have a set of personality and knowledge in many fields (Adams, J.R. and L.L. Adams, 1997).

Under the circumstance of globalization, a project manager may encounter a project in which team members come from different countries. Therefore, to successfully manage these team members and become a successful project manager in a cross-culture environment and manage team will involve good understanding of the culture background of each country and the difference of the motivation method of American, Japanese and Chinese.

4.2 For American subordinates: individual-oriented feature, focusing on individual achievement and “equal pay for equal work”

American culture, one of the western culture, is highly individualized, claiming individual freedom and political democracy. Each individual has the right to seek for personal welfare and achieve goals through the way he likes (Chen, 1999). Everyone should discover and make full use of his own merits and make others happy. Unfortunately, most people only know to utilize the merits on his own, forgetting creating happiness for others.

The good point of individualism lies in the fact that each one should be fully responsible for his own act, treat others equally, and respect other's dignity, and therefore, in this sense, personal freedom should not impede other's freedom and should be based on other's trust. However, the shortcomings of individualism are also can be seen in the phenomenon such as excessive freedom and influence of other's freedom, too much self-emphasis and ignorance of other's existence, lacking of mutual trust, selfishness.

The motivation in America is also influenced by the individualism, targeting at the individual. Since every one should be judged by the God by himself after his death, each member in an organization should also be evaluated one by one. Motivation for American subordinates carries the following features (Yan, Song, Shi, 2000):

Firstly, in a team, the so-called team objective has already been separated into several personal objectives, and each one will accept various motivation due to different efforts, and the mode of motivation carries with personal characteristics.

Secondly, each member is a single body and single unit. Everyone set his own target and endeavor to realize it. Motivating each individual and make him realize and develop his own potentiality is the main task of American-styled motivation.

Thirdly, if no success is achieved, effort will be no use, therefore, only credit is counted.

Fourthly, American people emphasize the doctrine of “equal pay for equal work”. If they find they got less than their colleagues for the same amount of work or equal contribution, they will become unsatisfied. Moreover, another effective motivation mode is to motivate employee individually and secretly, since the Americans are apt to respect others and team rules, and regard each person as a single individual. Therefore, in a working American team, each one strives to perform himself, instead of paying too much attention to others.

In a word, for Americans, motivation and performance evaluation measures should be open to all employees, whereas the pay or reward they got should be kept secretly, which is the way that Americans would mostly like to accept.

4.3 For Japanese subordinates: team-oriented feature, focusing on group identity and uniformity

Japanese is famous for his group feature in the whole world. When introducing himself, one will first tell others his working place, and then his own name. “My family” is usually refers to the organization he belongs to, reflecting the strong group sense of Japanese. The “family” in a Japanese eye means more than the word “family” itself in English (Zhang, 1994).

Japan is a collective society paying attention to the institutions the individual belongs to, which is the base to motivate employees (Shen, 1994). The group binds each member together solidly with the rules and policies and the sense of unity of members results in that the relationship of stock is not closer than that of group, in other words, in the eyes of employees colleagues are more important than the relatives to some degree, except parents and some direct relatives, which makes the whole group very solid. Therefore, it is not surprised to find there is a famous proverb in Japanese enterprises which says “One can easy to survive without relatives, hard to live without colleagues”(Zeng, 2003). Most Japanese live and work at ease with the sense of unity of group without feeling that their dignity are affected even though they almost have no privacy.

Therefore, the motivation mode of Japanese employees has the following features:

Firstly, targeting at working group, and team motivation be more constructive than individual motivation. Individual motivation is avoided to create solidarity.

Secondly, individual reward or encouragement will threat others. In other words, reward individually may possibly affects the sense of unity.

Thirdly, due to the seniority order in Japanese firms, employees attach great importance to the relationship of their senior and junior colleagues and all believe that one should be the same with others, and self-performance and boasting should not be accepted. Japanese will not think too much demarcation of job, they like something unrelated with their scope of duty to exaggerate their contribution to the group. If a leader lets a Japanese subordinate do something not on his duty, this will be regarded as motivation by the subordinate. Moreover, the praise of colleague is also a kind of motivation.

From the above analysis, motivation should be used to strengthen the sense of unity and solidarity.

Now if Americans work with Japanese, they should recognize that the difference of working mode between them. For an example, in a working team, if five Japanese work for one American team leader, the American boss is likely to reward two of the five team members, which causes that the other three resign together. Japanese and American feel differently for reward. Japanese believes that rewarding their two colleagues equals to the declaration of their poor performance and that their resignation is quite natural. American boss's treating Japanese employees with the method treating American employees causes the strong culture conflict between individualism and collectivism. In America, to motivate a single person will not threat others, whereas in Japan to motivate working group is the only way acceptable to strengthen sense of group.

4.4 For Chinese subordinate: both group-oriented and individual-oriented

Americans focuses on individualism and adopt individual motivation, while Japanese focusing on collectivism and adopt group motivation instead of individual motivation. For Chinese, individualism and collectivism will be considered together, therefore, motivation in China focuses on neither individualism nor collectivism. Each single person will depend on his working group, and the working group will also value the contribution of each member, in other words, individual can realize himself in the group (Zhang, Fang, 1995).

In Chinese society, the status of individual is respected. At the same time, the sense of working group is also regarded as being important, since Chinese believe that “If the nestle is destroyed, no eggs will be left intact.” The interests of the state, the collective and the individual are taken into consideration simultaneously. When the individual spirit should be showed, personal independence of conduct will be admired; When the collectivism should be emphasized, collective wisdom and efforts will be universally welcomed. Chinese are shifty and adaptable to circumstances, but all of this should be reasonable.

Chinese people like to share the benefit, which means share the bitterness and happiness with

colleagues(Zeng, 2003). Therefore, when no benefit can be shared, nobody will mind and everyone will support with each other. However, when one have got the real benefit, everyone will think: Why do you need my help during work, but getting benefit by yourself after work? This is unfair! If the rewarded one keeps silent and will not share his reward, then no colleague will have some changes in their attitude and expression, and it will not easy for the rewarded one to obtain support from his colleagues anymore. Then, there will a question: the rewarded one will feel that if sharing the reward, he will not get the true benefit and the motive of hard work will be influenced, what will be the solution?

Motivation for Chinese subordinates should:

First, when taking into consideration of the interests of the collective and the individual, motivation for Chinese employees should also make sure of being just perfect. For those who are not motivated, some advantages can also be gained, which makes all the members be able to enjoy due respect. If everything is clearly defined, the motivated one will also feel pressure from others, and those who are not motivated will possibly create a disturbance, which are not good for each member and the team. Therefore, if you want to motivate Chinese employees, you need protect the motivated one to gain real benefits and not attack the unmotivated ones as well.

Secondly, for the subordinates themselves, the able one should take care of those unable; The people who have the opportunities should return something to those who support them.

Thirdly, many researchers believe that motivation could be done through overt and covert method. Share those overt and reward the part of covert to the excellent ones.

5 Conclusions

Management of team members from different countries is a great challenge to today's project managers. When motivating these subordinates, project managers should take culture background and management notion in different countries into consideration. Motivating Americans should focus on individual achievement, whereas motivating Japanese should attach importance to the group. However, for Chinese, measures which can take both individual and group factors will be take effect.

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