Critical events in the work of remote teams

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Annotation. The article discusses the features of the work of remote teams. The influence of the pandemic situation on the organization of various forms of work is analyzed. The results of a pilot study of the influence of critical situations on the proactivity of members of remote teams are presented. It is shown that a critical event in work activity has a serious impact on the efficiency of the team, causes disruptions in the motivation of participants and negatively affects their ability to constructively solve professional problems.

Keywords: critical events, remote teams, proactivity, group dynamics, agile teams.

Introduction

The last two years have been marked by dramatic changes in the life of the whole world. The coronavirus pandemic is forcing all organizations to rethink and adapt. The impact on the functioning of society and the perception of life has been enormous. Long-term uncertainty, the need to avoid crowds, border closures and self-isolation have raised new questions about how an organization should function to survive this period.

In Russia, organizations have also restructured their work in accordance with the new safety requirements. Most office workers still work from home. The experience of self-isolation forces us to re-examine the previously accepted concepts of the work process. The question is raised about the expediency of finding all employees directly in the office. Managers think about how to continue to work effectively in the face of uncertainty.

Previously, the study of critical events was actively studied within the framework of clinical psychology. Critical events mean life events that arise in connection with a change in the social situation and require a person to adapt accordingly. Since these events represent the destruction of habitual ways of action and require a change or abolition of existing patterns of behavior, in principle they can be considered as "stress-generating" [3]. Studies show that critical events in professional activity seem to have a greater impact on mental well-being than family [4].

Critical events affect people's ability to process information, remain calm, and efficiently solve problems. The state of employees is also affected by the transparency of the decisions made. Thoughtful, frequent communication between leaders and their team members demonstrates how much they monitor the situation and adjust their actions as new information becomes available. The problems, questions and interests of each group must be taken into account to relieve stress from workers [1].

The coronavirus epidemic in a short time has led to changes in the existing models of company management. It has accelerated the global job transformation process. Within just a few weeks, 88% of workers around the world had switched to telecommuting from home. In this regard, J. Meister views the coronavirus as a catalyst for revising views on the development of the labor market - on the role of a corporation, remote work, retraining, hiring principles and corporate training [6].

The coronavirus is forcing employees and managers of all companies to work remotely for as long as possible. Face-to-face meetings have been completely replaced by Zoom conferences. Time spent in the office, personal meetings and negotiations are no longer a test of productivity [6]. These changes make the topic of organizing teleworking one of the most relevant.

The need to quickly adapt to changes in the external environment has led to changes in the structure and processes of the organization. Now they have to quickly innovate, update production, match the technologies of a changing market. Organizations that have a high level of collective self-efficacy become successful. This led to the emergence of flexible organizations. They are characterized not only by the desire to use modern technology, but also by revising the design of the work.

Classic organizations were built on a rigid vertical of power - bosses give orders and orders, subordinates carry them out. At the same time, the latter practically do not participate in decision-making. This approach does not give ordinary employees the opportunity to express themselves, apply talents and feel like part of a team with a common goal, and not just a cog in a

huge machine. Agile offers a new approach, the absence of a vertical of power: a minimum of bosses and a maximum of freedom. The Agile Manifesto was published in 2001.

● People and interactions are more important than processes and tools.

● A working product is more important than comprehensive documentation.

● Cooperation with the customer is more important than negotiating the terms of the contract.

● Being ready for change is more important than following the original plan.

The manifesto declares values resulting from the key role of the human factor - efficiency and cooperation. [5]

In agile organizations, there are no job descriptions, each employee chooses a role that matches his skills and desires, he makes appropriate promises, and always receives feedback from the team in each of the areas. In the process, he can refuse some roles and choose new ones, for example, join any project within the company. The team is also responsible for each hired employee.

The process of team formation, as well as the factors influencing it, have long been the sphere of scientific interests of psychologists. We proceeded from the model of levels of command dynamics by S. Kozlevski. Within which, he identifies four stages of team development:

The first is team building. At this stage, initial acquaintance takes place. The leader plays the role of a role model and sets the rules of behavior.

The second is assembling a team around a task. At this stage, team members associate themselves with the tasks that he solves. The leader acts as an instructor. Its main task is to raise the level of knowledge of the team members to effectively complete the task

The third is gathering around. This level is characterized by the formation of dyads between team members. The team has already mastered the tasks and methods of solving them, the leader plays the role of a coach.

The fourth is the formation of a command network. At this stage, the team can solve problems independently. The leader plays the role of a facilitator, joining only when needed to address critical situations.

To identify the level at which the team is, S. Kozlevski suggests considering such questions: where, who and how.

The question "where?" Refers to the strategy and goals of the team. Considered: product architecture, the process of discussing tasks, identifying priorities. These processes can be observed during the sprint planning phase.

The question "who?" Refers to such characteristics as: leadership, roles of team members and team norms and rules. The specifics of team management, working roles, the formation and change of team norms are considered. All this can be observed during the daily meetings.

The question "how?" Refers to the entire process of direct execution. It includes the following factors: interdependence, efficiency, work perception, overcoming difficulties, feedback. [8]

The personal characteristics of the participants also affect the effectiveness of the team. The importance of such competence as proactive behavior for business organizations is growing faster than ever. In conditions of high dynamics of changes, uncertainty and complexity of the organizational environment, the ability to anticipate ways to resolve problems and various options for personal and organizational development is one of the most demanded qualities of employees.

In response to the needs of organizations, research was carried out on the personality traits of an employee, which could be predictors of a certain type of behavior aimed at achieving business goals. Scientists agree that employees with a high level of proactivity are able to initiate positive changes in their own professional development, and the development of the organization as a whole, they more often take responsibility for the results [2].

An employee exhibiting this behavior has the following characteristics:

● strives to keep situational factors under control and proactively change the parameters of his organizational environment, as he is able to foresee future changes;

● sets subjectively significant goals in the field of professional development and professional development, as well as actively (actively) strives to achieve them;

● independently organizes its educational, cognitive and practical activities related to the professional sphere;

● independently takes the initiative to transform and change his work role, ways of performing work tasks in order to increase his professional efficiency [7].

The characteristics described are indicators of proactive behavior.

Organization and research methods.

At present, special attention is paid to the study of the factors of proactive participation of employees in the remote work format, and the influence of critical situations on the manifestation of this behavior.

To answer these questions, we conducted a study of the impact of critical situations on the proactivity of members of remote teams.

The study involved 2 development teams, 6 people per team. According to S. Kozlevski's model, at the time of the study, they were between the second and third levels of team formation,

showing a high result in terms of the following factors: distribution of roles, interdependence and overcoming difficulties (corresponding to the 3rd level of team development according to S. Kozlevski)

The specificity of teams can be called: first, work on the agile methodology; secondly, their multifunctionality, this means that the level of knowledge of the participants in different areas is not equal, from this it turns out that individual team members know more in their area than the team lead.

The following stages of the study were carried out: testing the characteristics of the team at the beginning and end of the study, fixing team events, discussing them during a retrospective, group coaching. As part of group coaching, attempts were made to help the team develop their own ways of solving problems.

Research results and discussion

Team members assessed critical events (important work situations for which there is no ready-made action plan). On a scale of 0-3:

0 - no event

1 - routine events

2 - important events

3 - very important events

The questionnaire of current proactivity was used, which reveals three factors: first, proactivity as an attitude towards a task, that is, confidence in decisions and a positive attitude; second, proactivity as a mood - the ability to concentrate, energy; third, proactivity as self-motivation - the ability to motivate oneself or force oneself to work.

As a result of the study, the following results were obtained:

● When the event is perceived as very important (3) on the first day, the team members' mood decreases (factor 2) $p < 0.05$

● When the event is perceived as very important (3) on the first day, the team members' self-motivation decreases (factor 3)

● The day after the critical event, mood and self-motivation increase, but the willingness to solve the problem decreases (factor 1) $p < 0.002$.

As a result, a critical event reduces the team's performance by two days. Further, the influence of the event decreases. Since there is a decrease in mood on the first day, it may be a good recovery tactic to seek support from other team members. The second day, characterized by a decrease in the readiness to solve a problem, will be more effective to start with solving simple problems. This will allow the team member to overcome negative attitudes towards work, avoid procrastination, and begin to work effectively.

Conclusions and conclusion.

It was found that a critical event in work activity has a serious impact on the effectiveness of the team, causes disruptions in the motivation of participants and negatively affects their ability to constructively solve professional problems.

It is planned to conduct training on assertive behavior and the management cycle: setting a task, working during a task (making a joint decision, forming an intention to complete a task, support in critical situations) and feedback. In the form of exercises with further video analysis.

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