

Task- und Problem Solving Communication in the Team

1. What is the advantage of team communication?

Team Communication compared with the performance potential of a single person shows some advantages, if one knows how to use it.

Team communication basically is more challenging than individual thinking, because besides the requirement of thinking it also needs the management of the communication, which is a separate and additional requirement. So in sum the requirement for concentration and attention is much bigger, than personal thinking. But there are also advantages of the team communication which are essential.

2. Process levels of the team communication

Team communication is running on different process levels. That means

- there is a process of communication contents which deals with the needs of task- and problem solution
- and an interactional process, which only can set free the advantages of the team by organising the cooperation and the mutual fertilization and motivation.

2.1. The process of working the matter

On this level there are a couple of part tasks, like

- A.. Collecting relevant knowledge
- B. Analysis of available information
- C. Evaluation of a situation
- D. Derivation of questions and problems from the situation
- E. Derivatiopn of steps for the solution.

- A.. Collecting relevant knowledge

Several persons in tendency can add more information to a matter, than one person.

- B. Analysis of available information

Several persons in tendency can make more effective analyses of a given set of infor-

tion than one person.

C. Evaluation of a situation

Several persons in tendency can use more different criteria in order to evaluate a situation, than one person. They can combine their criteria and compare the results in order to derive a more distinct evaluation.

D. Derivation of questions and problems from the situation

Different persons in tendency have questions and problems with regard to different aspects of a task or a problem and can complement their views in order to find more substantial questions and problems.

E. Derivation of steps for the solution.

Based on the different questions and problems several persons in tendency can derive more steps for solution or come to a higher goal orientation and precision of such steps.

3. A concept for task solution

Should time and potential of such a discussion be used optimally, than is it necessary to formulate a concept before the beginning of the discussion, which includes

- the most important subjects
- the priority of these subjects
- and the time the needed in the discussion.

This has to be harmonized within the group at the beginning and it must be the line along the discussion will run. Otherwise problem aspects of minor importance are selected and sometimes discussed several times and most important matters are replaced or compressed in short timeperiods remaining. Except the organizational reasons there mostly are logic reasons which require to follow a certain order of the subjects.

But this does not mean, that additional aspects of the matter, arising in the discussion, could not be cared of. Just in the opposite they have to be implemented according to the importance they might have for the task solution. Otherwise the group effect can not arise accordingly.

4. Strategie of Kommunikation

The described potential of team communication does not arise automatically. It has to be produced by qualified strategies of communication, including aspects of the relationship and aspects of the interaction. If this requirement is not fulfilled, the additional complexity of team communication will cost its price by producing complexity, conflicts and consuming much time. Thus its effect easily can be less than personal reflection.

Surely it will not be goal-leading if everybody agrees with everything and the group members mutually are confirming one's opinions. So critical discussion is avoided and the fertilizing effect has gone.

4.1. The matter of content and logic

Only if the opinions of the members are questioned mutually (Can you reason your statement? Are you aware of the point xx?), the resources of the information are checked carefully (Which facts confirm your judgement? Which criteria did you use for your conclusion?) the processes of drawing conclusions are justified (Is the procedure of decision strict enough? Is that really logic?) then the potential is set free.

Thus additional information is generated, the optimum of control is applied and the mutual motivational effects are used for completion, precision, care and consolidation. Own mistakes can be discovered and reflected and the arguments of the others are processed. This leads to a more differentiated and careful consideration.

Mutual questioning and provocation is not only a gain in subject matters but also a motivating effect, which of this quality can not be produced in personal thinking.

But it is not only useful to be critical but also necessary to be helpful and supporting, by moderation and by delivering ideas, opinions, experiences and by the delivery of summaries and goal defining contributions.

4.2. The interactional level

In order to use the potential also the communication strategy is important. Are critical objections aggressive, depreciatory, ironical or otherwise colored by negative emotions they will produce opposition and impair the relationships. Conflicts will arise and the creative effects of the group interaction is damaged. Are the objections based on rational arguments and are presented in a respectful, motivating manner, the potential can be used. This is mostly effective if the own role is defined on a common eye level.

4.3 The role of attitudes and values

A mutually respecting form of interaction is not only a question of a learnable technique. It

also is a question of attitudes and values. Do I not accept to be criticized I can not criticize others and do I not accept being a human with weaknesses and mistakes, I will not be successful in group based task- and problemsolving. Do I have prejudices against certain groups of people (strangers, woman, men), do I try to produce my own performance dominating the potentials of others or do I even show a tendency to bossiness or dogmatism, then probably emotional reactions will arise and the the group members are seriously bothered or even the atmosphere will be damaged.

Such features can grow a risk in the cockpit.

5. Veto

As in some cases and matters a mandatory quality of a statement or rule can arise, it must be possible to apply a veto. This is a difficult act of balance between putting pressure on the other group members and the goal to convince them by reflection and reasons. The discussion can easily change from a fractional one to an emotional one.

A veto can be applied in the way, that the exceptional importance of a subject is expressed explicitly and a request to the other team members is formulated, that they should try to focus on a certain point with high care and quite qualified reflection.

Naturally this can only be applied in cases of serious matters and good reasons.

6. Summary

- 6.1. Team communication implies potentials of effects, which can not be realized in individual thinking.
- 6.2. Team communication shows a process level of contents and a process level of interaction. The latter one essentially counts for the atmosphere in the team.
- 6.3. Team discussion with a defined requirement in restricted time only can be optimally effective, if there is a concept at the very beginning, which defines the subjects and the priorities and the respective time, which should be used for each one.
- 6.4. The content level and the interactional level complete one another building a communication strategy which at the one side uses critical elements and at the other side, constructively helping and supporting elements.
- 6.5. In special cases a veto can be used in order to stress the special importan-

ce of a decision, a rule or a goal, which replaces the need of authoritarian or even aggressive means.

If the resources of team communication are not supported by adequate means, the developing requirements can easily overcharge the partners and produce stress, conflicts or more disastrous emotional effects which can grow to be extremely risky at a workplace like a cockpit.