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September 25, 2008

Reflection Paper

Introduction

I devoted almost all of my university leisure time to Shorinji-Kempo Club in University of Tokyo (SKC), which is a type of martial arts. As the captain of SKC, I had about 100 members in the club, and planned programs and camps for training. Moreover, I participated in many congresses and negotiated over a lot of issues. As a leader I had confronted three challenging matters: dealing with teammates who joined the club in the same year, keeping juniors motivated and diplomacy.

1. Dealing with teammates who joined the club in the same year

Even though there are some roles such as captain, vice captain, manager, and so on, there's no hierarchy between teammates who joined the club in the same year. We are equal. All we had was just division of roles. So, it was difficult to discipline teammates who joined the club in the same year under just the name of a captain. A captain doesn't have any right to order, not like a king or a president. If some people gathered, there would be difference in personalities. Even though there

was a need for a discipline to endure harsh training and to win a prize. Because we were not just a group of friends, but an organization which shares a goal to win a competition, to win a trophy. But there were some obstacles. Some of teammates who joined the club in the same year were jealous of me just because I was the captain, and challenged me over almost everything. Of course, I was not a perfect person like saint, but they expected me to be perfect in everything. If there was a slight mistake or others, they would blame me.

I used to be very strict with others and have a short temper before I became a captain of the club. However, through experiences of dealing with the problems which I mentioned above, I believe I learned a lot and have matured.

According to Van Wart (2005), there are some leadership traits: self-confidence, decisiveness, resilience, energy, need for achievement, willingness to assume flexibility, service mentality, personal integrity, and emotional maturity (p.123-124). I did my best to acquire these traits to be a good captain, and to make my teammates trust me.

First of all, I tried to control my bad moods and emotional impulses, and to create an environment of trust and fairness: emotional maturity. Second, to become a charismatic captain, I forced myself to be self-confident, energetic, willing to assume and pursuing personal integrity. Third, to establish a good relationship with my teammates, I tried to be flexible and show my empathy. In that way, I believe I

gained some communication skills and influence skills, too.

2. Keeping juniors motivated

To get SKC a vigorous atmosphere and to win a trophy, I needed to keep juniors motivated. I knew there is a close relation between motivation and performance. The more motivated teammates are, the higher performance they will get. According to Goleman (1999), motivation is encouragement for an employee to do his or her tasks (p.87-88). I would say that motivation is a supplement for people to work just as vitamins are so for people to be healthy. And it is one trait that all effective leaders have. According to Lemay (2006), one role of a leader is motivator. "Leaders as motivators are concerned about the quality of face-face supervision, tangible benefits and incentives, and using the intrinsic interest of tasks to motivate employees" (p.259). And also Van Wart (2005) pointed out that leaders need to plan at various levels and monitor their progress in each through goals, objectives and timelines (p.58). Goal setting by leaders is an art in that action is based on past experience and beliefs, uses customized methods to handle unique circumstances, and encourages passion and commitment to strive for excellence (p.66).

To keep juniors motivated, I set a long-run goal such as winning a trophy in a national competition, and short-run goals such as setting a small competition within our club. Besides, when my juniors who were wondering to quit the club to

come to talk to me, I gave them empathetic advice and motivated them to get back to the club. Thanks to these efforts, it was rare that teammates quit the club when I was the captain, our club sustained around 100 members, eventually. Actually, SKC was one of the biggest clubs in University of Tokyo at the time.

3. Diplomacy

As the captain of SKC, I participated in many congresses and negotiated over several issues. Sometimes with captains of other clubs in University of Tokyo, sometimes with captains of Shorinji-Kempo Clubs in other universities.

Van Wart (2005) pointed out that there are some leadership skills: communication skills, social skill, influence skills, analytic skills, technical skills, continual learning (p.153). I had trained these skills, especially communication skills, social skill and influence skills. After making an effort to improve my communication skills and social skill, I personally built up good relationships with some captains of Shorinji-Kempo Clubs in other universities. Thanks to good relationships, it got easier for me to carry a pending bill about changing the rules of the national competition through the committee of Shorinji-Kempo. And also when I negotiated with captains of other clubs in University of Tokyo, I used influence skills effectively by using the carrot and the stick with advantages of force of numbers of my club.

Finally, our club won the victory of the Kanto match of Shorinji-Kempo,

which was one of our huge goals (the level is like a state level in USA.). We got the trophy back for the first time in half a decade when I was the captain. The memory of the standing ovation when I held the trophy high for the members of the club dies hard.

Conclusion

I learned a lot from these experiences. I learned how important leadership traits and leadership skills are not only for a leader, but also an organization itself. I also learned that those are not innate traits, but we can learn and improve them. I'd like to continue making an effort to improve my leadership traits and leadership skills.

References

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