Developing a Team Culture

Katy Fisher
Academic Partnerships, Academic Services

1 Introduction

As a new manager leading a team with a number of new team members, I wanted to look at how I can develop a team culture that will provide a better working environment for the team and help the team to deliver service excellence.

Objectives:

• To get to know the team members better and identify the strengths each individual brings to the team.

• Identify our current team culture and identify strengths and weaknesses.

• Look at the team culture we would like to develop going forward.

2 Methodology

I arranged a morning away from the office and used a number of exercises from the online Leadership and Management Toolkit.

• Exercise 1 – getting to know the team better (icebreaker)

• Exercise 2 – The Shield – understanding the motivations of individual team members

• Exercise 3 – What are our team values? – to identify the positive and negative aspects of the current team culture

• Exercise 4 – What is our Team Contract? – team to formulate a set of basic principles and standards for working together in order to create a supportive and productive team environment.

Exercise 3 generated lots of really useful discussion on how we could improve upon the less positive aspects of our team culture so the team agreed that it would be more useful to use the final part of the morning to work on a specific action plan to address some of the issues we had identified rather than continue with Exercise 4.

3 Findings

• The team members all have a similar value set and are motivated by supporting and helping people and learning new things.

• Ultimately all members of the team want to provide an excellent service to its various stakeholders.

• Overall the team members feel that there is already a positive and supportive culture within the team although the following barriers were identified as things that prevented individuals from being as supportive to colleagues as they would like to be:

- The bureaucracy involved in much of the team's work
- Some of the processes could be confusing especially to new members of the team
- Heavy workload
- Lack of understanding of each others roles

Action Plan

The team identified a number of actions to address some of the weaker areas of our culture as identified above:

- Team members to look at bureaucracy in own roles and identify possible changes to address this.
- Understanding team roles – work in pairs to find out more information on a colleague's role and feedback to the team.
- Identify opportunities for work shadowing within the team.
- Review format of Academic Partnerships Team meeting.

4 Conclusion and Next Steps

• **Team Engagement** - The team's engagement was excellent and all members of the team actively participated in the exercises. The feedback from the team was that they appreciated the opportunity to take some time out from their very busy jobs to look at the way we interacted with each other and how we could address some of the issues that prevented the team from being as cohesive as it should be.

• **Team Culture** – All members of the team have a similar value set and are committed to providing service excellence to our stakeholders. It is clear that the team's heavy workload does have an impact on the team and is a cause of frustration as individuals feel that this sometimes prevents them from being as supportive to team members as they feel they should be.

Next Steps:

• **Action Plan** – The action plan will be reviewed and developed as we identify more small steps that can be taken to address some of the more bureaucratic processes and ensure that the team has a better understanding of everybody's roles.

• **Further team development** – Netta Silvennoinen (EDQ) and I have secured support and funding from the Head of Academic Services to hold a joint team away day for both Academic Partnerships and EDQ with a particular focus on managing workloads and dealing with stress.

References:
Leadership and Management Toolkit
https://member.goodpractice.net/bournemouth-university-mkh/Welcome.gp