Building Trust And Collaboration In The Workplace: Key Strategies For Boosting Employee Productivity And Morale - A Case Study On The IT Sector In Hyderabad City.

Dr. Veena Prasad Vemuri

Abstract
This article is a report on a multi-phased case study of trust and collaboration in IT sector organizations in the Hyderabad City. Why trust and collaboration is important, preconditions for trust and collaboration - the role of welfare measures, support systems, human resources practices and job designs, the impact that trust and collaboration have on organizations, and finally, barriers to trust and collaboration. Building a winning organization is every business leader's goal. Organizations recognize that innovation is the key. Employees and their teams are responsible for getting things done. As a result, successful organizations will be marked by a large number of empowered employees who can work in high-performance teams. Happiness in employees is found to lead to increased productivity. Happiness has two components - job satisfaction and morale. The higher the job satisfaction, the greater the employee's morale. A happy employee has a positive attitude, enjoys people, and is influential, conscientious, and empathetic - all good attributes in winning organizations. He is more productive and takes a professional and constructive approach to his work.
Trust and collaboration represent some of the new dimensions or competencies required for organizational success. A fair level of trust and collaboration among employees within an organization is essential. Trust, in terms of byte-sized teams working closely together, means that team members are able to collaborate and share data with the expectation that others would carry on as the individual would, and that group members would maintain the agreed level of cooperation and effort, even when they are not being watched. Studies by Vroom and his associates aimed at opening the 'black box' of leadership. The results indicate that employees at every level show higher job satisfaction and a stronger sense of identification with their firm when employment conditions are improved. The success of teams is a pervasive theme in the IT industry. This study uses the term 'software professional' as representative of all types of human resources involved in the study. Their total number is 13,000. Their average duration of service at the present employer ranges from a year and a half to just short of three years, clearly indicating the tendency to job hop. The age cohort of 25-29 years comprises the largest group of software professionals. The respondents work in a variety of functional areas, such as software development, systems engineering, systems support and troubleshooting, people management, and project management - a fair cross-section of the varied activities in the industry.
Key Words: *Trust, Collaboration, Innovation, Job Satisfaction, High-Performance Teams.*

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I. Introduction

Business success in the new economy increasingly depends on people and effective leadership. In the emerging collaborative workplace, people are expected to work across organizational boundaries, make decisions based on complex knowledge, communicate technical concepts clearly to non-experts, deal with ambiguity and continuous change, and work with individuals not under their direct control, and in many cases, even from different companies that may have conflicting goals and objectives. And unlike manufacturing or other tangibles-focused production work, a service-based, knowledge economy means independence at work. Managers and supervisors cannot walk around checking on employees because the work requires interactions with customers, suppliers, and other employees that result in a final product that cannot be easily observed or measured. Staff must exhibit not only technical and project management competency, but innovation, creativity and intrinsic motivation in their work, because that's what clients and stakeholders ask for and what employees want and expect in their work.

The managerial rise of knowledge workers has profound implications for organizational behavior, because such individuals require different forms of motivation, with a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards being essential because knowledge work is creative in nature. It is critical that organizations and their managers and HR staff both respond to these changes in the workplace and take the time to understand the unique needs and concerns of knowledge workers empowered in the identity workplace. The flat, flexible, team-based, and

self-managed work environments that a business creates helps to build a climate of trust and fairness that is so key to employees. Managers and supervisors in this new economy must adapt traditional employee retention strategies to meet not only basic Maslow and Herzberg human needs for job satisfaction, but reach the postmodern level of self-esteem in their employees—offering career development and intrinsic benefits that enable them to more fully reach their potential.

Background and Rationale of the Study

The workplace is where most people spend a significant part of their lives. Organizational strategies that contribute to improving employee productivity and morale are, therefore, of significance to both management researchers and practitioners. While the factors influencing employee productivity and morale have been widely studied, certain sectors, despite making substantial contributions to the economy and employing large numbers of people, have been relatively ignored. In a rapidly globalizing service economy such as India's, one of these sectors is the information technology (IT) and information technology enabled services (ITES) sector. Moreover, Hyderabad city has witnessed an unprecedented growth in the IT and ITES sector over the past decade with both large and small firms vying for the attention of highly skilled employees.

The IT and ITES sector employs a very large number of young professionals. Given the fact that opportunities for all-round personal and professional growth are numerous and relatively easy to find, employees in large and small IT firms are becoming increasingly mobile. Within this context, strategies to keep employees motivated and attain better performance have evolved with increasing frequency. Recent studies underscore the importance of several soft issues, including trust and collaboration, as key drivers of employee productivity and morale in the IT sector. These employee attitudes not only impact individual performance but are also integral to overall corporate performance. Hence, this paper examines key strategies that enable organizations to maximize the benefits of trust and collaboration, resulting in enhanced employee productivity and morale. The discussion is substantiated with the findings from a longitudinal case study of 21 firms operating in the IT and ITES sector in Hyderabad city.

Research Objectives

The objective of this research is to analyze the factors influencing trust and collaboration in a multinational company operating in Hyderabad, primarily from the IT sector along with other sectors, and to provide feedback on the current issue and ways to improve the situation. Most multinational IT companies have a customer pool based on the consumer, finance, and banking sectors. These companies act as software providers, bringing in their know-how to service the various units of the company located in several countries including the USA, UK, and Europe. This gives the company an added advantage over its competitors in the market. The basic aim of the management of the company is to achieve customer satisfaction by serving the customers better. To serve the customers better, the employees have to perform their tasks properly with full dedication.

Hence, the employees working in such companies have to meet the customer demands which, at times, appear to be different under high-stress situations. Due to globalization, companies are facing high local as well as international competitiveness and are constantly trying to implement new strategies to gain or maintain a competitive advantage. This commonly involves the downsizing of the workforce. The remaining employees are often transferred to other tasks and become part of project teams. In this way, such structures should be changed from a local divisional to a more geographically oriented and integrated corporate structure. Also, working with project teams instead of divisional line units is very typical and necessary to improve the market orientation of the workforce.

II. Literature Review

Collaboration in an organization is not easily achieved. It is the combination of individual efforts that leads to the achievement of organizational goals. Upon an exhaustive review of the literature, it was observed that the performance of an employee, in addition to technical and professional skills, is extensively influenced by non-tangible attributes such as trust, collaboration, and environmental factors. Trust in the workplace is an essential factor for the functioning of an efficient organization. It is important to increase the level of trust to engender increased output and the development of the individual. Each individual has the ability to work effectively towards their career and goals only when there is trust between the individual and the organization.

Good collaboration amongst employees and in a team is essential. The root of everything a group or an individual needs to achieve is in the ability of an individual to believe in the person to whom they are assigned. The team members are individuals with their own feelings, insecurities, fears, strengths, and weaknesses. Collaboration therefore involves employees working in an environment of trust, respect, and cooperation. Individuals are parts of teams where every member makes a unique contribution. It is important that individuals extend the limits of their individuality and enhance cohesiveness by providing, encouraging, and modeling the

trust, understanding, support, and collaboration needed for the fulfillment of personal potential and organizational success.

Definitions and Concepts of Trust and Collaboration

In this section, we discuss the concept of trust, its existence, and antecedents. We also discuss the concept of collaboration and the need for trust to have collaboration and the organizations' behavior to build trust and collaboration. Trust is an important aspect of the organization, as it allows the collaboration needed for the working of the organization to a large extent. In an organization, individuals and groups need to collaborate intensively. It is trust that primarily forms the basis for successful collaboration and interaction and teamwork in organizations. Trust can be referred to as the glue that holds people and organizations together. In trust, the trusting party expects faithfulness, reliability, competence, integrity, and more from the one trusted. Such trust in the workplace has many well-known benefits, especially the positive impact on creativity and innovation.

In general, the level of trust in an individual or a firm is directly proportional to the level of sophistication and complexity of transactions. Many scholars view trust as an attribute that fosters the interrelationships between people. Others believe that it is a characteristic of the situations that viable exchanges have the potential of creating. There are two traditional dimensions of trust at the individual level: trust as an expectation, and trustworthiness as a disposition or outlook. Trust, the state of mind in situations that a person or group believes that another person or group will act in a manner that will not be detrimental to themselves. It is more about cooperation and willingness to depend on each other, and comply with others' decision-making process. Trust underpins the social relationships and the operational dynamics of groups in work settings. It is a key determinant of team performance.

The Importance of Trust and Collaboration in the Workplace

Employees are the most valuable assets of an organization. The productivity, efficiency, and success of any organization depend on its employees' ingenuity, creativity, and teamwork. Companies that value the contribution of their staff maintain higher levels of morale, tend to be more competitive, and are more likely to attract and retain talented employees. The benefits of this approach are the employees' loyalty and the preservation of the companies' most valuable intellectual assets. The great challenge of companies is to become agile, continually updated, and able to respond to the demands of their environment by fostering innovation and creativity. For this, there is a need for management styles that are permeable to information networks, employee motivation, transparency, knowledge sharing, strategic thinking, and skills that add intellectual capital and can create value for the organization. The next section analyzes the importance of trust and collaboration in the workplace.

Nowadays, companies are facing difficulties in keeping their human talent motivated, focused, and committed to their goals. Traditional management models are proving to be little facilitators in leveraging the potential of employees, leading to disengagement and unwillingness to contribute as a differentiator for the company. The main managers' challenge is to be able to attribute to their ailing businesses the necessary levels of engagement, commitment, and motivation to achieve results. The solution to this puzzle goes through an asset that needs to potentiate itself-training. In this scenario, trust and collaboration become assets that should be encouraged and valued by organizational capital. Companies and people are engaged in finding formulas that preserve the commitment, contribution, and participation of individuals, who are the target of different actions of motivation and involvement. This search is not exclusive to companies. The academic community also reflects on the factors and metrics that drive organizations in their quest for competitiveness based on knowledge. The trust and collaboration of members are one of the aspects most cited in the literature, present in various explanatory models of organizational success.

III. Methodology

Research Problem

In recent times, employee retention has assumed center stage in the HR strategies of companies in the IT sector in Hyderabad city, particularly in the context of high rates of attrition and wide differences in employee expectations vis-a-vis the available facilities and rewards. Among the various factors that are generally believed to be the cause for negative attitudes of employees, such as long hours, excessive work, lack of family time, lack of interest in their contributions and opinions, and insensitivity of management, high rates of attrition, in general, are considered to be a significant drain on the finances of the companies. The competitive edge is not only in bringing in the latest technology into the corporate system but also in protecting this investment once made, which is now being realized as an increasing responsibility of the HR professionals. The companies that are successful in maintaining a competent workforce gain a distinct advantage in their markets, whether local, national, or international. Such an advantage takes on increasing importance in today's competitive marketplace. Therefore,

there is a need to understand from the employees about their opinions on the various activities and programs so that they can benefit from improving their own work output.

Research Objectives
The objectives of the study are to:
• Identify the major problems faced by the employees in the day-to-day workplace.
• Suggest measures to overcome these problems and improve their working conditions.
• Understand the key factors that can trigger employee productivity in a positive direction.
• Assess the effectiveness of employee providing freedom to express views/open dialogue on the various facets of work performance in the given work environment and relationships and how it contributes to organizational effectiveness.

Research Design

The purpose of the case study research design is to examine in detail processes and issues in the case, which are related to the complex nature of the phenomenon, to unfold the rich texture of behavior patterns and the strategies people adopt, and to investigate what or how questions. The study provides a source of evidence, which can be used to support initial inferences and which can help inform substantive theory development – where the aim is to develop new senses of purposes and to provide an understanding of why a particular phenomenon occurs and how – for improving the dynamic nature of organization of work and situation. The basis of the research design will be of descriptive and exploratory nature and the objectives of the research addressed properly. The context of the study was in the IT sector, where the employees are younger, have relatively fewer responsibilities than their counterparts in some of the other sectors. Due to the nature of their work, the interaction, commitment, dedication, the type of organization structure and managerial style, one will find that the trust between the management and employees plays a crucial role in staying together and put more efforts towards organizational objectives. For achieving high morale and retain the talented employees, one has to change the prevailing interior organizational policies, interpersonal relationship, and managerial attitude or perception regarding healthy communication related to work and personal issues. The nature of the problem can be understanding the role of trust in knowledge sharing, affecting the level of trust in other colleagues and top management, find the key determinants to boost knowledge sharing and suggest suitable manipulations. It is not the whole story. The business must give workers an opportunity to have a say in their work and its organization and to help develop the organization's business. The answers to the question are helpful for management, which have to build up internal and external operational and relational capital. They can be used to suggest that. Apart from that, in the knowledge economy, the organizations are expected to create, distribute, and apply knowledge, that is, to innovate. Organizations are increasingly being conceptualized as places of social learning, places that are informed by theory, by formalizing and testing relationships and ideas, and by practice. The argument also has implications for management education and training, as well as the selection and promotion of managers: do traditional approaches to management education and training developed in the industrial and service sectors meet the demands and requirements of the IT sector.

Data Collection Methods

The secondary data was collected from various sources for the present study. These sources included government publications, union reports, industrial relations journals, media reports of industrial actions, other publications on issues of unionization, industrial actions, and similar other issues. Labour Bureau data on industrial disputes in India was collected for the purpose of the present study. This secondary data was used to know and understand the historical perspective of the Indian IT sector. To summarize, industrial or sectoral level statistical sources were used to have a broader understanding of the historical aspect.

The primary data was collected through a questionnaire. Dillman's Total Design Method was used in the present study. A systematic design strategy emphasizing numerous steps designed for increasing response rates from surveys, it was developed and tested in the author's earliest research, who is a recognized expert on survey methodology. The survey instrument contained questions related to building trust between employee and employer, increasing collaboration and openness in the organization. Due to the highly competitive nature of this sector, this industry is moving employees from level-based rewards to skill-based rewards. The objective of the survey instrument was to get employee perceptions at different levels in different organizations about trust and collaboration at work, job satisfaction, and work commitment in the organization. The questionnaire contained 41 items and questions which were simple to understand and non-threatening to the respondents. Even in the Indian context, the survey was pre-tested by two researchers studying industrial relations.

IV.   Case Study: IT Sector In Hyderabad City

The Indian information technology sector has had an impressive growth rate. With an extremely talented workforce, the industry has earned a reputation for quality work in areas like embedded systems and software. Recently, a few hindrances to growth surfaced that had the potential to adversely affect both employee productivity and industry morale. Factors such as work hours, promotion policies, badmouthing of competition, and non-cooperation between divisions in companies have come with an increased sense of insecurity among employees. The quest is to look for solutions including trust-building and collaboration and to initiate a process that leads to employee improvement.

The research study pertains to the IT sector in Hyderabad city. The study is based on a global approach. It covers famous IT organizations throughout Hyderabad, recognized coaching institutes, academicians, and students of management institutes. Pamphlets, directories of associations, and search engines were used to identify these organizations and individuals. Furthermore, personal interviews were conducted. Open-ended and close-ended questionnaires and emails to organizations and pioneers in the IT field of Hyderabad helped in understanding the causes of diminished growth, downtime, and almost static HR-IT sector during the conflict.

Overview of the IT Sector in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, the fifth largest metropolis, is the capital of both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states. Today, Telangana is emerging as a front runner in IT and ITES services. The city is home to leading global companies like Microsoft, Google, Facebook, Value Labs, Kellton Technologies, etc. The city is racing fast in the software export zone with over 1300 software companies housed mainly in HITEC city, Madhapur, Gachibowli, and Nanarkramguda. The state is also promoting investment in the "National Investment and Manufacturing Zone" near the Hyderabad airport. The city hosts several major research and development institutions of India, including Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Indian Immunologicals, Bharath Biotech, Indian Pharmaceuticals, and National Remote Sensing Centre. Other national scientific institutions include Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics (CDFD), Advanced Numerical Research & Analysis Group (ANURAG), Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAD), Institute of Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT), and Center For DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics (CDFD).

Challenges Faced by IT Companies in Building Trust and Collaboration

The following are some of the important challenges faced by IT companies in building trust and collaboration in the workplace: work autonomy, unmanageable growth of teams, lack of support from seniors due to their lack of technical knowledge, low interpersonal relationships at work, high job stress, ongoing software project management problems, unstable inter-department transfers, work load and due date threats all the time, long hours of work, no time to know colleagues at work, cultural differences, poor communication skills, overpowering Indian parental authority, India's rigid caste system and language barriers, employees' wariness on policies related to sexual harassment and unacceptable behavior at workplace, communication and interpersonal relationship skills, and mold the organization into more of a learning organization in every sense of the word.

If all or some of the challenges mentioned above are faced by IT companies, naturally, their ways of dealing become crucial to the employee-employer relationship. The way of dealing can be broadly classified as the leadership that is adopted, the roles that the various individuals play in the company in shaping the corporate culture through policies and procedures, and finally how the well-being of employees is taken care of. The amelioration of all the challenges would together lead to a trust-based, relationship-based workplace which, according to the author of this study, is the most preferred option.

V.   Key Strategies For Building Trust And Collaboration In The Workplace

Here it is essential to narrate the nature of our study. In the first section of this case study, we provided a literature review, highlighting the significance of trust and collaboration in the workplace and how building trust and collaboration can lead to better employee productivity and morale. We then provided the theoretical foundation for the nature and design of our survey. Based on this, our next step involved interacting with the employees of a few IT companies based in Hyderabad and collecting data using questionnaires. In the third section, we reported the results from the analysis of our data and documented the peculiarities and asymmetries in the data. Here, we recounted the behavioral relations that unfold as and after trust and collaboration is cultivated in the workplace, identifying them as unspoken tales hidden in this data.

In this section, we outline key strategies that companies can follow to strengthen trust and collaboration in the workplace. This should serve as a useful toolkit for companies intending to improve employee morale and productivity. Consequences and Findings of Trust and Collaboration. Further, we present some interesting results of our study that confirm certain claims made in the literature and hence contribute to enhancing and strengthening

trust and collaboration in the workplace. We provide details of a survey conducted on a group of IT companies in Hyderabad city of the state of Andhra Pradesh in India. Our study confers on the behavioral constructs that lead to the formation and evolution of trust and collaboration. The data is important and brings to the surface concerns and issues that confront those responsible for managing the workplace, and motivates the need for establishing open two-way communication channels between the employer and employee.

Leadership and Communication

In every interaction, the quality of communication is essential in creating or destroying trust. Creating powerful interactions, however, begins with the right mindsets and modifies an interaction that reflects the mindsets in every word, phrase, and body language. Skills are also important, but credibility and the ability to create interactions that make them excellent depend upon powerful mindsets and the right map of interaction.

Leadership - Given the erosion of trust in organizational leadership during the past few years, it is essential that managers and leaders walk the talk to rebuild trust.

Six right thoughts - Behavior can change rapidly, but beliefs change slowly. The six right thoughts provide a series of questions and statements, which represent six mindsets that are at the core of powerful interactions. The six provide a mental model that represents what truly occurs during an interaction.

These six thoughts have become integral to enrollment and leadership programs at Harvard, U.S. Air Force Academy, Incitement, and a number of other institutions. Faculty and educators of these principles report that as students master the six thoughts, they can see the students' interactions become increasingly powerful. Interviewers who have used the six thoughts have reported interviewees that exuded trustworthiness, trust empathizers, and elevators. Directors who used the six thoughts find that they are able to inspire both their biases and clients and that their organizations began leaping as a result of power interactions. These changes and comments are natural outcomes of managers' new mindsets, resulting in trust among team members, trust between employees and managers, and proactive organizations.

With trust taking multiple hits, managers often have their work cut out for them. However, the challenges are worth facing head-on, for the reward is the development of powerful and trusting relationships among work teams.

Team Building Activities

When it's about managers creating support structures for employees or the employees trying to cope with greater demands on their time, an effective support network can help to solve this unhealthy attitude of not prioritizing work-life balance. It also appears to lead to unhealthy lifestyle habits. Ignoring employees asking for a better work-life balance also leads to a company's bad reputation as a bad company to work for. The idea of people team building has gained increasing importance in the wake of the escalating trend towards employee empowerment. Team building needs to be an ongoing process rather than an occasional event. An effective team building may require a significant commitment of time and energy, and the consequence of an effective team can be fun and very rewarding, not only for the team's research but also for all its members.

Fun is certainly one of the key elements of building a team; however, the issues involving team organization may also not be overlooked. Underlying any effective performance might be frustration, time wastage, and the substantial emotional energy expended. The not prioritizing work-life balance attitude is often why, at the individual level, long hours of work are a recognized psychosocial hazard. Executive team building, both for management and non-management, is designed to develop caring individuals willing to care for their people and try to adapt to their needs. They want to adapt to their life changes and actually grow people, both at home and at work. Such concerned individuals worry about losing people for any reason and realize the effort certified professional experience who lived through the trials and tribulations and must be replaced.
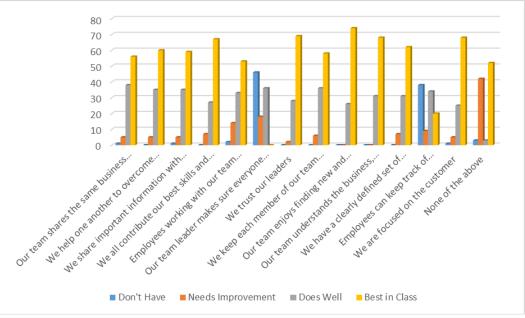
VI.   Conclusion

In conclusion, creating strong and successful trust relationships is an ongoing process that requires frequent check-ins to ensure that everyone's needs are being met. Developing affective trust relationships requires establishing interdependency and frequent interaction and creating an environment in which employees feel free to take risks and in which leaders are willing to share control. Developing cognitive trust relationships requires that we foster grounded, realistic expectations, a coherent foundation for action, and the ability to deliver on our promises. Finally, developing behavioral trust relationships requires that we create alignment between our words and our actions. At each stage, we must be sure to recognize individuals' unique strengths and contributions.

By supporting and recognizing employees' contributions, sharing vision and purpose with employees, and modeling respect, humility, and integrity, we prepare the soil for cultivating trust and create conditions that allow the manifestations of affective and cognitive trust to emerge quickly and consistently. Further, as we talk openly and promote dialogue, hold employees to high standards and mirroring compassion, and create shared goals and purpose, in order to support risk-taking and knowledge capture, we allow these trust relationships to

flourish, setting the stage for the development of behavioral trust. I believe that as we continue to build these behavioral trust relationships, we will create a high-performance team that can deliver superior results.

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Tables & Charts