Chapter XII

Teaching Team Competencies

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Abstract

Within institutes of higher education, the incorporation of various types of group work into pedagogies is already widespread, yet many examples fail to embrace a rationale for, or the potential benefits of, multiple contributor environments essential in a knowledge intensive society. We propose that for optimum IT workplace effectiveness, in which principles of knowledge management need to be applied, it is necessary to take into account the competencies of the teams in which individuals work and to explicitly teach team competency skills.

Introduction

Though the importance placed on knowledge is increasingly being recognised, applications of knowledge management principles are still inconsistent, the topic
and even its definitions still being widely interpreted (Von Krogh, Ichijo, & Nonaka, 2000). The complexity of problems in our knowledge society requires that problem solving activities be shared across disciplinary, cognitive, geographic, and cultural boundaries (Leonard-Barton, 1995), with Jewels and Underwood, (2004, p. 1) synthesising these and providing a definition of knowledge management as *the collection and processing of disparate knowledge in order to affect mutual performance.*

It is expected that when IT graduates enter the professional workplace their ability to work as a team member will contribute to the team’s immediate levels of productivity. Though various types of group work have already been incorporated into higher education pedagogies, many examples fail to embrace the potential benefits’ of multiple contributor outputs in knowledge intensive environments. While perhaps being ideal candidates to capitalise on the benefits of knowledge sharing behaviours, higher education has generally not realised its potential. There has, according to Senge (1992), never been a greater need for mastering team learning in organizations.

*Team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organisations* (p. 10) and

*Until we have some theory of what happens when teams learn (as opposed to individuals in teams learning)…. Until there are reliable methods for building teams that can learn together, its occurrence will remain a product of happenstance.* (p. 238)

The intent of this chapter is to provide a rationale for the teaching of team competencies by IT educators and to propose several innovative and successful learning opportunities in which team competencies have been developed.

**Knowledge Within Teams**

Forty years ago, Drucker (1964) defined knowledge workers as those people with a high degree of formal education and who apply knowledge to work, rather than manual skill or brawn. There is now an increasing awareness that the knowledge that had always been residing tacitly with workers, can be made explicit by capturing and codifying it for the purposes of re-use, transfer, and the creation of new knowledge (Nonaka, 1991).