Self Managed Task Assignment in Service Processes – A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the feasibility of self managed task assignments in the service processes by getting insights from companies which have already went self managed way. The suggestions are provided on how self managed task assignments can be implemented in particular situation under study by taking into account the factors that might affect the subject. The theory has laid foundation for understanding the intricacies of the underlying concepts and then opinions, recommendations, suggestions were made regarding the subject matter of this paper.

***Keywords**: task role distribution, self managed task assignment, service industry, service processes, smart grid and energy market, field workforce, distributed leadership.*

INTRODUCTION

Organizations have to deal with challenges of increasing productivity and improving customer relationships along with improving the quality of work life of its employees to survive and thrive in modern times. To meet their objectives, firms have adopted various innovative management techniques, ways of job design & types of organizational structures (Rogers et al., 1995). The formation of self managing teams is becoming regular prodigy to be followed in service organizations (Jong et al., 2001; Rathman et al., 1995; Uhl-Bien & Graen, 1995; Yeats & Hyten, 1998). Molleman E. (2000) refers self management as "autonomous decision making within a unit with respect to both the transactions (output) it wants to realize and the way it organizes its transformation processes to achieve these transactions", whereas self managing teams are described by Rogers et al. (1995) as "relatively autonomous work groups in which the responsibilities and duties traditionally maintained by management have been transferred to the teams."

This new type of team structure is referred to as: self-regulated, self-directed, self-managed, high-performance (Thibodeaux M. S. & Faden S. K., 1994; Lee C., 1990), self-managing (Molleman E., 2000; Rogers et al., 1995) among few other names. This paper will use the term "Self Managing Teams (SMT)" for its purpose. *Fortune* magazine called self managing teams as "the productivity breakthrough of the `90s." SMT have been also called as "second industrial revolution" by Fisher K. (1994).

The approach of delegating decision making to the employees seems to be effective as the manager alone might not be able to process all the relevant information and make quick & strategic decisions which suits business interests of his/her company (Jong et. al., 2001). The major challenge that remains in this kind of team structure i.e. self managing teams is how to distribute the task among teams in company operating in the service industry. This paper is an effort to gain insights into how to achieve self managed task assignment in service processes; it is from here this paper got its title.

METHODOLOGY

The Study

The introduction describes how companies have adopted various management techniques for increasing business productivities, efficiencies and effectiveness. With increasing pressure of optimizing these further, the companies in service industries to be particular have now taken the help of Self Managing Teams to achieve their organizational goals. It also highlighted the challenges faced by the companies while implementing such organizational structuring techniques.

Literature Review which follows this section will highlight what should be the organizational structure and culture supporting such kind of team structure and various factors influencing the task role distribution mechanism in this kind of situation along with its effectiveness. The issues related to resistance from employees, managing change while transitioning from traditional management to self-management and resolving conflict were discussed and future scope of research in this field has also been highlighted.

The Objective

The following are the objectives of the study:

a) to identify the kind of organization structure and culture that supports the purpose of self managed task assignment in service industry.
b) to determine various factors that influence the self managed task assignment and its effectiveness.
c) to determine how issues related to employee resistance, managing change while transitioning from traditional management to self-management can be addressed and how conflicts can be effectively resolved arising out of such case.

Data Collection

The study was based on the secondary data. To answer the research questions (objectives of the study), the required secondary data was collected by exploring various research papers and case studies which were accessible to the researcher through different research database search websites

like www.search.ebscohost.com, www.ssrn.com, www.emeraldinsight.com, scholar.google.com, etc.

Data Analysis

The collected secondary data in the form of research papers was thoroughly studied to understand the key concepts and facts that were highlighted there. Sections like Abstract, Introduction, Methodology, Results & Discussion, and Conclusion were studied. After developing the basic understanding of the underlying concepts, those were discussed with faculty members at TUT, Tampere as mentioned in Acknowledgement Section towards the end of this paper. Their applicability to this study was discussed and then the some opinions were made regarding concepts under study. Then the contents of this paper were compiled.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is divided into further three sub-sections based on the research questions to be answered. The concepts discussed in these sub-sections are inter-related but for the better reading experience of the reader, this particular presentation technique is being employed here. These sub-sections are namely: *1) Organizational Structure and Culture, 2) Self managed task assignment and its effectiveness,* and *3) Resistance from Employees, Change Management and Conflict resolution*.

The companies should decide, according to Rogers et al. (1995) and Metlay & Kaplan (1992), what level or degree of self-management they are going to implement for catering to the needs of achieving high business productivities and efficiencies as shown in *Figure 1*. These levels are represented by certain activities to be performed by teams at that level; decision making power delegated to teams at that level; and characteristics possessed by teams at that level. The typical examples regarding activities, decision making and characteristics of teams at different levels are also shown in *Figure 1*.

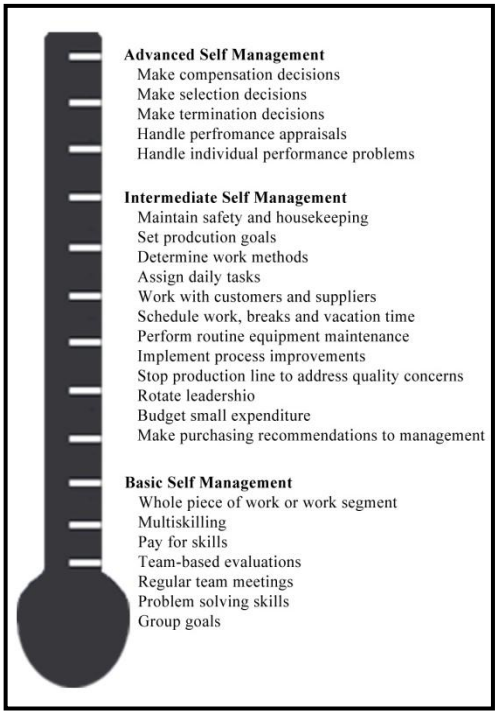

Figure 1: Thermometer of Self-Management (Rogers et al., 1995; Metlay & Kaplan, 1992)

This decision regarding the level of self-management should be taken by the companies before taking decisions on the issues raised in above mentioned sub-sections, which shall be discussed now one after another.

Organizational Structure and Culture

This section addresses the issues related to what could be the optimal organizational structure for facilitating the implementation of self managing teams and then to support this type of structure, what should be the characteristics of organizational culture like trust etc. This section also attempts to find out some relevance of level or degree of those characteristics of organization culture with the success of self-managing teams.

There is a tendency in team environment to create more flatter and informal organizational structures (Lee C., 1990). The organizations implementing such structures are generally leaner than the conventional ones because the leader is more like a coach, the information is usually shared with the employees, and it is expected from employees to learn all the job and tasks requirements of the team (Wellins R. & George J., 1991). Mintzberg H. (1989) has identified several characteristics that differentiate flexible organizations from other organizational forms (Thibodeaux M. S. & Faden S. K., 1994), which includes: *1) limited formalization of behavior; 2) a tendency to use group specialists; 3) reliance on expert formal training; 4) use of liaison devices to encourage mutual adjustment; 5) selective decentralization;* and *6) innovation as a means to break established patterns*.

Thibodeaux M. S. & Faden S. K. (1994) has identified key organizational components of self-managing teams as represented in *Figure 2* & concluded that the development of organizational structure and management strategies is critical as these are highly inter-related. The energy derived from this interrelationship will act as reinforcement for the belief that people are the greatest resources for organizations. Thus, the key to success of an organization is to replace the control and status differences with a strategy that encourages everyone to be a winner.

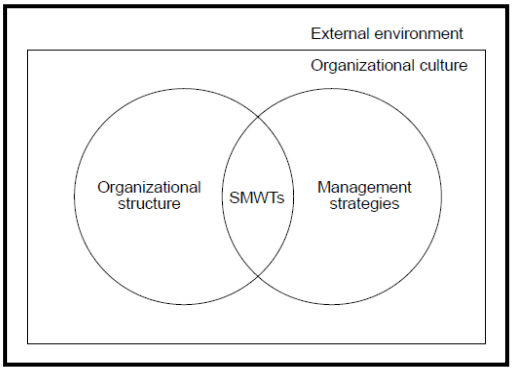

Figure 2: Key Organizational Components of Self Managing Teams (Thibodeaux M. S. & Faden S. K., 1994)

Manz C. C. & Sims H. P. Jr. (1987) in their study on self-managing teams in production industry suggested the organizational structure consisting of three distinct hierarchical levels: *1) Upper Plant Management (called Support Team), 2) Work Team Coordinators,* and *3) Self Managing Teams*. Support team is the level at which

traditional plant management responsibilities like overall plant production schedule planning, dealing with clients etc are handled. Work team coordinators occupy next hierarchical level and self managing teams are at the final level. They further mentioned that within each team, there is one elected team leader, who receives higher pay than other team members due to additional leadership responsibilities. But this individual is expected to do the same physical work as done by other team members.

The relations between self managing teams and their relevant environment are exhibited by Leede J. de & Stoker J. I. (1999) in their study on manufacturing companies as shown below in *Figure 3.* They further provided insights on criterion based on which self managed teams can be designed. These include: *1) Production structure & degree of task integration, 2) Size of team, 3) Job Rotation, 4) Autonomy, and 5) Hierarchy*. The issues like *1) Initiative for change, 2) Strategy, 3) Duration, and 4) Resistance to change* were also highlighted that should be considered while implementing this team structure in their study.

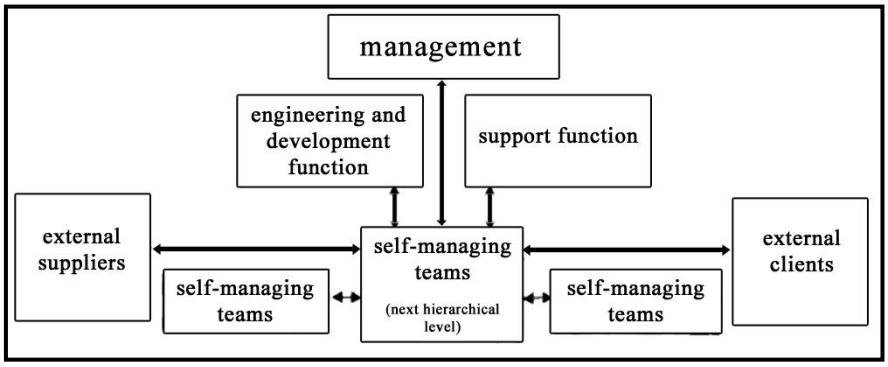

Figure 3: Relations between self managing teams and their relevant environment (Leede J. de & Stoker J. I., 1999)

The role of facility management (FM) in managing, controlling and coordinating distributed work arrangements (DWA) was highlighted by Roper K. O. & Kim J. H. (2007) enabling organizations to better manage rapid changes in business, influences in ICT, and dramatic shifts in requirements for workers focused more on knowledge than production. More fundamental goals of providing high performing and sustainable workplaces become the responsibilities of facility managers extending beyond just conventional operational issues. How FM and its functions can interact with DWA factors, is shown in *Figure 4,* to contribute to the development of high performance DWA.

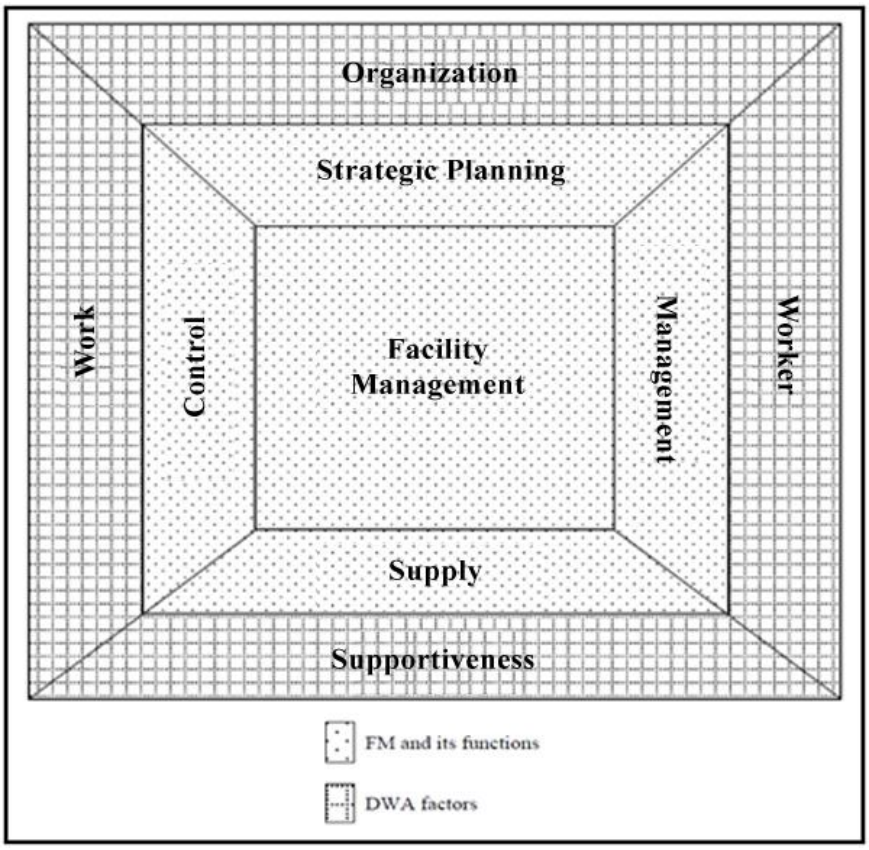

Figure 4: FM functions and DWA factors (Roper K. O. & Kim J. H., 2007)

Facility management is needed to be viewed as a strategic function rather than technical function, within the organization for more successful coordination of FM with DWA. Facility managers have the ability to understand and identify the particular features of DWA types, and adapt the most-appropriate options for organizational specific needs. Thus, the key role of efficiently and effectively setting up and supporting DWA options can be played by the facility managers.

Having discussed some theories about the organizational structure required for implementing and facilitating the self-managing teams, now some theories shall be discussed about what should be the characteristics of organizational culture for supporting such kind of organizational structure.

Elmuti D. (1997) in the study has identified the obstacles to a successful self-managing team programme. Elmuti has recommended conducting an environment analysis (SWOT analysis to be included) of the organization before designing such teams and establishing expectations from them as self-managing teams are not conducive for every organization (Pasmore W. A., 1994). The recommended analysis should be conducted on the basis of three considerations proposed by Elmuti.

The first consideration is to determine the competitiveness of the company environment. More competitive the environment is, more conducive it will be for self-managing teams. The second consideration is of management style which is being currently followed in the organization. The autocratic style of management makes it difficult for implementing the self-managing teams. How the management responds to its employees is equally important determining the success of self-managing teams. The last and third consideration is technical competencies of the organizational under which they are operating. The organizations using highly specialized and automated production technologies should not opt for this kind of team structure as these technologies require least amount of operator interventions.

Trust and effective communication with employees are other few factors also to be considered while designing or implementing the self-managing teams (Elmuti D., 1997). If the management is able to effectively communicate with its employees, mistrust within ranks of the company can easily be avoided. The employees should be communicated clearly the benefits they will receive from this kind of teams, and what is expected from them.

Removing the authoritarian figure to whom SMT reports is one of the biggest mistakes that companies commit once teams are able to achieve self-management. However, the key person is required to guide the teams in difficult times by answering their questions and receiving information from them (Elmuti D., 1997). For the sustainable teams, company should continuously monitor the performance of SMTs and help them remain focused towards achieving the organization objectives. Pauleen D. J. (2003) in the case study also highlighted few characteristics of organizational culture like *team motivation, purpose and identity; structures and processes of the virtual team and trust building; and organizational HR issues* for the success of such team structures.

Johnson P. R. et al (2000) in their study has highlighted few qualities that the teams of 21st century should have as in case of a wolf pack. The first quality is *Attitude*: the successful teams have right perspective and right attitude in minds towards their work to be done. The second quality is named as: *Uniqueness*: it is needed to kept into mind that everyone is doing his/her own job and each individual job is equally important for the success of the project. The third quality, which is essential in every aspect, is *Communication:* the success of group or team depends upon how effectively they communicate with each other and share their knowledge among themselves.

The fourth quality of the team should be *Creativity:* the new team members should allowed thinking freely so that new members do not feel dumb, if managers restrain their creative thinking. The fifth quality discussed is *Play:* this refines the skills of communication, and teamwork. We as humans routinely use the term "work hard, play hard". This also facilitates the other purposes like developing positive peer relationships, increased commitment to the team, reduction of conflict, member's satisfaction with each other and developing much needed cooperation between team members which results in higher achievements and greater productivities.

There is also downside of these organizational culture's characteristics like trust, etc. As it is said sometimes in real life that "*Too much of good thing is also not good sometimes",* similar is the situation in the concepts under study as highlighted by Langfred C. W. (2004) in the study. Langfred concluded that in some case too much trust in self-managing teams can be harmful as then members would be reluctant to monitor each other. Moreover, high levels of individual autonomy in combination with high trust can become liability for the organizational supporting such kind of team structure. Also sometimes, the presence of very high levels of trust and individual autonomy can hamper the performance levels also.

Self Managed Task Assignment and its effectiveness

Self-management or self-organization represents an adaptive process through which system adapts to its environment by making required changes in the system's structure and organization (Stempfle J. et al, 2001). The dynamic interplay between the group and its embedding systems drives the adaptation to the environment, which is achieved through changes in the group structure and manipulations of the external world (McGrath J. E. et al, 1999).

Things are more complicated as they seem to be as it is not only the successful achievement of group task that is of concern. The individual goals of every group member that stem from their individual needs may or may not correspond to the group goals, which is of equal concern. The each group member will adjust his/her level of commitment to the team depending upon the benefits s/he receives from the membership of the team after conducting evaluation from time to time for making such decisions (Moreland R. L. et al, 1993).

There are two forces driving the adaptation in groups: *1) External demands* (success in fulfilling the group task) and *2) Internal demands* (recognizing the needs and preferences of the group members), as proposed by Stempfle J. et al (2001) based on

their findings. However, the level of influence of these two forces on the adaptation varies depending upon the nature of the group's environment. The nature of group environment is depicted by environmental or external pressure in study conducted by Stempfle J. et al (2001). The higher external pressure will have tendency to give preference to external demands whereas in lower environment pressure situations, internal demands of the group members will be the prime concern in task role distribution.

"Task Role Distribution" is a term associated with how the task roles are distributed within the work group. The individual member has a specific task role that defines what particular job s/he has to perform in that group. Stempfle J. et al (2001) proposed the functional theory of task role distribution. The theory has two requirements, namely *1) Principle of Competence* (Stempfle J., 1998) and *2) Principle of preference* (Stempfle J., 1998).

Principle of Competence is "one where the demands of each task role do not exceed the skills of the group member to which the task role has been assigned", whereas *Principle of Preference* is "one where as many group members as possible are being assigned to a task role that they themselves prefer (Stempfle J. et al, 2001)." The stated principles and their proposed effects on the functioning of group are depicted in *Figure 5* below.

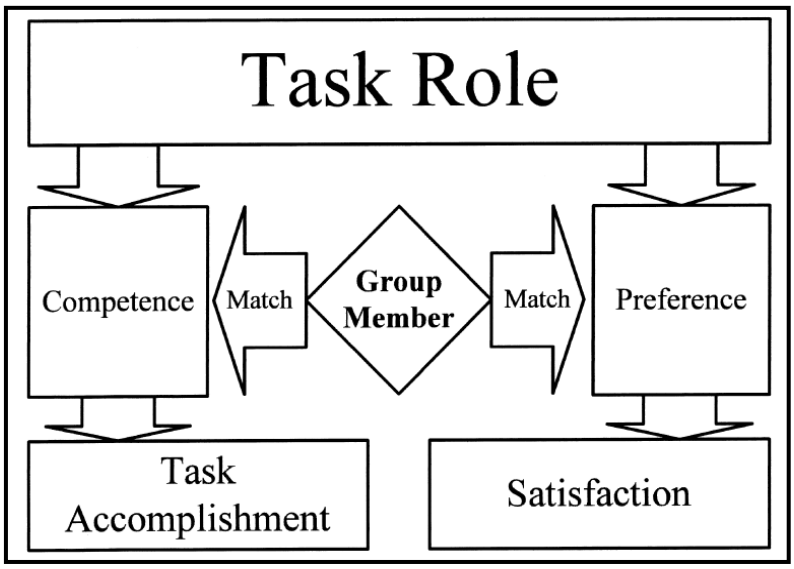

Figure 5: Effects of subtask assignment (Stempfle J. et al, 2001)

Besides these two principles according to Stempfle J. et al (2001), there are two influencing factors on task role distribution that must be considered, are: *1) Centrality*

of task role and *2) environmental pressure*. "*Centrality of task role* is defined by using a number of criteria:

- The more central a task role, the greater its importance with regards to achievement of the group goal. If a central task is not completed successfully, the group as a whole will be likely to fail in achieving its goals.
- The more central a task role, the higher the skill level that is needed to complete the task role. Central task roles require expert skills.
- The more central a task role, the more difficult it is to reassign the task role to a different group member during the on-going process of group work. Reassignment of a central task role will be difficult and time-consuming"

whereas *Environmental Pressure* is referred to influence of team environment on relative weight of the two principles in the emergence of task role distribution.

Environmental pressure is considered to be on higher side if flow of resources that team and/or individual members receive is directly dependent upon the team's success or failure in task accomplishment. However, if the team's success or failure in task accomplishment has no or little influence over resources that team obtains, then environmental pressure is considered to be on lower side.

If the task role is more central, then it should be assigned more on the basis of principle of competence as it requires highly skilled personnel to perform the requisite task(s) whereas less the task role is central, more it should be assigned on the basis of principle of preference. Similar is the case with environmental pressure, higher it is more the task role are distributed based upon principle of competence; lower the environmental pressure, principle of preference is given more weightage for task role distribution.

The next question which comes to mind, after discussing how to distribute the task in self-managing teams, is its effectiveness. How the effectiveness of self-managed task assignment can be defined in context of service processes?, What are the different variables that can predict the said effectiveness? are few questions addressed by Cohen S. G. et. al. (1996) in this regard. According to their study, the effectiveness of self-managing teams is defined in the terms of *"performance effectiveness (e.g., controlling costs, improving productivity and quality), employee attitudes about their quality of work life (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment), and employee behavior (absenteeism)."* These criterions were derived from various group effectiveness theories and empirical work (Cohen, 1994) on quality of work life and effectiveness of self-managing teams.

They proposed a comprehensive model for self-managing team effectiveness in which categories of predictor variables like group task design, group characteristics, encouraging supervisory behaviors and an organizational context that supports employee involvement were incorporated (*Figure 6).* The various variables that come under one particular predictor category are also shown in the model diagram.

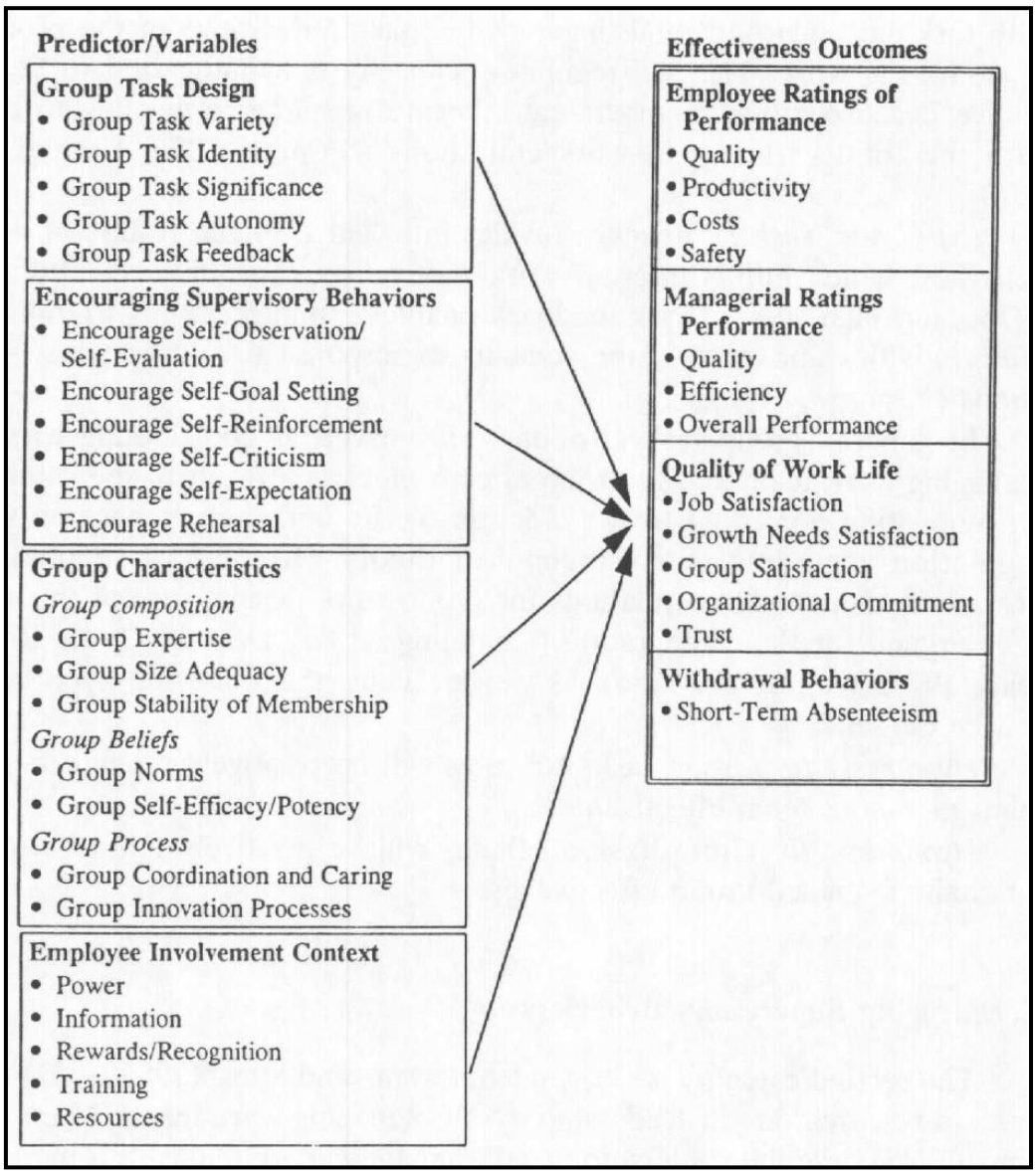

Figure 6: Model for Self-managing team effectiveness (Cohen S. G. et. al., 1996)

The questionnaires were given to individual teams to provide their responses by Cohen S. G. et. al., however, teams in which less than 2 people responded were dropped to maintain the data quality and managers handling more than two teams were asked to fill out separate questionnaire for each team. Along with questionnaire, interviews were also conducted with different teams to understand the nature of work being performed by the team.

In other measure of effectiveness as Group Potency, Jong A. de et. al. (2005) studied its antecedents and consequences in their study in case of self-managing service teams. The strong belief in the potential for effectiveness resulted in better performance was revealed in qualitative work done by Hackman J. R. (1992). This belief was later labeled as "Group Potency" (Guzzo R. A. et. al., 1993) and term was used in their study by Jong A. de et. al. (2005). The group potency as a concept is a part of social cognition theory and is a group-level construct as self-efficacy is in case of individual-level construct. Both are motivational constructs that contemplate appraisals of capabilities (Jong A. de et. al., 2005; Gully S. M., 2002; Lee C. et. al., 2002).

Still there are some fundamental differences between Group Potency and Self-Efficacy. The former reflects the competency of team as a whole whereas latter reflects an individual's belief about his/her own competence. In second major difference, former also point towards 'generalized' employee beliefs about the team's performance capabilities across tasks and contexts, however, latter is associated with beliefs about task-specific activities (Jong A. de et. al., 2005). A key dimension of team functioning in front-line service delivery settings is identified as 'Potency' by Kirkman B. L. & Rosen B., 1997; Kirkman B. L. & Rosen B., 1999). Moreover, in serving the customer and the company, there is a high degree of task variability and role stress involved which in order to function well, urge SMT members to coordinate, communicate and cooperate (Batt R., 1999; Jong A. de et. al., 2005).

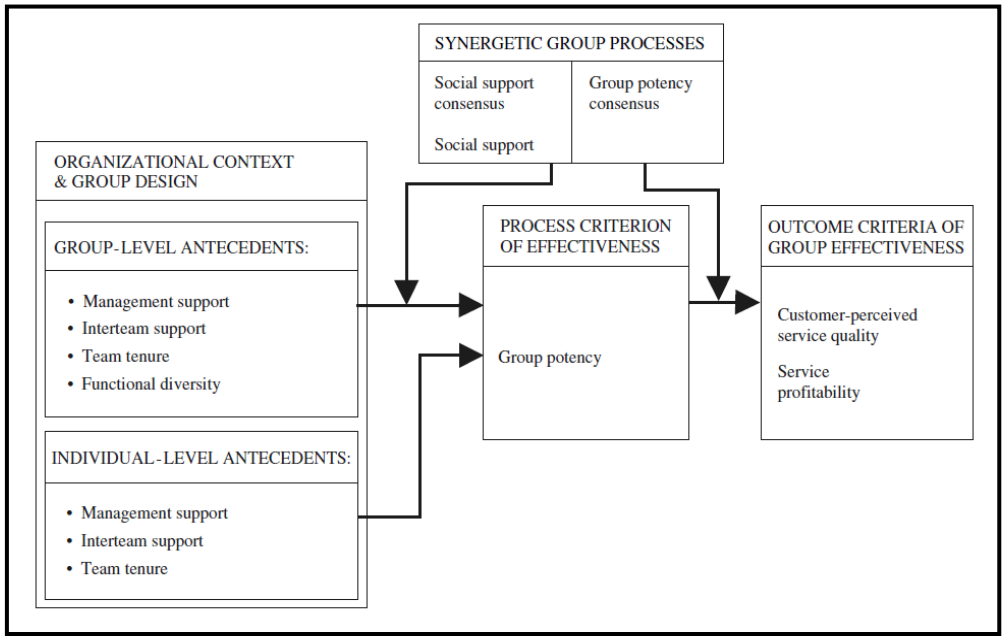

Figure 7: Conceptual Framework for Group Potency (Jong A. de et. al., 2005)

The framework depicted in *Figure 7* relating group potency to its antecedents is based on normative model of team effectiveness put forward by Hackman J. R. (1987). The normative model differentiates between supportive organizational context and team design parameters. The consequences of group potency as depicted in *Figure 7* are important measures of effectiveness for boundary-spanning service operations that have customer interactions as core responsibility (Emery C. R. & Fredenhall L. D., 2002; Singh J., 2000; Jong A. de et. al., 2005).

Resistance from Employees, Change Management and Conflict Resolution

In previous sub-sections, this paper discussed about what could be the organizational structure and culture for supporting self-managing teams, how tasks can be distributed in this new kind of management structure and then what factors influence the effectiveness of self-managed task assignment. These are issues which need to be taken care of before implementing self-management structure, however, while implementing this new management structure there are many other issues (e.g. resistances from employees, conflicts arising out during the process to name a few) that management has to face or address for facilitating smooth transition from traditional to self-management structure.

While implementing self-managing teams, managers generally expect resistance from employees or their unions, when they take such initiative. However, actual resistance came from an unexpected quarter – first-line supervisors/shift managers, as pointed by Klein J. A. (2001) in her study on QWL programs failure due to ignorance of concerns of first-line supervisors.

When she interviewed one of the supervisors, then following is refrain from what supervisor has stated: *"because management should know what is good for company, employee involvement must be good for company, Because the program is aimed at involving employees, it must be good for employees. But what about us? How is it going to help us?"* While another supervisor pointed out: *"for five years we have been beaten over the head about the need for more participation by workers. By this time we know we'd better believe, or at least say we believe, that it is good for the company and for employees. No one has really stressed that it would be good for us, just that we had better believe it or we don't have a job* (Klein J. A., 2001)*."*

So it is quite necessary for managers to take supervisors concerns seriously and make them aware about how this new initiative for change in management structure is going to help them in many ways. Klein J. A. (2001) identified three major concerns of

supervisors in this scenario: *1) Job Security:* will supervisors become redundant after implementation of self-managing teams? Are they going to lose their jobs? Managers generally talks about job security of employees working in such teams but they comparatively do not talk much about in case of supervisors; *2) Job Definition*: How supervisors are expected to perform? How their performance is going to be measured? Management should communicate effectively to the supervisors about their new roles and responsibilities from the very beginning itself. In one of cases mentioned in study conducted by Klein J.A., management took more than three years to actually do that which resulted in resistance from the first-line supervisors; *3) Additional Work Requirement:* additional work generated such as team development and training for short period of time and handling quality circles for extended periods, usually fall on supervisors' shoulders generally without extra pay and reward led to resistance from them.

Even if managers address these concerns of the supervisors, some still offer some reluctance to the new initiative. Those can be categorized into: *1) proponents of Theory X* – those who believe that workers need to be controlled and specifically told about what they have to do; *2) status seekers* – those who want to continue enjoy the prestige of their current positions and do not have willingness to part with their status or prerogative; *3) skeptics* – above two category of supervisor oppose the idea of self-management itself whereas skeptics express their doubt on ability of an entire organization to change; *4) equality seekers* – those who want equal involvement for themselves too. They just do not fully like the idea of top management selling this new concept to workers; *5) deal makers* – those who use informal, one-on-one deals (promising good job assignment, time-off from job) with workers as their management practice, because in self-managing teams they have to address the whole team not any individual worker.

Klein J. A. (2001) proposed some band-aid approach to concerns of those first-line supervisors working in different plants implementing self-management practices, but this approach can be used as strategy for companies who are thinking about implementation of this structure a fresh in their organizations. The approach includes:

1) *Support Based Training:* here managers have to become role model for supervisor since many times supervisors say that they do not get support from their bosses in case when some problem arises.
2) *Supervisory Involvement:* The supervisors need to be involved in design and implementation of employee-oriented programs and in decision making that would affect their jobs as well.

3) *Responsibility with authority:* The managers should delegate increased responsibility with adequate authority to those supervisors, just not provide them with what they have to do.
4) *Supervisory Networks:* The management should encourage the peer-networking among supervisors to help them in seeing the value of employee involvement programs.
5) *Replacement:* The management might decide to replace (here replacement does not necessarily mean demotion or termination) the supervisor to "less damaging" position (as called by one of company), if their every effort proves futile in making supervisor participate in this change process.

The strategy/approach discussed above for effectively handling resistance from employees (supervisors in particular) coupled with the effective organizational change management policy/plan, as managers have to make significant adjustments within the organization while changing from conventional to self-managing organizational structure, will make it much easier for management to implement new management structure.

It can be troublesome process for managers to pass power and control to their lower ranks in the organizational hierarchy majorly due to the perceived threat to their own status and power. Manz C. C. et. al. (1990) identified primary themes of this managerial transition to self-management. These themes not only helped in understanding the process but also provided basic material for design and evolution of change in management philosophy and action. These themes are:

1) **Initial Suspicion, Uncertainty and Resistance**
   Initially there is a feeling of threat and resentment towards the change apparently due to *1) concern over having what might be viewed as past personal performance failings come to the attention of upper management; 2) the tendency for the change plan to be credited to the consultant; and 3) belief that the new system would fail.* The consultant or change agent has to act as insulator between the top management and manager(s) reluctant to change. S/he needs to conduct interviews and discussions with manager(s) to make them aware about potential benefits of the new system.

2) **Gradual Realization of the positive possibilities inherent in the New Work System**
   It takes time for managers to recognize the need to assume a new role as facilitators and develop belief that workers are competent and responsible enough to handle the new system. Now managers are exploring new ways of empowering

the workers with the authority to perform management tasks rather than questioning their competence about the same.

3) **Wrestling with a New Role**

Here the managers in the new roles as facilitators of self-managing teams must be made aware about what the new philosophy logically demands. How the self-management philosophy influences the managerial behavior? How is manager in new role different from or better than being a manager? The consultant or change agent here can argue that to achieve the goal of facilitation, facilitators should encounter the destructive behavior of team members by instructing them to adopt constructive ways of expressing themselves in conflict situations.

4) **Learning a new Language**

This theme can be facilitated by role plays in which managers can rehearse appropriate behaviors for their new roles. They can even experiment with the new ways of speaking and test its effectiveness with one another. While communicating with self-managing teams, facilitators need to keep in mind that they should talking in terms of team context rather than individual context as required by the philosophy of self-management. So facilitators need to develop certain kind of verbal skills to deliver right words at the right time suited for this new philosophy of management.

Thus, any organization thinking of adopting this new kind of management i.e. self-management is well advised to spend substantial time and effort in facilitating this important managerial transition (Manz C. C. et. al., 1990).

Management armed with policies/strategies to deal with resistance from employees, how to effectively manage change while transiting to self-management structure still have one more equally important task at hand: "Conflict Resolution." Conflict refers to *"a process of social interaction involving a struggle over claims to resources, power and status, beliefs, and other preferences and desires."* Conflict is an important factor that can guide the success of teams (and organizations as a whole) as it is inherent in the nature of teams. The different people from different backgrounds working together, may one of the reasons for the conflicting situations. Human tendency to relate conflict with destructiveness, antagonism, uncomfortable relationships, violence & war make it difficult for them to understand the conflict. This tendency has led to avoid confronting the conflict in initial stages, thus resulting in escalation of the situation (Appelbaum S. H. et. al, 1999).

To understand the conflict, it is essential to understand how conflict actually comes into existence (meaning to understand Conflict Process). In case of self-managing teams, conflict process can be understood as sequence of four related stages (*Figure 8*, Robbins S. P., 1994: p. 172). The four stages are:

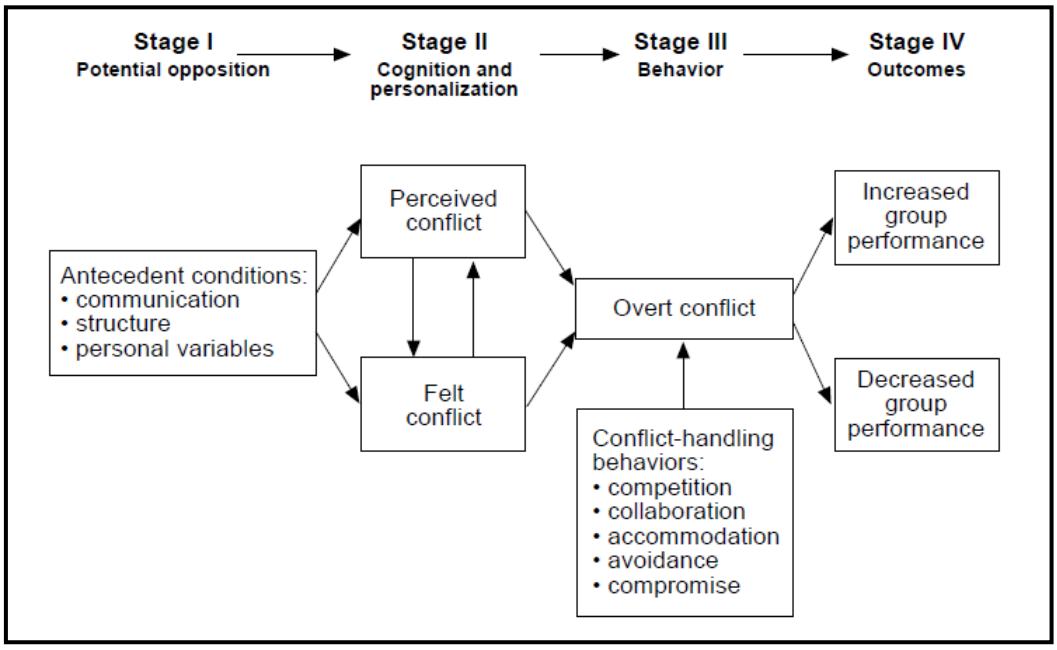

Figure 8: Four stages of conflict (Robbins S. P., 1994: p. 172; Appelbaum S. H. et. al, 1999)

1) *Antecedent conditions:* The sources of potential opposition are related to the structure, personal peculiarities, and communication present in the team. The presence of these conditions is required for conflict to occur (Robbins S. P., 1994: p. 170).
2) *Cognition and personalization:* The generation of frustration, hence conflict, is due to the presence of antecedent conditions. The issue for conflict can be: *I) Scarce Resources, II) Collective procedures and/or policies, and III) Role behavior of individuals.* The conflict can now either be felt or perceived by any team member.
3) *Behavior Manifestation:* This is moment when conflict is out in open. Conflict can be expressed in subtle, indirect, and highly controlled way or it can even take aggressive, violent or uncontrolled struggle way of expression (Robbins S. P., 1994: p. 173). The interplay between the explicit/overt conflict and conflict handling behaviors (withdrawal, smoothing, compromising, forcing, confrontation as suggested by Lippit G. L., 1982) results in outcomes of conflict.
4) *Outcomes:* The positive outcomes include development of sense of solidarity among members of groups engaged in conflict; the emergence of creative ideas; formulations of new policies, procedures, and services; the reformation and

renewal of organizations and their programs; and heightened enthusiasm and purpose among the conflicting participants.

The negative/destructive outcomes include physical or psychological injury, increased hostility and misperception; hardened antagonistic positions; and emotional exhaustion.

There are other two sides of conflict, as identified by Literature on conflict, that have distinctly opposite consequences on team decision-making process: *1) Cognitive Conflict* and *2) Affective Conflict.* The former is also known as functional conflict and it revolves around differences in decisions whereas latter also known as dysfunctional conflict is aimed at a person not on an issue and generally leads to poor and unacceptable decisions (Appelbaum S. H. et. al, 1999; Brockmann E., 1996: p. 61).

After understanding what the conflict is and what various stages are involved in evolution of conflict, the next step is to discuss how it can be managed effectively to create win-win situation. Appelbaum S. H. et. al (1999) summarizes the effective conflict resolution in *Figure 9* below:

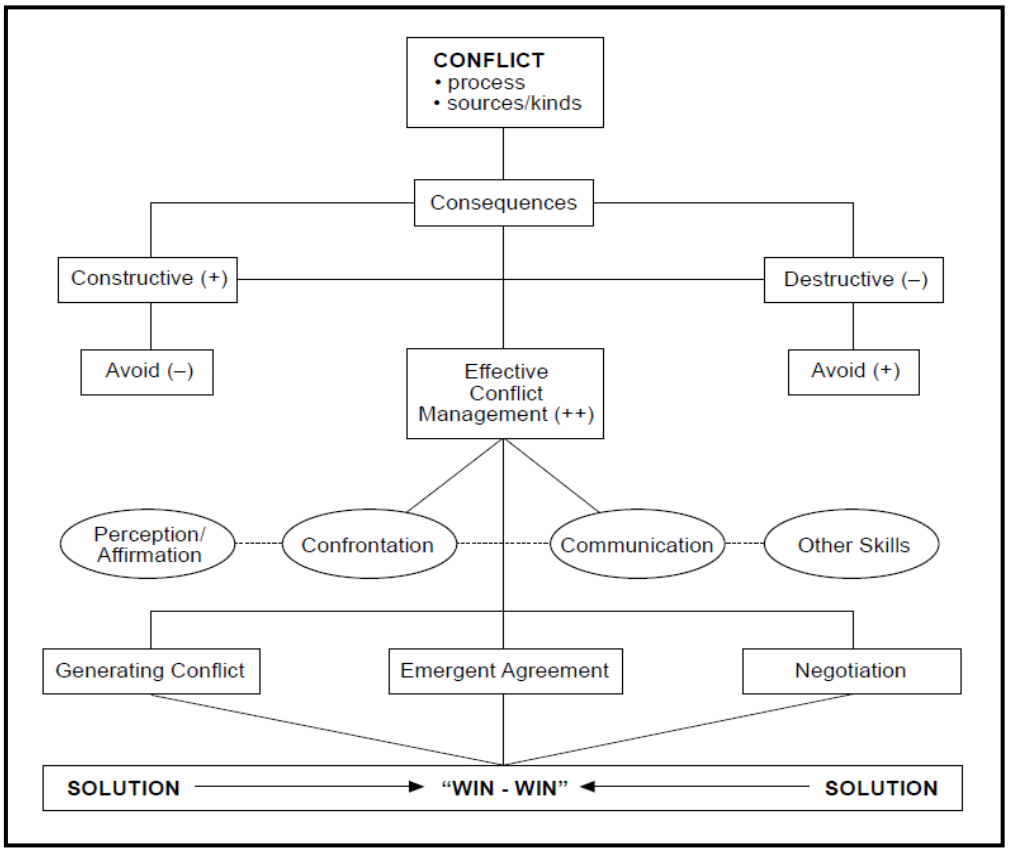

Figure 9: Conflict Resolution (Appelbaum S. H. et. al, 1999)

When a management conflict occurs, the general approach is to remove the immediate cause. But this approach is not effective as it may lead to spread of conflict in the organization (Rahim M. A., 1989: p. 9). An effective conflict resolution strategy needs to be beneficial, impartial and equitable. Conflict resolution means *"terminating conflict by methods that are analytical and get to roof of the problem. Conflict resolution, as compared to mere management or settlement, points to an outcome that, in view of the parties involved, is permanent solution to the problem"* (Tillett G., 1992: p. 123). The perception of conflict alone is not sufficient enough for making decisions. The existence of genuine conflict has to be assessed by the manager for taking decision as to whether avoid or go ahead with conflict managing activities as shown in *Figure 9.*

While executing conflict resolution techniques, managers come across a different type of individuals known as "co-dependents" (Cook R. A. & Goff J. L., 2002). Personal co-dependency is defined as *"the condition wherein one person tries to control another and to be responsible for the consequences of the behavior of that other person"* (Goff J. L. & Goff P. J., 1991). According to Whitefield C. A. (1992: p. 816), *"co-dependency is not only the most common addiction, it is the base addiction out of which all our addictions and compulsions emerge."* While assembling the SMTs, managers are looking for some desired outcomes, but those can be offset by inclusion of co-dependent individuals as shown in *figure 10*.

Characteristics of Successful Team Members Versus Co-dependents

Benefits of Self-Mananged Teams	Problems Created by Co-Dependent Individuals
Open-mindedness	Tend to operate in a dualistic world where everything is seen as black or white.
Emotional Stability	Described as individuals with constant anxiety and boundary issues, constantly inhibited in relationship by lack of self-esteem and fear of rejection.
Accountability	Have not learned the distinction between accountability and blame, and because of their own insecurities always try to shift responsibility to others.
Problem-solving Abilities	Unable to make decisions and implement actions to carry them out.
Good Communication Skills	Tend to hoard information, seeing it as a valuable commodity in short supply.
Good at Conflict Resolution	Caught in a web of self-defeating behaviors that . . .
Trust	Learn very early in life that it dangerous to trust anyone, and carry that into adulthood.

Figure 10: Impact of co-dependent individual on SMT benefits (Cook R. A. & Goff J. L., 2002)

To deal with co-dependent individuals, try to identify them in first place and never place them in SMTs but in most likely they will survive through the screening process. Then team has to deal with such individuals as they always try to look good. If they are working well with team, then there is good chance of them be able to work in SMT environment. The greatest diagnostic tool is "Conflict Resolution" where team members work in hypothetical situations and mock work environments, then the co-dependent individuals can be identified (Cook R. A. & Goff J. L., 2002).

All said but still the primary responsibility for managing SMT lies with team members. It is risky ground for team members as co-dependents have mysterious ability of drawing others into their own system. This has to be explored thoroughly during the training sessions. The question that team has to face is whether the co-dependent individual needs to be replaced. For this, there are three considerations:

- does the team require the service/expertise that individual is offering
- is the team ready to accept a new team member as per requirements of their work and team policy formulations
- can team find a person from within the organization fulfilling all the pre-requisites and who can fit him/herself into their existing team structure.

If team member's behavior is presenting only a few problems rather than being totally disruptive to the team goals, then other team members should take this opportunity to confront that member and try to find new ways for helping him/her to be more effective (Cook R. A. & Goff J. L., 2002).

This paper has now been able to discuss variety of issues, concepts, mechanism related to self-managing teams ranging from organizational structure to self-managed task assignment and its effectiveness, from change management to effective conflict resolution mechanism. It would be beneficial if this paper takes some clues from the companies who have already implemented the self-management structure.

Wagerman R. (1997) in her case study on self-managing teams at Xerox identified seven critical success factors for creating superb self-managing teams as summarized in *Figure 11*. These factors should matter for anyone leading a team – from front-line managers leading shop-floor teams to senior managers launching problem-solving groups. But for putting these success factors in use the organization-wide changes might be required to be incorporated. The changes can be in terms of reward systems, work design methodologies and resource allocation to the different teams. These factors give possible chances of getting creativity, flexibility and responsiveness into the organization which are building self-managing teams.

Critical Success Factors: Diagnostic Questions for Team Leaders

1. Clear direction
Can team members articulate a clear direction, shared by all members, of the basic purpose that the team exists to achieve?

2. A real team task
Is the team assigned collective responsibility for all the team's customers and major outputs?

Is the team required to make collective decisions about work strategies (rather than leaving it to individuals)?

Are members cross-trained, able to help each other?

Does the team get team-level data and feedback about its performance?

Is the team required to meet frequently, and does it do so?

3. Team rewards
Counting all reward dollars available, are more than 80 percent available to teams only, and not to individuals?

4. Basic material resources
Does the team have its own meeting space?

Can the team easily get basic materials needed for the work?

5. Authority to manage the work
Does the team have the authority to decide the following (without first receiving special authorization)?

- How to meet client demands
- Which actions to take, and when
- Whether to change their work strategies when they deem necessary

6. Team goals
Can the team articulate specific goals?

Do these goals stretch their performance?

Have they specified a time by which they intend to accomplish these goals?

7. Strategy norms
Do team members encourage each other to detect problems without the leader's intervention?

Do members openly discuss differences in what members have to contribute to the team?

Do members encourage experimentation with new ways of operating?

Does the team actively seek to learn from other teams?

Figure 11: Seven critical success factors (Wagerman R., 1997)

Liebowitz S. J. & Holden K. T. (1995) conducted their study on self-managing teams in two companies which are world-class corporations namely *Corning and Motorola*. They selected Corning's Erwin Ceramic Plant and Motorola's Elma Plant as target for their study. *Figure 12* summarizes how the management at plants under study managed to deal with supervisors and their concerns according to pre-existing organizational environment there. Liebowitz S. J. & Holden K. T. summarized all their findings from the analysis of the

What Happened to the Supervisors?

	Motorola's Elma Plant	Corning's Erwin Plant
Became a team member	37%	11%
Became a team coordinator	5%	4%
Accepted technical position	12%	19%
Accepted trainer/support position	12%	15%
Became a team member	19%	7%
Transferred/promoted to other facilities	0%	44%
Changed shifts	5%	0%
Quit	10%	4%
Early Retirement	0%	0%
Fired	0%	0%
Laid off	0%	0%

Figure 12: Statistics regarding supervisors (Liebowitz S. J. & Holden K. T., 1995)

plants in *Figure 13*. They concluded their paper by saying *"if companies are really serious about increasing sales and reducing costs by becoming more quality conscious and customer-oriented, the results are in on self-managing work teams. They are definitely worthwhile."*

CONCLUSION

Self-managing teams is the way to go for companies striving to enhance the business productivities and better their customer relationships. In first place, the companies should decide at what level they want to implement the self-managing teams. Organization structure should be flexible and leaner to support the SMTs. The role of managers/leaders in the organization would now change to be a coach or facilitator. A three level organizational hierarchy (as also was finding from study at Motorola Plant) would be ideal for this new management structure. The biggest mistake organization is to remove the controlling layer when teams are fully developed as self-managing teams. The role of facility managers was highlighted to solve this problem in this paper. Alone having organizational structure will not solve the purpose; it requires proper organizational culture to be in place within the organization where trust and effective communication was too most important components of such culture. But too much of trust should not be there as it may go against the principle of SMTs. SMTs need to acquire a set of qualities (attitude, uniqueness, communication, creativity, and play) for their effective functioning. There are two driving forces behind the self-managed

Tips from Corning

1. Bring resistant employees on the benchmarking trips to other successful companies.
2. The older employees will support self-managing teams if they perceive that it can make their plant a better one.
3. The employees must be shown what tangible benefits they will receive if the SMWT's work out.
4. Skill-based pay can work even with highly experienced specialists if they can give up their low-level tasks and learn to perform other high-level tasks.
5. A gain-sharing program can help create that one big team or family feeling, with everyone shooting for the same goal.
6. Employees often prefer to give up their overtime pay in return for a more satisfying home life.
7. It is critical for top management to clarify middle management's important new role.
8. The performance appraisal and reward systems for supervisors (i.e., team leaders and coordinators) must reflect the new culture.
9. Involve the union from the beginning steps of planning the SMWT effort.
10. Continuous visible commitment from top management and the union leadership is vital to prevent backsliding.

Tips from Motorola

1. When support from corporate management is lacking, emphasize the quantitative results they want, not your new methods that they are unsure of.
2. Reduce the number of levels of management in the plant to three.
3. Encourage employees to accept horizontal career moves.
4. Implement the Activity Based Costing method of accounting.
5. Allow each self-managing team to gradually pull in some support functions into their team.

Figure 13: Tips from Motorola and Corning Plants for implementing self-managing teams (Liebowitz S. J. & Holden K. T., 1995)

task distribution namely *external demands and internal demands.* The task role distribution can be done on the basis of two principles: *principle of competence* and *principle of preference*, where giving higher weightage to one particular principle will depend upon two factors: *environmental pressure* and *centrality of task role*. This paper discussed two theories regarding the effectiveness of self-managed task assignment in which one theory identified *employee ratings of performance, managerial ratings performance, quality of work life* and *withdrawal behaviors* as the measure of effectiveness whereas other theory identified *Group Potency* as the measure, but the factors discussed need to be tested under real situations of the company planning to go self-managed way.

Implementing this new management structure is not going to be hassle free. The management should be ready to face and tackle issues related to resistance from employees (supervisors to be particular). There should be some consultant or change agent to facilitate the change process and insulate the reluctant managers from the top management. This paper discussed the change process in sequence in terms of themes of managerial transition. The conflict is bound to rise while implementing new management structure. To resolve the conflict effectively, the managers first need to understand what kind of conflict is there within the ranks of the company and adopt the resolution strategy accordingly. The self-managing teams in most cases themselves should handle the issues related to co-dependent individuals and help them in new ways to be more effective towards achieving the team goals.

The companies planning to go self-managed way should also learn from the experience of the organizations which have already implemented the self-managing teams, as they provide valuable information regarding conflict resolution, change management and how to deal with resistance from the employees. This is reason this paper mentioned two case studies towards the end of literature review.

In the personal view of the author of this paper, self-managing teams are worth to implement in present day world of business competitiveness and business organizations striving to better their customer relationships and enhance business productivities. In earlier times, the production companies such as Motorola. Xerox, Corning, General Electric, Coca Cola to name a few have already gone self-managed way. Now it is the time for service-oriented firms to implement this new management structure.

The service-oriented firms should empower their employees and include them in decision making process facilitating the inflow of innovative idea of doing the business and serving their customer in a much better way. For facilitating such programs, self-managed teams and related task assignment strategies can be adopted.

LIMITATIONS

This paper suffers from limitations in terms of unavailability of highly cited research publications and from quality journals. Moreover, the literature which was readily available was in context of production-oriented firms as they were first to implement this new management structure. Service-oriented being fresh to implement this new management philosophy, so literature in their context was not readily available. Still author has tried his best to do justice to the title of this paper.

FUTURE SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The future research can focus on how technology can play its role to enhance the effectiveness of self-managing teams and how better self-managed task assignment strategies can be implemented by use of information technology and its varied applications. The more focused research on service-oriented firms could be conducted as in present times author was not able to get access to the good amount of literature on the self-managing teams and its task assignment in context of service processes.

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

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