Stressmanagement: a new instrument for self management and cooperation

Purpose

This study evaluated the effectiveness of an intervention with the purpose of diminishing work stress. The intervention was focused on the balance between available capacity and capacity demands in organizing processes. Through individual insight in workload, measurable indicators and a structured decision making process, capacity constraints are solved and balanced.

Stress is a significant cause for health problems. Time is the scarcest of all resources and unless it is managed, nothing can be managed. Customers and partners have limits to their time. Proper planning of tasks is essential. Since the strength of a chain equals the strength of the weakest link, logic holds that to solve non-bottleneck tasks will not effectively contribute to solve time constraints. Thus insight in time constraints and interdependencies with regard to the bottleneck, structures decision making and reduction of complexity.

In today's rapidly changing business environment, workers struggle to contribute to shifting priorities and faster delivery cycles. To remain viable, they must evolve to personal leadership that drive better business outcomes. This requires building transparency and coherence into planning, execution and driving learning and development.

Intervention method

The Taaktuner was used by all workers to plan their working activities. The Taaktuner is a webbased planningtool, indicating bottlenecks to a user. This gives insight whether requested delivery moments can be met, which task or tasks are critical and which possibilities are effectively available to resolve constraints. Indicators that represent task load of the current planning are presented to indicate self management to the user and to communicate with colleagues and management. Based on this insight, a process of bottom-up innovation and improvement of skills was started. The effort in innovation is limited by available time and aims at reduction of time spent on regular activities and improving added value through experimenting, learning and applying what is effective.

Measurement methodology

This intervention is measured by a 0 – and 1- survey. For the interventions the VBBA 2.0 (Questionnaire on the Experience and Assessment of Work) was used. Each question gives one answer. The answers are bundled in a scale score. Each scale score of the VBBA is compared with the VBBA reference data to determine the significance of the results. The distribution overview shows the percentage of employees with a positive grade and a negative grade in comparison with the two benchmarks. The percentage of employees that scores "moderate" is not shown. Therefore the "positive" and "negative" percentages do not add up to 100%. The Distribution overview allows for a check on "hidden" outliers in the average grade of the group.

Results and conclusions

The results show significantly that workers feel fitter, have less worries about work, less work stress, feel greater autonomy, and have a better relation with their manager. The deployment of the Taaktuner in work results in less work stress and better working conditions. The intervention has led to a better relationship between workers and managers.

MAARTEN DE WINTER