

Chapter 78

Rhetoric of Game: Utilizing the Game of Tavistock Method on Organizational Politics Training

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ABSTRACT

The Tavistock method, commonly known as group relations, was originated from the work of British psychoanalyst Wilfred Ruprecht Bion. The Tavistock method's basic premise is that an aggregate cluster of persons becomes a group when interaction between members occurs. Within a group, there is organizational politics, and there are two features of organizational politics that should be considered when investigating its relationships with employee attitudes and behaviors. First, perceptions are more important than reality. Second, organizational politics may be interpreted as either beneficial or detrimental to an individual's well-being. Thus, organizational politics perceptions may result in differing responses to organizational policies and practices depending on whether politics are viewed as an opportunity or as a threat. How well one survives within an organization is correlated with how well one navigates these organizational politics. The Tavistock method is utilized as a game to assess and train individuals on organizational politics.

BACKGROUND

The connotation of game, more often than not, is a negative one. The term game often implies deceptions and questionable ethics. In the field of business, to practitioners more so than to researchers, business is often perceived as a game, and like a game, it possesses its own special rules for playing. Similarly, lies of omission, overstatements, puffery and bluffs are morally acceptable within business because it, like a game, has a special ethic

which permits these normally immoral practices (Shapiro & Carr, 2012). Although critics of this reasoning have used deontological and utilitarian arguments (Bowie, 1993) to show that deceit in business is just as immoral as it is in any other realm of human practice, little attention has been paid to the fact that the argument is one of analogy.

A (computer) game, according to Tran (2014a), can embody more than one rhetoric, but play as a form of conflict and contest (power), a means of expressing an identity and belonging to a

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group (identity), as imagination and creativity (the imaginary), and a means of relaxation and escape (the self), are the most common forms experienced in computer games. Regardless of the embedded play rhetoric, one of the primary concerns of industrial and organizational practitioners is the utilization of game as a method on training and assessing gamers (potential and current employees) in an organizational setting. Understanding of such psychological gamer is important not just in studying video game players but also for understanding behaviors and characteristics of individuals who are non-players of video game [non-player characteristics (NPCs)]. As an industrial and organizational practitioner and researcher, it appears that currently there is still a gap in literature concerning both the understanding of these psychological factors and the utilization of these psychological factors of the gamer in assessing and training gamers in organizational settings.

The gap in literature concerning the understanding of these psychological factors and the utilization of these psychological factors in relation to assessing and training employees on organizational politics are due to three reasons. First, in the field of psychology, the American Psychological Association (APA) has 56 divisions, but none of which addresses this topic and area of study. Second, this topic and area of study is not in the area of business (management or human resources), because both the research (academic) and the practice (practitioners) of business is not clinically-based. Third, more often than not, industrial and organizational (I/O) practitioners [for the business arena (also known as industrial and organizational psychologists for the non-business arena)] are the group of individuals who will, more likely than not, study and utilize this area in assessment. However, it does not mean that it is a common practice for I/O practitioners to adopt this methodology and I/O researchers to select this route of research.

The understanding of the psychological gamer is important not just in studying video game players but also for understanding behaviors and characteristics of individuals who are non-players of video game. Currently there is a gap in literature concerning the utilization of the gamer in selecting and training potential and current employees in organizational settings. The benefits and competitive advantage of utilizing the game of Tavistock Method in assessing and training gamers are: 1) identifying qualified gamers who are a good fit to fulfill the organizational needs, and 2) assisting the organization to achieve and maintain competitive advantage over its competitors. Organizations are strongly encouraged to utilize the game of Tavistock method to assess gamers on their other characteristics (O) and to train gamers on organizational politics. The O factor is part of the knowledge, skills, and abilities factors, commonly known as KSAOs. The emphasis will be on the game of Tavistock Method and on utilizing the game of Tavistock method to train gamers on organizational politics.

GAME THEORY

Game theory is the formal study of conflict and cooperation, and the game theoretic concepts apply whenever the actions of several agents are interdependent (Varoufakis, 2001). These agents may be individuals, groups, firms, or any combination of these. The concepts of game theory provide a language to formulate structure, analyze, and understand strategic scenarios. In other words, a gamer refers to an interactive situation involving two or more players making strategic decisions. Game theory is a branch of applied mathematics concerning optimal or purposeful behavior in different types of situations involving strategy and rational decision.

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