The Effects of Cognitive Style Composition on MIS Project Team Performance: A Field Experiment

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Abstract

A field experiment was conducted to examine the impact of member distribution of cognitive styles on the performance of MIS project teams. 24 computer programmers/analysts working for a large government agency were assigned to one of three MIS project teams. The first (heterogeneous) team of 8 members consisted of equal numbers of persons from each of Juing's cognitive types; sensor-thinkers, sensor-feelers, intuitive-thinkers. The second (homogenous) team consisted of 6 sensory-thinkers and 2 intuitive-thinkers, and the third (homogeneous) team of 6 intuitive-feelers and two sensory-feelers. The three teams worked independently on similar MIS problems for period of nine and eighteen months. After those periods their performance were rated by five managers who used their services. The performance of the heterogeneous team was rated significantly more highly by these managers than either of the two homogenous teams after both nine and eighteen months. Its members also expressed a significantly higher level of satisfaction with their jobs than did the members of the two homogeneous teams. The results suggest that the distribution of cognitive styles among members of MIS project teams can help to produce differences in job performance and member satisfaction. They suggest that heterogeneous teams, in which all four cognitive styles are represented, are likely to perform better than more homogeneous teams, dominated by either thinkers or feelers.

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