

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

All organizations are living and breathing organisms in the sense they are constantly changing and adapting to their environment. This case study is a clear representation of the changes and issues that must be continually addressed by management if an organization is to be successful. How everyday concerns such as; promotion, communication, and leadership are tackled can have a lasting effect on morale and productivity. It is clear that with the arrival of Dr. Oputa as the new Executive Director at the Indianapolis office there were many changes that were not popular and which caused dissention throughout the organization. In this case study I will identify the problem areas and list in detail some recommendations on how to make corrections that will help create a better work environment. Finally, I will discuss the contrasting management styles of Dr. Oputa and Dr. Ajiri, both of whom bring experience and talent to the organization.

PROBLEMS:

It is difficult to identify all of the problems without speaking to a variety of employees. In this case study we received information from three main sources, all of who are in management positions. To get a real sense of the problems within an organization it would be important to speak with employees from all areas of the organization. However, given the scenario in this case study I have identified the following areas where I believe problems exist and recommendations are needed to make improvement.

1. Human Resources
2. Discrimination
3. Promotion

4. Leadership
5. Communication

CRITICAL ANALYSIS:

1. Human Resources

It is a little unclear on the structure of Human Resources within this organization, except for the fact that Dr. Oputa had centralized this department during his re-structuring of the organization. The first issue that needs addressed in this area is the hiring practice within the organization. As an example there is an indication that a vacancy for Assistant Manager existed in the Kokomo regional office. When Mr. Maro applied for a job through the Indianapolis office he was originally told by Mr. Nelson that his services were needed and that he was qualified. However, his application was given directly to Dr. Oputa who held it for two month without any communication with Mr. Nelson or Mr. Maro. There seems to be no clear policy on hiring with Dr. Oputa allowing some regional managers to make their own decisions while not allowing Mr. Nelson to do the same.

The same is true when it comes to terminating an employee. There appears to be no clear policy on how to accomplish this in a fair way. In the example given Dr. Oputa was determined to fire a manager based on his own observations even when the observations of Dr. Ajiri differed greatly. The question is there a progressive disciplinary policy in place or are they simply flying by the seat of their pants when making decisions on when to hire and to terminate. This potentially opens the organization to legal action when it comes to unfair hiring practices and bias when it comes to terminations. Moreover, it creates anxiety within the organization when employees feel as though they can be fired just because a supervisor doesn't like them.

2. Discrimination

Discrimination can come in many different forms and there are at least two examples listed in this case study. The first given is the mandatory retirement of all employees that are 55 years of age or older. This policy has a negative effect on the organization in that it depletes valuable resources when it comes to experience and training. It will be very costly to train new employees to do the job of those who have years of experience. There is a possibility of a reduction in the quality of service as less experienced employees are learning their new jobs. Furthermore, it creates an environment where those employees who are approaching the age limit will feel helpless, unsure of their future, and frustration with the organization. All of which is likely to greatly reduce their production.

In the second example all women were removed from sectional head positions based on the theory “they were always taking time off from work”. Just like the first example this has a negative impact on the organization giving the women little hope of progressing in their careers. Additionally, many qualified employees are removed from consideration based on their gender with no consideration for their experience and ability to perform the job.

Finally, both of these examples leave the organization vulnerable to legal actions when it comes to affirmative action and discrimination laws. Even more damaging to the organization is the loss of valuable human resources and experience, not to mention the trust of all employees that they will be treated fairly. A well organized human resource department acts as a central location for all work related policies, thus reducing the chance of intentional and unintentional issues of discrimination.

3. Promotion

Most employees desire to improve in their workplace, including the possibility of a promotion as they progress in their career. Often being promoted brings a sense of accomplishment; the feeling that one is being noticed for their skill, knowledge, and ability to manage people. If the promotion process is unfair or even appears to be unfair to the employees this can lead to a sense of hopelessness or an attitude that it really doesn't matter how well I perform -- I will not be promoted because of my gender or race.

In this case study since the arrival of Dr. Oputa no women had been promoted into a senior management position and he had removed all women from sectional head positions. This sends a message to all female employees that it does not matter about your qualifications – you will not be promoted because of your gender.

Second, Dr. Oputa changed the promotion policy for females and minorities from seniority based to one based on superior evaluation of subordinates. This policy leaves the likelihood of promotion solely in the hands of their supervisor, which could be subjective depending on whether that supervisor liked the employee.

Finally, one additional problem began when Dr. Oputa first arrived as the new Executive Director. Instead of looking internally for qualified people to manage the regional offices he brought in managers from the outside that had little knowledge of the inner workings of the organization. By bringing in managers from the outside without giving any of the current employees an opportunity to be promoted causes frustration and the feeling that no matter how hard they work there is little chance of being promoted.

4. Leadership

Good leadership is critical to the success of all organizations. Without good leadership there is no vision or goal in which the employees work towards. Often times it may feel as though they are drifting along in the ocean with no clear direction. At least for Mr. Nelson there was no sense of leadership in the Commerce Department. According to his accounts Dr. Oputa would make decisions based on his own perception of the problem with no real input from other employees. He would allow certain managers to perform task such as hiring and firing in their districts but with other managers, including Mr. Nelson, this process would be done from the central office. He felt Dr. Oputa didn't care for his employees which is evident in the one-sided promotion process, forced retirement of employees who were still in their prime, and termination of employees even when other high ranking managers have sound reason to not terminate. Dr. Oputa's leadership style is one of an authoritarian, who believes it is my way or the highway.

5. Communication

Good communication consists of more than just carrying on a conversation with another person. One key element is the ability to listen to the other person and to give feedback on what they are talking about. In this organization it is clear healthy communication is missing. Mr. Nelson is frustrated because when Dr. Oputa first arrived he tried to tell him about the problems that existed within the organization, however, he felt instead of listening to his concerns that Dr. Oputa instead only wanted to complain about the past administration.

Second, when deciding how to restructure the department Dr. Oputa did not seek out the advice of those who work in the affected areas, but instead reorganized the department in the way he felt was more productive. This approach can have a negative effect on morale, and

productivity given the fact Dr. Oputa was new to the organization and didn't have a complete understanding of how all of the divisions function.

Finally, when it came to terminating a manager Dr. Oputa refused to listen to advice from Dr. Ajiri, who felt termination was not the right punishment given the organization had failed to provide training needed to help to make the employee a better manager.

Overall, Dr. Oputa's leadership style is one that does not lend itself to asking for advice when it comes to making decisions. It would appear that he struggles when it comes to listening to others, and when advice is given if it does not lineup with the way he feels simply dismisses it to past problems with his predecessor.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

First of all before I make recommendations on the five mentioned problems I believe it is important to answer the question concerning the management approach of Dr. Ajiri and Dr. Oputa. There are different management/leadership styles and given the situation a different style or approach may be needed. In this case study it is clear that Dr. Oputa's style is authoritarian where Dr. Ajiri is more participative. In the book titled Public Administration; Clerkin, Kravchuk, & Rosenbloom (2009) explain an analysis done by Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt where they described a continuum from boss to subordinate centered leadership styles. In the boss centered style the boss makes a decision and announces it, where on the other end of the scale the manager permits the subordinates to make decisions within broad limits defined by the manager. In between the two extremes are five other management levels. Dr. Oputa would tend to fall in the boss-centered range where Dr. Ajiri would fall more in the middle of the scale allowing for subordinate input.

Although, he may not view his style as being negative Dr. Oputa has alienated many of the employees with his lack of listening to their concerns, creating policies that discriminate against women and minorities, and making important decisions that affect the work environment without first asking for input from those who work in the affected areas. Finally, most people will view his management style as being egotistic and self-fulfilling with little regard to how it affects others in the organization.

Dr. Ajiri on the other hand comes across as a person who cares about his employees and is willing to listen to their concerns. In his management style he is more likely to solicit input from other managers and his subordinates before making critical decisions. Perhaps the one drawback to Dr. Ajiri's style is the tendency to get too close to his subordinates, which can cloud his judgment when it comes to making a decision on important issues such as termination. It is very difficult to recommend such a harsh punishment for someone when you have a very close relationship with that person.

As listed above there are five problem areas I have identified in this organization. Some of the problems tend to cross over into other areas such as human resource issues and promotion issues. Many of the problems in the area of human resources, promotion and discrimination can be corrected by creating a viable human resource department which has clear rules and policies. I will recommend a solution to each problem area individually but keeping in mind at the very least these three areas affect each other.

1. Human Resources

Very little was mentioned on the role human resources play in this organization. For the most part the only information given is that Dr. Oputa centralized the human resource division

but still allowed for some regional managers to make decisions when it came to hiring. The centralization of this department is not necessarily a bad idea, however, there needs to be a clear policy on hiring and firing practices that are used throughout the organization. If not already in place then a policy should be created that describes a progressive disciplinary approach to discipline with some indication on who will investigate complaints and hand out the discipline. The same is true when it comes to hiring new employees. There should be a central location where interested candidates submit their applications and resumes. A standard across the board hiring policy should be in place with a detailed plan of action on how the hiring process will take place.

Depending on the position to be filled individual managers should be given leeway to fill vacant positions within their area and take on more of the human resource responsibilities – in other words decentralizing some areas. In the book titled Public Administration; Clerkin et al. (2009) speak about the evolution of human resources management from the “Gentlemen” approach used by President George Washington to a “Merit” system that is used in many organizations today. In their concluding statements they see three broad approaches to human resources in the future.

1. Personnel systems will continue to be decentralized.
2. Central personnel agencies will do less.
3. One-size-fits-all regulations will be abandoned in favor of laws tailored for specific agencies.

No matter which direction an organization chooses when it comes to human resource management there needs to be a clear policy in place which describes the procedure to follow

when it comes to hiring and terminating employees. The policy must be fair to all employees and regional managers should be allowed input and the ability to make some of these decisions on their own.

2. Discrimination

Discrimination in the workplace comes in many different forms including gender, race, and age. Discrimination is defined as “treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction in favor of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person or thing belongs rather than on individual merit”(“Discrimination Defined,” 2009). Most forms of work place discrimination are violations of Federal law and can leave the employer liable for their actions.

In this case study it is clear discrimination is occurring when employees are forced to retire at age 55 and when minorities and women are either removed from managerial positions or receive no consideration because of their gender or race.

A clear non-discrimination policy should be created which complies with all Equal Employment Opportunity requirements. Furthermore, an affirmative action plan should be put into place that ensures women and minorities will be treated fairly. According to Jerald Greenberg (2005) in his book titled Managing Behavior in Organizations there are three things to consider when putting together such a plan:

1. Take steps to ensure that there is a diverse pool of applicants.
2. Based on the racial composition of this pool, predict what the workforce would look like if selection of employees were nondiscriminatory.
3. Compare results with goals and revise procedures and policies to alleviate any discrepancies.

Discrimination of any type in the work place can lead to employee dissatisfaction, low morale and low productivity, and leave the organization vulnerable to costly litigation.

3. Promotion

The third problem in this organization is in the area of promotion. This is one problem area that crosses over into discrimination and human resources. There needs to be a clear promotion policy that is uniform throughout the organization. There are several things that need to be corrected when it comes to the promotion process. The most obvious one is the wholesale removal of women from certain managerial positions simply because of their gender. It needs to be clear in the policy that race, and gender will not be considered when looking to promote an employee or in job performance evaluations. The second issue is the criteria required for promotion -- no single criteria should be the deciding factor. As an example the change from seniority based to superior evaluation of subordinates. Instead many things should be taken into consideration such as; seniority, job performance evaluations, skill, knowledge, and ability to supervise people. By doing so greatly reduces the likelihood that an employee will be bypassed simply because a supervisor holds a grudge against them and gives a poor performance evaluation.

Fair treatment when it comes to promotion is critical in creating a pleasant work environment. Jerald Greenberg (2005) in his book titled Managing Behavior in Organizations list the chance of promotion as one of the things that motivates people. With that in mind employees must feel that they have an equal chance at promotion.

4. Leadership

In Jack Enter's (2006) book titled Challenging the Law Enforcement Organization: Proactive Leadership Strategies he states there are seven laws of leadership; integrity and honor, servant hood, mentorship, professionalism, positive attitude, reinforcement and accountability, and proactive communication. The vary sense of leadership means to lead and perhaps a more specific meaning is to have a vision and/or goal with the ability to motivate people towards the fulfillment of that vision. It is clear that when you look at the seven laws listed above that leadership is missing from this organization. There needs to be a clear direction in which the organization is headed and a strategic plan on how they are going to get there. Dr. Oputa has many years of managerial experience during his stay with General Motors; however, it will be difficult in this situation for him to motivate his employees given his style of management and the decisions he has made so far. Perhaps, the only way to correct the lack of leadership is to find a new leader.

5. Communication

In his book titled Managing Behavior in Organizations Jerald Greenberg (2005) describes two types of communication in an organization; formal and informal. Formal communication is normally that communication which is shared in a formal way such as a supervisor telling her subordinate how to perform a certain job, whereas informal communication may be a group of employees discussing the latest rumor circulating throughout the department. In either case communication is occurring daily within an organization and can be critical to the success or failure of that organization. In this case study the formal communication appeared to be mostly one directional with Dr. Oputa making the decisions and then passing his decision on to be

implemented. One of the key elements to successful communication is the ability to listen to others. No one person has all of the answers to every problem. Therefore, it is recommended that a clear channel of communication be opened where other managers and employees have input on decisions that affect their particular division. Study committees should be formed when major decisions such as restructuring entire departments are being considered. These committees should include a diverse make-up of employees from every area of the organization including supervisors and those employees who perform the task on a daily bases.

When hiring, termination and promotion considerations are at stake, input should be sought from other supervisors and employees and final decisions not based solely on the opinion of one person.

Finally, Dr. Ajiri clearly embodies a leader who listens to his employees and genuinely has their best interest in mind. For an organization to be successful, proactive communication must be present. Leaders must have the ability to listen and subordinates must feel as though they are being listened too even if all of their ideas are not implemented at least they feel as though they have a say in what will happen.

CONCLUSION:

Success in an organization can be determined by many different factors; however for any organization to be successful the employees need to be productive, which means they must have a work environment which gives them a feeling of safety, fairness, and belonging. The problems identified in this case study lend themselves to these factors. Employees must feel they have an equal chance at succeeding free from bias or discrimination. They need clear direction on what the mission is and leadership from those responsible to motivate them toward completing the

mission. Finally, they must feel as though they have an opportunity to be heard, to have a say in decisions that may affect how they do their job. If all of these dynamics are in play then the chance of an organization being successful will greatly increase.

References

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