

Change management situation in a police organisation



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This essay will analyse a change management situation in a Police organisation, comparing approaches to leadership, analysing the efficiency of interpersonal skills for a Leader and analysing the role of a Leader within the Police environment, taking cognisance of the principles, theories and approaches to Leadership.

Leadership is a “ function of knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues, and taking effective action to realise your own leadership potential.”

The Police service in Scotland has under gone many Change Management Situations over the years.

In 1975 the Local Government reorganisation brought about the amalgamation of the Burgh and City police forces into the eight territorial forces that we recognise today. At the present Strathclyde Police are undergoing a significant change management situation, the result of which is the implementation of Variable Shift Agreement (VSA) across the force at operational level.

EVALUATE APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP

The introduction of the VSA saw the force revise its traditional four group system for core uniform coverage into a five group system. The demands of the new arrangement meant that the leader (Chief Constable) was tasked with altering the resource management for each of Strathclyde’s territorial divisions considering factors such as:

Length of Service and age

Specialities i. e. Public Order , Firearms

Gender

These factors were all considered to provide an equal share of skills and experience across a Division as possible. This could prove the cause of friction between the management and subordinates, as well formed; productive shifts could be fragmented and divided up across a division.

Kotter (1990, cited in Leadership 2009) observed that managers and leaders have three main tasks that they accomplish in different ways:

Deciding what needs to be done - Shift pattern must change to give better work life balance, better service to the public and more efficient use of resources.

Creating networks of people and relationships that can accomplish the agenda - Setting up of a review and implementation team, looking at best use of resources.

Trying to ensure that people actually do the job - monitoring the results of the newly formed shifts through Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) such as cases submitted, stop searches undertaken and absence management.

In the implementation of the VSA shift pattern the leader involved, more or less followed the three tasks as observed by Kotter, however depending on the leaders' rank within the hierarchy, their approach to the same task will differ.

Remembering that there is a difference between “ leaders” and “ managers”

Kotter’s approach allows Leaders to concentrate on the creation of strategies and visions for the future, communicating and committing to achievement of these visions and motivating others despite obstacles to change.

During this change management situation the Leader was more concerned with focusing on the implementation of the VSA rather than focusing on the needs of the employees’.

Lewin et al (1939, cited in Leadership 2009) identified a leadership approach, sometimes referred to as the behavioural approach:

Autocratic - (or authoritarian) style - where the leader concentrates on getting the job done; the leader takes responsibility for everything that is done e. g. making decisions , allocating work, setting targets and ensures , through the use of rewards and punishments that team members obey.

Democratic - (or participation) style - where the leader concentrates on the needs of the group or team; leadership is shared with team members who have a greater say in the decision making; how tasks are allocated and so on.

Laissez Faire - (or delegative) style - as its name suggests this is where the leader deliberately allows the team to decide what has to be done and how to do it; the leader is available for help and advice if needed but does not interfere.

According to Lewin et al the leader utilised an autocratic style of leadership when implementing the VSA, controlling decision making and task setting. Shown with the formation of the VSA implementation team. They had the set task of rolling out the shift plan to each division in turn, with target dates set for this roll out. Furthermore, the Chief Constable regularly chaired a strategic tasking and co-ordinating group, receiving feedback from the implementation team and Divisional Commanders, whilst making all the decisions regarding the implementation, without handing any of these decisions down to subordinates to undertake, showing that in this case he was taking responsibility for everything that was done.

A different approach to leadership is that of Hersey and Blanchard (1988, cited in Leadership 2009) theory known as situational leadership, they make use of observing members willingness to perform a task and from this select a suitable leadership style.

The four stages of readiness are described as:

R1 - unable and unwilling

R2 - unable and willing

R3 - able but unwilling

R4 - able and willing

Most personnel which would be affected fell into:

R2 – New Probationers who do not yet have the necessary skills and had not experience any other shift pattern.

And

R3 – More experienced officers who could foresee that the shift pattern was not as favourable as the current one, some possibly resistant to change. But others able to argue that there would be problems with child care, longer working days and frequent cancellation of rest days with the VSA.

The leadership styles suggested are:

S1 – telling or directing – requires state of readiness R1

S2 – selling or coaching – requires state of readiness R2

S3 – participating or supporting – requires state of readiness R3

S4 – delegating – requires state of readiness R4

From this theory the leader should have adopted a combination of S2 and S3 styles to communicate and sell the VSA and support those who require it. However in choosing to implement S1 (similar to the autocratic approach) with telling and directing the VSA implementation, does not follow Hersey and Blanchard's theory and could create more friction by choosing the wrong leadership style. This is shown in the table below.

This table shows that different readiness levels require differing styles of leadership, leaders should consider their relations with others, and the structure of the task before determining what style of leadership to adopt,

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evolving their leadership style as readiness levels change, as with many things “one size does not fit all”.

ANALYSE THE EFFECT OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS ON LEADERSHIP

When a leader decides upon a particular leadership approach to their given task, they must then interact with others and consider their own interpersonal skills.

A successful and effective leader requires a range of interpersonal skills such as listening, asking questions, giving feedback, being assertive and so on.

This section will analyse two particular aspects of interpersonal skills:

Influencing – trying to get someone to do, or to think, something that they might not otherwise have done.

Managing Conflict – coping with disagreements between people (in broad terms)

Using interpersonal skills is not just a matter of knowing what they are, but about being aware when they are suitable and knowing how to use them effectively.

According to French and Raven (1959, cited in Leadership 2009) power comes from five sources:

Reward Power

Coercive Power

Referent Power

Legitimate Power

Expert power

Power is an abstract concept and is difficult to define; basically A has the ability to make B behave in a certain way.

The type's of power demonstrated by the leader, throughout the organisational change was a mixture of coercive and legitimate power. The leader had the authority to influence behaviour through their rank within a disciplined hierarchal organisation, the force were presented with the VSA or an alternative of an even older shift pattern without consultation.

Influencing

Leaders are likely to adopt a particular style or approach when trying to influence someone, the balance of power between both parties will possibly determine the strategy, these may include:

Reason - using reason and logical argument.

Assertion - making a direct request with no argument to support the request.

Exchange - negotiating to arrive at a mutually acceptable outcome.

Courting Favors - friendship and positive behavior to encourage others to behave in the required manner.

Coercion - using or threatening to use some form of sanction.

Partnership - gathering support from both sides to build a coalition.

And also the style used, Manning and Robertson (2004, cited in Leadership 2009) suggest six possible influencing styles:

Strategist - this is where the influencer is clear in what they want to achieve and has considered it beforehand. A strategist style tends to favour reason, assertion and partnership styles of influence.

Opportunist - this style involves responding opportunistically to the situation facing the influencer. An opportunist style tends to use courting favour and exchange strategies. An opportunist is unlikely to prepare much beforehand but will attempt to grasp chances that come their way.

Collaborator - this style as its name suggests, involves collaboration with others for the overall good. A collaborator style concentrates on partnership, reason, exchange and courting favour strategies. Leaders who favour consensus are an example of collaborator style.

Battler - this is where the influencer concentrates on what they want and the sanction that they will use if they do not achieve this. A battler style tends to make use of coercion and assertion styles. A battler style is associated with people who want to get their own way and are reluctant to take no for an answer.

Shotgun - this strategy involves attempting to influence on a frequent basis and by use of a number of different strategies.

Bystander – those who adopt this style tend to engage in relatively few influencing attempts and make use of a restricted use of strategies.

For the VSA to be implemented the leader combined their influencing strategy and style, using assertion and coercion. By making a direct request to Divisional Commanders to introduce the VSA to their respective divisions, through the VSA implementation teams, underpinning this with their legitimate power by virtue of their position within the force. The leader wanted to get their own way, however reluctant to take no for an answer from their Divisional Commanders.

This resulted in conflict, which may have been avoided had the leader utilised a partnership or reason approach, justifying the reason behind their requests.

Managing Conflict

On some occasions leaders can use the previously discussed influencing strategies and power levels to assist them in managing conflict.

Robbins (1996, cited in Leadership 2009) describes conflict as “ a process that begins when one party perceives that another has negatively effected, or is about to negatively effect, something that the first party cares about “.

Buchanan and Huczynski (2004) argue that “ conflict is a state of mind “.

Some will argue that conflict is a necessary part of organisational growth and development, where some will claim that an absence of conflict could be seen as an indication of complacency.

However conflict has functional or potential benefits such as:

Enabling opposing parties to gain a better understanding of each others views.

An essential part of the process by which a team becomes effective.

Leads alternative suggestions being made.

Helps to implement a change successfully.

Leads to an agreement that establishes a framework for future working.

It is not always straight forward to manage conflict; some measures can be used to contribute to reducing the conflict at an organisational level reminding those involved of the rules and procedures, but also of remits, targets and goals of the organisation, however sometimes it is these that are the root causes of the conflict.

Leaders will all handle conflict differently depending on the type of conflict faced; Thomas (1976, cited in Leadership 2009) suggests five styles for managing conflict:

Avoiding - this means doing nothing to tackle the conflict, this can be used when the issues are trivial and there is no chance of resolving the conflict.

Accommodating - this means accepting the existence of the conflict, this can be used to maintain harmony and allow people to learn from their mistakes.

Compromising - this involves some form of bargaining or negotiation; this can be used when getting a solution is important and both parties have equal power.

Competing - the opposite of accommodating and pursuing the interests of one party at the expense of the other, this can be used in an emergency and a quick solution is necessary.

Collaborating - working out a solution that is acceptable to both parties and meets all their concerns, used when it is important to gain long term commitment and issues are too important to compromise.

Successful influencing and conflict management was certainly required with the initial introduction of the VSA. Firstly the leaders had to influence the core shifts and federation into accepting that it would provide a better quality of service and greater work life balance. The conflict arose through others unwilling to accept the terms of the VSA; however the leaders in managing this conflict firstly adopted an avoiding strategy during the initial pilot stage of the VSA. At the conclusion of the pilot and in preparation for roll out the leader, still facing resistance changed into competing. The leader believed the shift plan would work force wide and therefore would be implemented, with no consultation and no argument to justify the reasons for implementation. Either that or resort backwards to an older shift pattern.

In implementing the VSA the Chief Constable has made effective use of their interpersonal skills, in their own distinct approach to this particular change management situation. However a more beneficial approach may have been a mix of accommodation, accepting that there were flaws in the VSA, and the <https://assignbuster.com/change-management-situation-in-a-police-organisation/>

existence of conflict with its implementation, collaborating with subordinates to work out a better solution for the long term strategy of the VSA.

ANALYSE THE ROLE OF LEADERS IN ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Organisational change is about closing the gap between where the organisation is at the moment and where it wants to be. It is the leader's role to close this gap.

Senior (2002, cited in Leadership 2009) has identified four levels of change in which some, if not all would be involved in,

Fine tuning

Incremental adjustment

Modular transformation

Corporate transformation

According to Senior the level of change that the VSA posed to the force was that of a modular transformation, as a significant number of the force, but not all, would be affected by its implementation.

Kurt Lewin (cited in Leadership 2009) suggests that there are three main stages of change, unfreezing, change and refreezing.

For the change to happen, the Leader firstly recognized the need for change, with a new shift pattern, following this with proprietary planning with the implementation team before the unfreezing stage.

At this point resistance to the change should have been addressed, but the leader chose to avoid the conflict. The change period was overseen by the leader through chairing tasking meetings and monitoring its progress.

During the refreezing period the VSA became an everyday part of life, the change was institutionalized, to give no chance of reverting back to previous shift patterns.

Within these three stages people will play different roles in this organisational change; Kanter (1992, cited in Leadership 2009) distinguishes between three different types of people;

Change strategists or initiators - who initiate change and set the direction for it.

Change implementers - who co-ordinate and carry out the change.

Change recipients - who are effected by the change e. g. officers on the street.

Change strategists are normally leaders - the Chief Constable, change implementers are normally managers - Divisional Commanders and the VSA implementation team, and subordinates are the recipients of change - Officers on the core shifts.

Force field analysis is a technique for analysing the internal and external drivers that can influence any organisational change; some of these driving factors for this organisational change can be identified as PESTEL factors, such as:

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Political – MP’s and councilors demanding more police presence on the streets.

Economic – overtime cost, reduced budget and the new Chief Constables promise to cut costs.

Social-cultural – alcohol induced anti social behavior.

Nearly all forms of change will be met with some resistance, the VSA being no different. Strebels (1996, cited in Leadership 2009) argues that employees resist change because it disrupts the “ personal contract” between employees and the organisation.

Resisters to this organisational change can fall into different categories,

Parochial self interest – those employees resistant to change, they think that their position will be threatened and will make them worse off, the same employees that fall into Hersey and Blanchard’s R3 state of readiness.

Misunderstanding and lack of trust – employee’s misinterpreting the reasons behind the change, due to a lack of communication, viewing this change as just “ one of many”

For this organisational change to be successful the leader had to reduce resisters and increase drivers for change in an attempt to reach equilibrium.

To do this they communicated the benefits of change, through more days off and a better work life balance; however there was an element of

manipulation used to show employees that they would have more weekends off.

Under the current shift pattern officers received one weekend off in every four, the VSA would allow two weekends off in every five.

Look back at the current shift pattern over five weeks, officers were already receiving two weekends off in every five.

The leader used this information selectively thus attempting to paint a rosy picture of the benefits of the VSA.

A better way may have included an element of participation helping to build commitment to the change and negotiation, which could avoid some resistance from the employees affected by the change.

CONCLUSION

Drawing a conclusion for this essay, firstly considering the approach to leadership undertaken by the Chief Constable during this, change management situation.

In their autocratic (or authoritarian) approach they concentrated in getting the job done and took responsibility for all the decisions made. Had the Chief Constable approached the organisational change according to Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership, identified their officer's level of readiness and adopted the suggested leadership style, they may have been faced with less friction or resistance by the officers that would be affected by the VSA implementation.

Secondly, in analysing the interpersonal skills and its effect on the organisational change, the Chief constable utilised their legitimate power to achieve the implementation, in adopting an assertion style of influencing with no argument to their request, coupling this with the conflict management style, by firstly avoiding and then competing.

Had they followed an alternative style suggested by Thomas (1976) such as accommodating and accepting the existence of conflict or resistance to the VSA, they may have been able to negotiate better with the federation and the officers affected by the change to find out the root causes of conflict and address them at an early stage.

Thirdly, considering the Chief Constables role within this organisational change was that of a change strategist, they initiated the VSA and set its direction, posing, as Senior (2002) identifies as a modular transformation to the force.

With some officers resisting due to a parochial self interest, whilst others through misunderstanding and lack of trust in this change, the Chief Constable had to reset the balance by education and manipulation, driving his vision forward.

One thing certain from this is the Chief Constable requires managers with the skill, knowledge and experience of organisational change, enabling them to have the ability to change and adapt their leadership style to suit each given change management situation.

These managers may not be able to ease all of the resistance to change, but should be able to reduce it considerably to implement future change's that are required.