

Organization behavior case study

Education



Lemuel Greene was a trainer for National Home Manufacturers, a large builder of prefabricated homes. National Home had hired Greene fresh from graduate school with a master's degree in English. At first, the company put him to work writing and revising company brochures and helping with the most important correspondence at the senior level.

But soon, both Greene and senior management officials began to notice how well he worked with executives on their writing, how he made them feel more confident about it, and how, after working with an executive on a report, the executive often was much more eager to take on the next writing task. So National Home moved Greene into its prestigious training department.

The company's trainers worked with thousands of supervisors, managers, and executives, helping them learn everything from new computer languages to time management skills to how to get the most out of the workers on the plant floor, many of whom were unmotivated high school dropouts. Soon Greene was spending all his time giving short seminars on executive writing as well as coaching his students to perfect their memos and letters. Greene's move into training meant a big increase in salary, and when he started working exclusively with the company's top brass, it seemed as though he got a bonus every month.

Greene's supervisor, Mirela Albert, knew he was making more than many executives who had been with the company three times as long, and probably twice as much as any of his graduate school classmates who concentrated in English. Yet in her biweekly meetings with him, she could tell that Greene wasn't happy. When Albert asked him about it, Greene replied

that he was in a bit of a rut. He had to keep saying the same things over and over in his seminars, and business memos weren't as interesting as the literature he had been trained on.

But then, after trailing off for a moment, he blurted out, " They don't need me! " Since the memos filtering down through the company were now flawlessly polished, and the annual report was 20 percent shorter but said everything it needed to, Greene's desire to be needed was not fulfilled. The next week, Greene came to Albert with a proposal: What if he started holding classes for some of the floor workers, many of whom had no future within or outside the company because many could write nothing but their own names? Albert took the idea to her superiors.

They told her that they wouldn't oppose it, but Greene couldn't possibly keep drawing such a high salary if he worked with people whose contribution to the company was compensated at minimum wage. Greene agreed to a reduced salary and began offering English classes on the factory floor, which were billed by management (who hoped to avoid a wage hike that year) as an added benefit of the job. At first only two or three workers showed up—and they, Greene believed, only wanted an excuse to get away from the nailing guns for awhile.

But gradually word got around that Greene was serious about what he was doing and didn't treat the workers like kids in a remedial class. At the end of the year, Greene got a bonus from a new source: the vice president in charge of production. Although Greene's course took workers off the job for a couple of hours a week, productivity had actually improved since his course

began, employee turnover had dropped, and for the first time in over a year, some of the floor workers had begun to apply for supervisory positions.

Greene was pleased with the bonus, but when Albert saw him grinning as he walked around the building, she knew he wasn't thinking about his bank account. Case Questions

1. What need theories would explain why Lemuel Greene was unhappy despite his high income?
2. Greene seems to have drifted into being a teacher. Given his needs and motivations, do you think teaching is an appropriate profession for him? Case study: 2 Dressing down for success It is so hard to dress for success these days.

For Jack Steeg, Vice President for Sales at the Internet-partner division of Dell Computer in Austin, Texas, choosing what to wear to work used to be a no-brainer. He would put on a white shirt, tie, and suit and be done with it. But with the introduction of casual dress rules, picking an office wardrobe has become a major task. That is why Steeg, 51, recently hired image consultant Sherry Maysonave to give him some pointers on choosing casual outfits that befit his station. It is the ultimate sartorial irony: Less restrictive dress codes were supposed to make life more comfortable for everyone.

Instead, with the old rules gone, many people are in a state of dress-down confusion. As a result, companies are refining their dress policies or hiring consultants such as Maysonave to help. Of course, there are some general guidelines that will keep you from getting too far off the mark. Fashion experts say men usually cannot go wrong with a sports coat in muted colours

and flannel or gabardine trousers. Shirts, whether button-down or knit pullover, must have a collar. Women can wear pantsuits or tailored pants with a sweater set. Beyond that, the rules get fuzzy.

For one thing, they vary by region and industry. Not surprisingly, the East Coast and Midwest are more conservative than the West Coast. About 50% of the financial, insurance and real estate companies allow casual dress once a week, but just 34% permit it all the time, according to the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM). The SHRM says 44% of all businesses have adopted all-casual, all the time policies, up from 36% in 1998. Companies have also learnt that if they do not lay down specific policies, the word ‘ dress casual’ can be subject to wide interpretation.

Three years ago, when Development Counselors expanded its Casual Friday dress-code to five days a week, its 25 employees were delighted. But then, they started wearing just anything they wanted –torn jeans, gym clothes, tube tops. Things got so out of hand that management formed a committee to devise an official dress policy. It then attached the new guidelines to employee handbook. Two years ago, the Austin office of Kennedy-Wilson International, a Los Angeles commercial real estate firm, adopted a casual Friday policy and sent out a brief statement about appropriate dress, nixing such items as sundresses and jogging suits.

More recently, when the introduced a new arrangement –business casual Monday through Thursday and plain casual on Friday, they revised the requirements considerably. Example: Monday through Thursday men have to wear shirts with collars and muted patterns; Friday, Hawaiian shirts are OK. When companies turn to image consultants, they are usually seeking <https://assignbuster.com/organization-behavior-case-study/>

guidance for more than just deciding whether, say, open toed shoes are acceptable.

They also must make sure policies are not potentially discriminating. Ideally, that means that if you indicate specific restrictions to women, you ought to do the same for men, and vice versa. Sometimes, these things are held up legally for weeks. Some consultants conduct seminars for managers in how to enforce the rules. Isbecque, for example, leads role playing exercises, holding up photographs of specific infractions and asking participants to demonstrate how they would confront a guilty employee.

The bottom line is that although suits and tie may never regain their once ubiquitous presence in the workplace, companies are stopping well short of anything that goes. Questions

1. Discuss the issue of dress code in contemporary organizations.
2. Present arguments in for and against dress code at the workplace.
3. From perception point of view, why do you think there is such a variation in how employees interpret dress policies? What, if anything, should be done for the differing perceptions?
4. How the people in India would respond to casual dress policy at the workplace?