

Poor employee relations essay sample

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This case study follows a Tool Manufacturer where an in-depth organizational analysis was conducted comprising of qualitative interviews with senior management. Hence, process mapping was conducted to detail the main activities of the organization. The process mapping demonstrated how the customer and the organization interacted. The customer would initially approach the Tool Manufacturer through associated marketing or more typically on the basis of previous work completed. On the basis of customer requirements a preliminary drawing of the tool would be drafted and sent to the customer. The customer would then accept the draft drawing, which would then be manufactured accordingly. Nevertheless, not all was well. Several projects had been delayed, resulting in a loss of revenue for the business. Worst of all, several tools had been manufactured to incorrect draft specifications, which then had to be scrapped and started again. Such was the case due to inter departmental conflicts.

An e. g. of such conflict is demonstrated between the Drawing Department and the Machine Shop where the Draft specification drawings rather than finalized drawings were given to the Machine Shop to produce the tool. There was lack of responsibility and accountability. This conflict not only created internal problems, but also reduced employee motivation and job satisfaction. Further research revealed that individuals tended to see themselves working in a vacuum or in a cliché as opposed to working within the wider organization. This had several consequences including worker conflict, interdepartmental conflict and poor employee relations. The conflict had a wider implication that jeopardized the business as a whole. Customer orders were being delayed, orders were not being produced to the correct

specification and some orders were of such inferior quality (due to their frequent reworking) that they broke down within weeks of being installed at the customer site. This led to a deterioration of the client's reputation of being a World-class tool manufacturer.

Evaluating the case

Introduction

Employee relations and worker conflicts are always problematic and the consequences are difficult to predict (Fortado, 2001). Problematic relations can cause ill-feeling between colleagues, lowering job satisfaction (Biggs, Senior and Swailes, 2002) or causing stress and depression (Dormann and Zapf, 2002; Friedman, Tidd, Currall and Tsai, 2000). The above case is a typical case of bad employee relations which is due to lack of proper coordination, communication, accountability and responsibility. We see that there is no harmony between the departments and many of the existing literature has viewed manufacturing-marketing conflict largely as an undesirable antecedent or outcome that is to be minimized. The case shows that such conflict is so undesirable for an organization that it not only affects the employees of those concerned departments but threatens the survival of the organization as a whole. Also, it is seen that the need to increase consumer orientation of the firm has necessitated the integration of marketing and operations. But, unfortunately, the relationship between these two functions has often been uncomfortable, if not adversarial (Karmakar, 1996, p. 125).

In the case mentioned above, we see that due to worker conflicts, there is lack of job satisfaction and employee motivation, both which are essential for the longevity of the organization. Worker conflict is inevitable in any workplace due to the interdependency of the employees and the teams. To overcome such conflicts, first requirement is that the organization must have a management team who is able, fair, provide clear and transparent communication and set goals that are consistent and achievable. The top level executives or the owner should consider improving management skills to resolve employee relations and hostility effectively. To such an end, out bound training or any such step can be taken. The managers must be trained enough to tackle the employee problems without humiliating any one party and taking a fair decision to solve the issue. They should also hold regular meetings to keep track of where they are standing in their task of delivering their products. This way the management in the company will be in a better position to take a decision as to how the alignment of the work should be done.

Also, being aware of the activities held, on a regular basis will help them to successfully meet peak periods of customer demands. Coming back to Job satisfaction, as most of us know, it is the extent to which an individual is content with his/ her job. The happier they are, the more productive they are. Also closely linked is employee motivation. Research and observations show that motivated employees are more productive and creative. The inverse also holds true. Therefore, to overcome this primary problem, the management should conduct surveys or questionnaires to find out the job satisfaction levels. Depending on the responses, they should then focus on

job design, job rotation, job enrichment and so on to meet the employee needs. They should focus on motivating the employees by rewarding them appropriately. Only once the working force of the organization is content and motivated, can they be geared up to fulfill their ultimate aim- i. e. meeting customer needs. In this case, we see success of the business is entirely based on meeting customer needs and satisfaction. As discussed, before reaching here, the other internal problems must be tackled and solved.

However, trying to reach the solution for meeting customer demands, the organization has to focus on overcoming the inter-departmental co-ordination. The responsibility of meeting customer demands does not lie with only one department. It's the combined effort that finds the reward in this form. Hence, co-ordination is a must. But here we see that the two main departments, the Drawing Department and the Machine Shop, which either directly or indirectly were related to ensure customer needs were not functioning in any fashion of co-ordination. Hence it can be suggested that they focus on their communication by adopting appropriate forums. Such has been proved and suggested time and again. Souder (1981) found that good communications and harmonious relations are more likely to lead to product success. The supervisors or the functional heads of both these departments should concentrate on co-coordinating with each other and not competing. Since the employees are working under these heads, care can be taken that they ensure that they do their part of the entire process of production, for which they are entitled.

Also practices like negative reinforcement or punishment can be adopted to ensure timely performance as time seems to be a very crucial factor for them. Another suggestion to overcome the communication problem is that the company can adopt the famous, well established and easy to understand model-the Johari Window by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. As the model is particularly relevant in today's business environment, it can surely prove to be of good use for this company to help improve their interpersonal relationships and teamwork. The case also mentions that there is lack of responsibility on the part of the Drawings Department.

They are supposed to give a finalized picture of the product to be manufactured rather than a rough draft. But they left that to be taken care of by the Machine Shop. In doing so, the Machine Shop went off track and hence delayed meeting the customer needs. This is clearly a case of lack of Unity of Direction. The entire organization should be moving towards a common objective in a common direction. (Henry Fayol's 14 Management Principles). Although their objective was to sell their tools, but the direction of accomplishing this objective was not in line. This decreased customer demand due to lack of quality in the tools.

As mentioned in the case, the Machine Shop went to the extent where several tools had been manufactured to incorrect draft specifications, which then had to be scrapped and started again. The quality decreased, the loyalty decreased, the expectations of the customers decreased. To rescue such situations, I would like to suggest that the management focuses on team building efforts. A team can be defined as two or more individuals who

socially interact (face-to-face or, increasingly, virtually) possess one or more common goals; are brought together to perform organizationally relevant tasks; exhibit interdependencies with respect to workflow, goals, and outcomes; have different roles and responsibilities; and are together embedded in an encompassing organizational system, with boundaries and linkages to the broader system context and task environment (Alderfer, 1977; Argote & McGrath, 1993; Hackman, 1992; Hollenbeck et al., 1995; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003; Kozlowski, Gully, McHugh, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1996; Kozlowski et al., 1999; Salas, Dickinson, Converse, & Tannenbaum, 1992).

As the definition suggests, if such is followed, definitely half the havoc of this Tool Manufacturer will be taken care of. According to (Kozlowski, Gully, Nason, & Smith, 1999), increasing competition, consolidation, and innovation create pressures for skill diversity, high levels of expertise, rapid response, and adaptability. Teams enable these characteristics. Hence the management should encourage team work rather than individualistic work, keeping in mind their line of business. This will also help address the other big problem that the company is facing, i. e. the departments working in vacuum as opposed to working as part of the wider organization. I would also like to suggest that the organization can adopt Total Quality Management (TQM) which emphasizes that the quality of products and processes is the responsibility of everyone involved with the creation or consumption of the products or services offered by an organization, requiring the involvement of management, workforce, suppliers, and customers, to meet or exceed customer expectations. Conclusion

Therefore, concluding the case, I would like to say once again that recognizing and solving the issues of poor employee relations and worker conflict should be the first step in aiding the organization identifying what issues are then involved in not meeting customer demand. All the possible several solutions, to help resolve this problem has been put forward. If adopted religiously, results are bound to show which will help the company retain its competitive advantage by meeting customer deadlines and demands.

References

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