

Leadership causes: negative employee attitudes



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Within the case of the mushroom factory it was very clear that each leader's personality type was vastly different from the other, and with this came big differences within the dynamic of each team. Bringing to light the idea that personality is directly related to how successful a leadership is, and therefore the success or failure of their team or group. Although the idea of a connection between personality and leadership style was not always accepted, this idea is by no means a new one. The Big Five Personality Model gives researchers a structure upon which to identify the most common traits found in individuals and a basis upon which to examine the traits found to affect the success of leaders. One such study is the Qualitative and Quantitative Review of Personality and Leadership conducted by Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt, (2002). The study revealed that three of The Big Five Traits were closely linked to leadership performance in the business setting.

So, what is The Big Five Personality Model? This is " a personality assessment model that taps five basic dimensions". The five factors within this model are as follows:

- (1) Extraversion vs. Introversion; refers to the degree to which we are comfortable with relationships. Extraverts are outgoing, sociable, assertive.
- (2) Emotional stability vs. Neuroticism; individuals who are emotionally stable are better at with standing stress, than those who are neurotic. Emotionally stable people tend to be self confident, secure, and relaxed.

(3) Openness to experience vs. Closedness to experience; this trait refers to the degree to which an individual is interested in and likes to explore new things, such individuals are usually creative, curious, and broad-minded.

(4) Conscientiousness vs. Lack of direction; this trait is associated with levels of responsibility, dependability, and persistence.

(5) Agreeableness vs. Antagonism; this is an individual's natural tendency to submit humbly to another person's wishes. Individuals who are agreeable are good-natured, trusting, cooperative and more likeable.

Although possessing all the right traits does not mean that a leader will be successful. Judge and his colleagues have found that, low neuroticism, high extroversion, and high openness to experience were correlated with successful leadership in an analysis done on business leaders. While agreeableness and conscientiousness were not closely linked to leadership performance in the business settings. However a study carried out by Murray R. Barrick, Michael K. Mount (1991) also showed conscientiousness as well as extraversion, to be important to job performance, and agreeableness to be not so important.

Now that we know what The Big Five Personality Model is and how it correlates to leadership success and job performance, given the evidence of correlations between certain personality traits and successful leadership and job performance, an assessment of the team leader's can be evaluated, based on the personality traits they have.

However before we get to the team leaders let us begin with the department leader Richard Long. The case study describes him as “ Suffering from shyness” and having “ great difficulty communicating with his subordinates...” from this description it can be concluded that Mr. Long is introverted. Introversion is associated with poor interpersonal skills, and the lack of such skills caused him to ineffectively communicate information. In particular the information about the change which was to take place within the company.

Now, let us move onto the team leaders, starting with John Ritch the leader of team A, and then moving on to teams B and C. John Ritch’s description states that “ John did not socialize much with the other members of the group;” , from this description, introversion in terms of lack of wanting to socialise is clear, which may have contributed to a lack of cohesiveness within his team after the teams were reorganised into a production team and a manufacturing team, causing some members to feel as though they just did not fit in.

This assessment will now focus on Valentino Rockford the leader of team B. Mr. Rockford was described in the case study as “ a true playboy... The other men on the team waited eagerly every Monday morning to hear the tales of the preceding weekend.” This shows that Mr. Rockford was highly social, one of the characteristics of an extraverted personality trait. However the case also stated that Mr. Rockford had “ occasional errors in judgment ... when he came in too hung-over on Mondays to get the work out.” This indicates low levels of conscientiousness, in that Mr. Rockford’s drunkenness at work showed a lack of responsibility. This meant that although Mr. Rockford may

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have been effective in motivating his team to produce the minimum standard of work he failed to give his team any direction. Resulting in output that was merely acceptable. This was also seen in the saving phase of the case study, where Val's extroversion allowed him to increase employee morale, but his lack of direction meant that problems such as absenteeism increased.

The final team, team C was lead by George Kelly, he was said to " believed that he should be the department manager... he considered it a personal insult to head Section B..." , illustrating a high level of neuroticism, shown in his very negative perspective of his position, and envy towards Richard Long. He also did not handle the change well, especially when employee behaviours began to take a turn for the worst after the teams were rearranged into two groups. The case also states that he " often complained that he had to do everything himself because he had no competent help. In fact, over the years, George had been assigned many engineers for his group, but they had never stayed. ...". This shows low levels of openness to experience, as it seems that George was unwilling to learn to work effectively with other engineers or with his own team of technicians for that matter.

This assessment shows that each leader possessed personality traits that negatively affected the success of each team. Therefore given the low performance of the department as a whole, and in particular teams B and C it is evident that personality has a strong influence over the successfulness of a team leader and therefore the success or failure of their team.

An Analysis of how Leadership Caused Negative Employee Attitudes

The changes within the organization which involved the decision to restructure the teams into a production team and a manufacturing team caused negative attitudes to develop among the employees, especially those pertaining to (a) job satisfaction; the feelings an individual has about their job due to evaluating its characteristics, (b) psychological empowerment; the degree to which employees believe they affect their work environment, and their level of competence, meaningfulness and autonomy in their work, and (c) the perceived organizational support; the level to which an employee thinks their organization values their contributions and cares about them.

According to the exit-voice-loyalty-neglect framework employees can assume any of the four previously listed attributes included in its name to cope with job dissatisfaction. Exit refers to behavior such as resigning. Voice includes behaviors such as becoming involved in union action. Loyalty refers to the act of passively but optimistically waiting for conditions to change, and neglect refers to behaviors which include absenteeism, lateness, reduced effort and increased error rate.

In the "Saving Phase" portion of the case study, it is illustrated that the engineers responded through "voice" by petitioning the department head for relief of the situation. The situation in this instance refers to the employees in manufacturing having far less of a role than they did before. They were not part of the design process of the products, they could not fix problems that arose during manufacturing, and at that point they were not even manufacturing the products. This caused job dissatisfaction primarily because

there was a lack of psychological empowerment, due to the employees having no influence over the product, and their exclusion from fixing problems, which dramatically reducing their level of autonomy. This is associated with high absenteeism, and exit behaviors which are also very present in the case.

A lack of job satisfaction also comes into play when the employees in manufacturing learnt of how much nicer the quarters their colleagues were transferred to were, which resulted in feelings of jealousy and hostility. This knowledge most likely altered the employees' view of how much the organization actually valued their work and cared about them, resulting in a low degree of perceived organizational support. This may have also contributed to the instances of neglect among the employees.

Low levels of perceived organizational support may have also arose in the manufacturing department because of Richard Long's and George Kelly's less than understanding or supportive reactions to the group's challenges. Richard's inability to effectively communicate meant that he didn't listen to his employees complaints and gave them less than understanding answers such as, it's just "" company policy". While George Kelly tried to control the men's behavior by threatening them and making them do duties he knew they would dislike.

It soon became evident that the employees lost hope that they would be able to rectify the instances of job dissatisfaction, and eventually an environment where stealing and damage to equipment occurred. Perhaps if Richard Long and George Kelly were better leaders and actually possessed

the levels of interpersonal skills needed for such a situation, much of the frustration, and job dissatisfaction experienced by the employees could have been mitigated.