

Case study "lugger vs butchers"

Business



The advancements have come at the price of his first marriage and the loss of his reputation as an ordinary guy to that of a manager who is always looking over his subordinates' shoulder. In Dick's most recent promotion to Plant Manager at Mode, he inherited a division that heavily invested in the future by modernizing its plant and equipment. Due to the heavy capital investments the plant is operating at a loss, which was planned, Dick began to emphasize cost savings as a way to offset the losses.

The methods Dick uses to implement cost saving initiatives, along with his previously mentioned reputation as a meddler, were hampering the changes he was trying to invoke. Issues Analysis In analyzing this case, there are three interrelated issues that point to Dick's ineffectiveness to create change.

First, Dick's choices in management style are not suitable for the position he holds. Micromanaging every aspect of the plant's 'OFF' operations is not only ineffective, but it is also a waste of time and resources.

Being a leader is more than telling people what to do at every decision point. Secondly, company morale is being affected by the preconceived ideas of Dick from his prior posts, as well as the employee's fear of organizational change. Lastly, stresses from home life and pressures of delivering results at work have diminished Dick as a competent manager. We will take a look at each of these issues, in turn.

Micromanagement The inability to delegate responsibility to subordinates stands out as the fundamental gap that exists in Dick Spencer as a plant manager.

Many of the instances mentioned in the case study are a product of Dick's micromanagement. " Micromanagement is a style of management that is characterized by an excessive need for control and extreme attention to even apparently trivial details" (Hernandez, 2012). The clearest example from this case is the method of disposal of scrap aluminum. The business as usual way of disposing of scrap in the trim shop was ended a cost driver and probably needed to be redesigned.

However due to Spence's forceful implementation, employees resorted to even more inefficient ways of cutting down scrap.

Micromanagement often not only obstructs performance of a plant at the detail level, as mentioned in the case of scrap disposal. A micromanager at a leadership position can be a detriment to an organization by neglecting the high level duties and responsibilities that are incumbent on their post by attending to the smallest details of operations. (White, 2010). Because Spencer was so involved in minute details like " Hammers and Tongs", he forgot to put his shoes back on before a meeting with public officials.

White also points out that a top heavy organizational hierarchy can lead to micromanaging.

This can happen from two scenarios, when an organization has too many levels, energetic managers have too few decisions to make and feel compelled to spend their spare time micromanaging their subordinates. Secondly, a good manager may be micromanaged by their superior and feel forced to do the same their employees (White, 2010). The text does not give

specific detail to either the organizational structure or the behavior of Spence's boss as a possible cause for his behavior.

It is worth noting, however, that during Dick's first year as the plant manager he had to make numerous trips back to the home office, which could infer he was being constantly called on the carpet and could have been a contributing factor. Micromanagement, like other traits of poor leadership such as stealing the spotlight and using intimidation can have detrimental impact to a company's productivity and in its employees in regards to morale and retention (Schmidt, 2013).

In a study conducted by Lei and Ye (2011), micromanagement was identified as a main contributor to employee discontent resulting in a poor quality of work life (SQL).

Constantly scrutinizing an employee's work can give the employee the feeling that they are not entrusted to the job they were hired to do effectively (Lee & Ye, 2011). Impacts to creative thinking and problem solving can stifle innovation in a company by making employees resistant to risk taking for fear of reprimand for making a mistake. Although micromanagement may increase production in the short term, it will generate more long term problems (Went, 2010). Interpersonal conflict styles of managing interpersonal conflict can be described in four categories.

An integrating style focuses on solving problems by sharing information, comparing alternatives and coming to conclusions that best benefits all parties. An obligating style is described as emphasizing similarities and de-emphasizing differences in the parties. An avoiding style seeks to avoid the

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conflict by passing the buck or evading a decision. Lastly a dominating style is a "win at all costs" philosophy (Cabal & Fatima, 2013). The last style appears to fit Dick Spender's reputation as a head hunter, which had preceded him when he took over as the plant manager.

His management style and methods of resolving issues did nothing to disprove those notions either. Syrian explains that there are high levels of employee dissatisfaction when operational decisions are made unilaterally by leadership, because most often "employees know from their intimate connection with the work itself" how a process or procedure can be made more efficient or cost effective (Syrian, 2008). Spencer decided unilaterally that folding the aluminum was the most cost effective way of fitting the scraps into the receptacles without any input from employees or foremen.

When the new process was not followed, Spencer had maintenance remove the tools the employees were using to cut the materials. Using confrontational methods to gain compliance not only breeds a culture of distrust between employees and management, but creates an "us versus them" mentality that can destroy a company's morale (Decker, Duplex, Shields, Smith, & Thomas, 1998). Beyond Spender's reputation as a combative manager, there was also a cross cultural conflict.

As an American manager in first English, British, and ultimately Canadian factories, resentment existed with the native employees towards Dick.

This is a common complication to U. S. Managers working in foreign country. A study of expatriate managers concluded that interpersonal conflict with

their native employees occur due to differences in work ethic, decision making, and ethnocentric (Colossally, Trail, & Graver, Jennifer, 2004).

Work Life Balance Evans, Carney, and Wilkinson describe work life balance as a process of attempting to balance the time constraints of a career with that of other personal endeavors, such as families, friends, and other relationships (Evans, Carney, & Wilkinson, 2013).

Being unable to manage career responsibilities while also maintaining relationships with family, friends, and other non-work associations, can provide stress that can negatively impact a person's quality of life, health, job satisfaction, and mental wellness (Faddish, Nielsen, Albertson, & Carnegie, 2011). These conflicts have been an issue with Dick since his days as a Salesman. Due to Dick's extensive travel and constant involvement with work activities, his wife left him after two years of his employment with Trim American. In Dick's current position, he is still having issues of having too many irons in the fire.

He has allowed the pressures of his career to push other priorities to into the background, resulting in the embarrassment of missing birthdays, anniversaries, dinner engagements, etc. Dick mentions that the competing pressures of proving to the home office he was capable of leading the plant and the resistance he felt from his Canadian employees caused him to withdraw from his family at a time where they needed him. Many of the key indicators of work place stress can be identified in the case study. Poor communication, irrelevantly, a loss of memory are among ten symptoms listed in the British National Health System (Hassle, 2007).

Recommendations All of the issues identified in the case study can all be trace back to one root cause, management style.

When Dick originally joined the company as a salesman, his will and determination alone were enough for him to achieve success. Those are great traits to possess, but when managing people solely by personal will and determination there will be a level of resistance to that type of leadership. White notes that a prescription for micromanagement is careful consideration as to who is promoted to leadership position. "...

It is more difficult to manage a job than to do it yourself (White, 2010).

When attacking complex problems that require technical knowledge or experience, a good leader should rely on input from subject matter experts (Syrian, 2008). In the Dick Spencer case, folding the scrap seems to be a logical solution for fitting them into the containers. There could have been a myriad of reasons that were preventing the workers from following Dick's directives. Syrian adds, " Employees are the ones who are typically directly involved in the actual day-to-day operational reality of the organization and their level of knowledge of what works and what doesn't is unparalleled" (Syrian, 2008).

Dick's attempt to control every aspect of the plant's operations, from soup to nuts, is at the heart of each of the issues.

His management style, his conflict management, and his work life balance are all affected by the pressure Dick feels to personally make sure every aspect of the business is handled. Delegating responsibility to there can be

difficult to managers like Dick, but they soon realize it is one of the most important productivity skills that he could master (White, 2010). Also learning to delegate to others will foster a sense of team with the people that work for him.

Empowering employees to make decisions and holding them accountable for their performance will make the employees feel trusted to do their jobs and increases their satisfaction with the position they have in the company (White, 2010). Developing good professional relationships with the people that work for him and creating an atmosphere of camaraderie can begin to turn the employees' perceptions of Dick as a manager.

Lastly, developing the skill of delegating to others can give Dick the confidence to be able to put work aside at times and focus on the relationships with friends and family.