

# Org behavior analysis of fight club



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NorthwestUniversity Organizational Behavior Critical Analysis of the movie Fight Club The movie Fight Club is an in depth look at the contrast between three different organizations and how each one of them led one man to seek a higher purpose and a more satisfying existence by associating himself with those organizations. In an effort to understand more fully how Organizational Behavior concepts apply to this particular movie, we will look at each group individually, compare and contrast the main purpose of those groups with one another, and then we will explore how the concepts of Organizational Behavior apply to each group. At the start of the movie we are presented with a nameless character who never actually reveals his name. He works for a major automotive company and is dissatisfied with his current employment.

From the outset of the film, the viewer is able to recognize the job he holds isn't important to the story line, as much as the idea of being a nameless worker bee in the middle structure of some major corporation. The level of responsibility and job title likewise hold little to know importance except to illustrate a cycle of powerlessness to change the corporate structure. The fact that the main character is nameless, powerless, and dissatisfied with his career is important in that it shapes many of the attitudes and much of the groundwork for the working themes of the movie. We know that emotions lead to the development of attitudes, and our attitudes lay the groundwork for our behaviors. When one is emotionally satisfied with any given situation, their outlook and attitude about that given situation is predominantly positive. With a positive mindset, one tends to exhibit positive behaviors.

We know the opposite to be true as well. Following the rational behavior model laid out in chapter 4 of the book, given any perceived environment, a person is going to present with emotional episodes based upon their attitudes about the environment, positive or negative. Such is the case with our main character. He has such a negative attitude about his life and sense of fulfillment; he begins to experience emotional dissonance.

He experiences an internal conflict between the required emotions of his job and his true disdain for the person he is and who he would like to be. Our main character as a result of this dissonance begins to experience insomnia. He finds himself “ not really awake, not really asleep. ” His job requires that he travel and he begins to feel that his life is time-zones and airports, single-serving packets of sugar, and microwaveable chicken cordon bleu.

He feels as though he has no real friends because of his hectic shallow existence. He seeks medical intervention for his inability to sleep and is directed to group therapy. In therapy he finds a group of individuals not bound by the rigid structure and meaningless existence that defines his career. He finds a group of people who suffer from a variety of problems ranging from blood parasites to tuberculosis; cancer to other terminal medical conditions. He finds a satisfaction and self-realization not perceived in his job. He’s able to sleep with ease and has found meaning in his existence once again.

It’s never indicated how long he attended group therapy, but from all indications, it lasts for several months until he meets Marla Singer. Marla, like himself is a faker. She doesn’t suffer from any of the previously

mentioned terminal illnesses, yet she attends group therapy. Never is Marla's work indicated so it's never made clear why Marla attends group therapy, but with another "faker" present, our main character finds it impossible to release the anger and frustration and inadequacies he feels brought about by his job.

He tries to confront her and convince her not to attend, but to no avail. Left with no outlet for the emotion our main character is sitting on the edge of an apparent breakdown. That's where Tyler comes in. Tyler Durden, as we learn is the imaginary alter-ego of our main character.

A cool, collected, laid-back individual who represents the care free and emotionally independent existence our main character wishes he could have. Tyler isn't concerned with modern conveniences and or the status afforded him from a job or paycheck. Tyler is a maker and distributor of homemade soap that is sold in department store beauty counters. Tyler is the anti-thesis to our main character and this is important, because as the movie progresses, so does their friendship.

As we wend our way through the story, we find our main character exhibiting more counter-productive behaviors at his job. Following the EVLN model of job dissatisfaction, our main character is a classic example of N, Neglect. Neglect: Neglect includes reducing work effort, paying less attention to quality, and increasing absenteeism and lateness. It is generally considered a passive activity that has negative consequences for the organization. Research clearly establishes that dissatisfied employees tend to have higher

absenteeism; the relationship between satisfaction and job performance is more complex.

This statement straight out of Chapter 4 illustrates the behaviors exhibited by our main character once he forms, with Tyler, Fight Club. Fight Club is an informal organization of men, who like our main character are frustrated by their everyday humdrum existence and don't feel as though they are provided a healthy outlet to resolve the inner turmoil. It all begins with a fight between Tyler and the main character slugging it out and grows from there. Following the concept of Organizational Justice, we see a common bond among the men who participate in Fight Club. These are men who work hollow jobs and feel they have been served an injustice.

They are tired of middle managers relegating them to meaningless tasks and are seeking distributive justice. They seek to communicate their disgruntled perceptions with their fists, often times crying after a fight at the incredible release of energy and stress. " Once you've been in Fight Club, it's as though life has the volume turned down. As our main character has developed a new " support group", he begins to exhibit many of the counterproductive behaviors listed in the Neglect aspect of the EVLN model of job dissatisfaction. His work is seemingly less important than at any other time in the movie.

He starts to ignore the dress code, shows up late, and even neglects to complete work reports with what would be regarded as any level of competency. Following the exhibit in Chapter 7, due to the distress he obtains from his work, he exhibits classic signs of Physiological,

Psychological, and Behavioral consequences. He suffered from sleep disturbances and undoubtedly high blood pressure. Upon discovering group therapy he displayed moodiness, exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and signs of burnout. Once he was fully involved in Fight Club, his behavior at work changed dramatically.

He exhibited severely lower job performance, higher absenteeism, and workplace aggression. “ That’s right, these cuts and bruises were from fighting and I didn’t care if they knew it, I wanted them to. ” The counterproductive behaviors escalate to a point where our main character is dismissed immediately from his job. The interesting aspect of this dismissal is he was dismissed with a computer, fax machine, copier, printer, 52 paychecks a year, and 48 travel vouchers at the company’s expense. This is relevant because it provides the funding for Fight Club to evolve into a larger, more structured organization known as Project Mayhem. “ When an applicant arrives, they are to stand out here for three days with no food, water, or motivation.

If at the end of the three days they are still there, they can join. ” This statement was the only requirement to join Project Mayhem. In modern Organizational Behavior theory it is what you might call their mission statement. The main differences between Fight Club and Project Mayhem are the size, organization and structure. Anyone who wanted to slug out frustration was able to join Fight Club.

Project Mayhem however required a higher level of commitment. The organization that is Fight Club is informal with some leadership, but no

clearly defined roles. Tyler and the main character are non-traditional in the sense that they fulfill all the roles within Fight Club in the beginning. All the participants are there for a similar purpose, to lose the aggression, yet all they have to be is participants.

Once Fight Club evolves to Project Mayhem, Tyler is the Plant. He creates all the ideas for projects. He is also the coordinator in that he delegates responsibilities well to others. He fulfills many of the roles and guides the members to completion on a series of tasks involving corporate vandalism.

Still many of the team members are solely team workers working towards the common goal of completing the task at hand. As Project Mayhem develops and grows, roles are passed off to other members of the group. None of the members of Project Mayhem are ever mentioned by name, a defining characteristic of Project Mayhem. “ You are not special. You are all part of the same decaying matter as everything else.

You are all part of the same rotting compost heap. You are not defined by your checking accounts. ” One of the nameless characters is seen indoctrinating a new applicant to Project Mayhem with them same slate of ideals and mission statement they all received. We also find SDWT’s as described in Chapter 10. It becomes apparent as the movie progresses, Tyler’s main goal was to create an organization with such loyalty and commitment, and the members wouldn’t stray from the task at hand, even if commanded to by Tyler himself.

This is extremely important to the plot of the movie because as the main character realizes Tyler and himself to be the same person, he attempts to

undo the plot of Project Mayhem. The Self-Directed Work Teams are carrying out their plot to without any direct feedback or reporting to the top levels of the organization. The only feedback given to the top level by any of the work teams is, “ not to worry, everything’s under control sir. ” The overall perception error presented in the movie is the concept of groupthink. It becomes apparent early on that the group was founded on the basis of like minds performing a task they see as fundamentally and morally correct.

They see themselves as invulnerable when in one scene they take the chief of police hostage in the bathroom and threaten to remove his testicles. This threat is a display of power and aggression on their part against what they view to be the protectors of what they are struggling against. Furthermore, they perform this heist at a police function as a display of their heightened sense of invulnerability by taking such a risk. The group stereotypes outsiders or outgroups, who don’t fall into their line of thought. They refer to them as mindless slaves to fashion.

Communication in the movie Fight Club is almost completely verbal, face-to-face, and non-verbal with regards to the actual fighting that takes place. The individuals involved in group therapy, fight club, and Project Mayhem all communicate face-to-face with one another. They don’t use instant messaging, pagers, phones, e-mail or written notes and letters. The main character found some level of emotional satisfaction and achievement through these groups.

Contrasting that with the typical business communication that takes place, it’s no wonder those groups are the antithesis of his job. Those groups are



founded on something much simpler and more humanistic than that of the main characters work. In conclusion, there are many insightful aspects to Organizational Behavior within the movie Fight Club. We have covered just a few from the formation, structure, and communication that take place within these organizations.

We have found many of the concepts covered in class were motivating factors for the main character to bond with and form some of these organizations. It's interesting to imagine how the main character, not being secure or confident enough in himself or his own abilities, needed to create an imaginary alter ego in order to fulfill the roles within fight club and Project Mayhem. I guess when “ this is your life and it's ending one minute at a time”, desperate people will take drastic measures.