

# Consolidated products



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Consolidated Products Case Analysis Abstract This brief paper's objective is to analyze the managerial behavior of two managers, Ben Samuels and Phil Jones, who worked for Consolidated Products plant. The analysis will concentrate on how these individuals displayed their specific relation-driven behaviors, and specific task-oriented behavior, and the subsequent managerial grid model. In addition, this paper will describe and compare to what extent each manager used participative or inspirational leadership, and their influence on employee attitudes and performance.

Finally, personal recommendations on how to achieve employee satisfaction, business high performance, and leadership effectiveness will be addressed in the hypothetical case I was designated to manage Consolidated Products plant. Consolidated Products Case Analysis The Consolidated Products case is without doubt directly related to a "managerial grid" model case. What is the managerial grid model? According to Newborough (1999) this model was first exposed by Bob Blake and Jane Mouton in their book *The Managerial Grid* published in 1964.

The referred model was not only created to explain human behavior, but was also considered as a powerful tool created to improve manager and leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, it provided a basis for comparison of managing styles in terms of concern for production and concern for people. Concern for production is the amount of stress that is placed by a manager on achieving production, getting results and profits; while concern for people is the amount of concern the manager has for his/her subordinates and colleagues as individuals (Newborough, 1999).

Both concerns, according to Newborough (1999), will definitely lead to management effectiveness and are necessary to be an effective leader. In other approach to this model, Liccione (2005) explains that early Ohio State leadership studies showed that effective leaders displayed repeated use of task-oriented and person-oriented behaviors. According to Liccione (2005), a task-oriented behavior can result in better understanding of role obligations, a competent use of resources and personnel, while encouraging a better coordination between subordinates.

On the other hand, the person-oriented behavior approach results in higher job satisfaction, teamwork, and organizational commitment. Therefore, Yulk (2006) considers that both types of behaviors are important for the overall performance of any work organization, and necessary effective leadership. Concerning the specific situation described in the Consolidated Products plant case, the discussion is based on the managerial behavior of two managers, Ben Samuels and Phil Jones. Unquestionably both managers show different managerial behaviors.

Ben is the perfect example of a person-oriented, concern for people, and relations-oriented manager. This individual, according to case highlights, was well liked by the employees and believed that by treating them properly would generate a sense of loyalty to the business. Moreover, Ben always tried to accommodate and help his employees, and avoid any layoffs by relocating the staff to other work related positions. This type of relationship that Ben developed with his employees and subordinates is specific of a supportive driven managerial behavior.

According to Yulk (2006) this type of behavior shows consideration, acceptance, and concern for the needs and feelings of other people. A perfect example of supportive behavior displayed by Ben is that he knew most of the workers by name, and maintained dynamic interpersonal relationships with his subordinates (always visited the employees and asked about their families). In addition, Ben showed a great deal of supportive leadership if we take into account that he believed that if you treat employees correctly, then a better job would be performed without close supervision.

Ben's behavior certainly improved employee satisfaction, and fewer turnovers among the company's five plants. However, Ben lacked of task-oriented managerial behavior since, as exposed in the case, he left his supervisors to run their departments alone without close monitoring. As argued by Yulk (2006) monitoring refers to the gathering of information about the supervisor's work unit, measure progress of the tasks, conduct periodic review meetings, observe operations directly, among other guidelines for monitoring operations.

In addition, Ben did not put in place standard operational procedures (SOP) for the departments under his supervision, and never developed a proper planning in order to improve productivity and product quality. Planning is a key element of management effectiveness, and as Yulk (2006) says it ensures efficient organization of the work unit, coordinates specific work related activities, and effectively utilizes resources in a proper manner.

Certainly, there is no indication that Ben displayed or showed a participative leadership behavior since he did not use group supervision (via group meetings), nor facilitate subordinate participation in the decision making process. He just left or delegated on his supervisors to work alone and make important decisions that lead to a second worst record for costs and production levels in the plant under his management. As a consequence, Ben was later asked to take early retirement, when the company was bought in by another firm. Phil Jones replaced Ben Samuels in his managerial position.

Phil had was recognized as an executive that could get things done. As a manager he displayed the classic task-oriented managerial behavior, and immediately put in place short-term planning, clarifying roles and objectives, and monitoring of operations and performance (Yulk, 2006). For example and as the case describes, Phil asked his supervisors to established high performance standards for their departments, and insisted that all employees achieve them (Yulk, 2006). This action was a clear indication that Phil was directly into communicating the plans, policies, and role expectations to his subordinates.

This type of task-oriented behavior, as Yulk (2006) says, includes “ defining job responsibilities and requirements, setting performance goals, and assigning specific tasks”. Phil wanted to make sure that his subordinates clearly understood what to do and how to do it. In addition, it is important to highlight that under the previous manager’s administration, there were not procedures in place, thus a great deal of ambiguity or role conflict existed. In order to remedy this issue, Phil immediately set forth a well-structured set of goals that were clear and specific.

Furthermore, as the case exposes, Phil checked closely his subordinates' performance. This type of managerial behavior is an indication that, as Yulk (2006) says, monitoring provides the information needed to evaluate subordinate performance. At the same time it helps recognize achievements, identify performance deficiencies, and assess training needs. Phil held weekly meetings in order to review department performance and required his supervisors to ask him first before taking any action detrimental to the established plans and policies in the plant.

This behavior was in no way a sign that Phil, though encouraged weekly meetings, was using participative leadership since he did not facilitate subordinate participation in the decision making process. Phil's actions positively impacted the plant's production levels, where costs were reduced by 20 percent and production output was increased to 10 percent. However, Phil did not display any sign of a relations-oriented or people-oriented managerial behavior. He believed, as described in the case, that "training supervisors to be supportive was a waste of time".

In addition, Phil showed rude and inconsiderate attitude towards his employees and subordinates, by reprimanding the person right on the spot to set an example. Moreover, instead of implementing coaching and mentoring as a developing component, Phil would rather fire any employee that had had a substandard performance without hesitating. He certainly, as the case indicates, did not help his employees learn how to solve work related problems, or provided opportunities to learn from experience, and definitely did not act as a role model when it came to interpersonal relationships.

As a result of Phil's negative actions against his employees, as the case sets forth, three of his seven supervisors quit, turnover among the machine operators was high, and talks about creating a union increased among the plant workers. If we were to compare Ben and Phil in terms of their influence on employee attitudes, it is clear that Ben showed a supportive relation with his employees and was certainly a more relations-oriented individual than Phil. Phil lacked of interpersonal relations with his staff, and was not considerate nor showed appreciation towards his employees' achievements, and contributions to the company.

Concerning short-term performance, Phil displayed a clear task-oriented behavior by setting forth standard operational procedures and employee high performance standards. This behavior contributed to cost reduction and a tremendous increase in production output. Ben on the contrary did not have any planning and monitoring procedures in place, resulting in high costs and low production levels. Regarding long-term plant performance both managers unquestionably faced barriers to achieve long lasting outcome and employee satisfaction.

Barriers that can be summarized into: Ben's lack of planning and monitoring task-oriented behavior, and Phil's lack of relations-oriented managerial behavior. If by any chance I was selected to be the manager of this plant with the specific goal to achieve both: high employee satisfaction and performance, I would operate in a relations and task oriented managerial driven conduct. A manager to be successful must lead and facilitate the work to accomplish task objectives and goals while at the same time maintaining cooperative relationships and teamwork at the workplace.

In other words, I would certainly use these two managerial behaviors simultaneously in order to achieve employee fulfillment and company profitability. However, it is imperative for a manager to have a balanced concern for task objectives and personal relationships with employees and subordinates, and essential to know and understand when and in which situation it is appropriate to display each behavior. In summary, these two dimensions of managerial effectiveness are directly related, and should be approached in a balanced manner.

Thus, having a strong concern for production or a strong concern for people should not be as effective as having a strong concern for both production and people at the same time. References Liccione, W. J. (2005). Balanced Management: A Key Component of Managerial Effectiveness Performance Improvement, 44 (2), 32-39 Newborough, G. (1999). People vs. Production. The British Journal of Administrative Management, 13(2), 2 Yukl, G. (2006). Leadership in Organizations (6th ed. ). New Jersey: Pearson, Prentice Hall. ISBN: 0-13-149484-8