

Bus454-01 case study

Business, Company



Abstract

In this paper, answers to the questions pertaining to the case study on motivation and work behavior are presented. The case is about the behavior of employees working for the J. K. Roberts Company.

- Discuss the case in terms of the attitudes and beliefs of the managers and workers. Pay particular attention to issues related to satisfaction and organizational commitment.

The case is about the behavioral problem of the people working at the J. K. Roberts Company, manufacturer of large sliding doors.

Peter Roberts, the newly appointed Production Manager is the son of Mr. J. K. Roberts. He is in his early twenties, married, and had a good build. As the manager, he is known to be very meticulous about keeping the shop orderly and neat. He is also very particular about the efficiency of workers towards work; in fact, he is not satisfied with the behavior and commitment of workers and so he was very determined in implementing the cost reduction program. Though he is committed to the attainment of Mr. J. K. Roberts' goal of reducing waste and increasing production in the company, he left most of the reprimanding and firing of tardy workers to his assistant.

The company employed 70 workers to work in the production department comprising of the warehouse, planning, assembly, door-jams, packing, and shipping. Most of the tasks in the production department are described to be repetitive and require very little skill or training; the door-jamb department requires the most skill. The workers used to work with little supervision from their foremen. The workers as well as the foremen were used to a very lax or lenient type of management (e. g., they often played cards together during

lunchtime and have company parties after work), and therefore are very resentful to the new stricter management under Peter.

As observed by Peter, the workers prefer to ‘sit around and chat all day’. In terms of wages, the workers find their compensation to be low and to compensate for their dissatisfaction with their wages, they believe that they could compensate it by taking frequent breaks, working overtime, and ‘taking small items home at night’. Also, the workers have negative attitude towards the new manager and they think that Peter is not capable to be the production manager of the company, hence they resented Peter’s cost reduction program

- Using theories of needs, discuss the differing needs of the male and female workers, the foreman, Mr. Peter Roberts, Bob Green, and J. K. Roberts.

Male workers – majority were in their mid-twenties; about half of them were unmarried.

Female workers – female workers were either young and single or older married women.

Foremen – the foremen were employees with most seniority and were responsible for quality and on-time production output. Most of the foremen had good relationships with the workers.

The workers in general, are dissatisfied with their work primarily because of low wages and new working policy imposed by the new manager. According to the theory of motivation established by Frederick Herzberg, factors like salary, company policy, supervision, interpersonal relations, and working conditions are hygiene factors. The lack of these factors creates dissatisfaction among workers, however, their presence do not create

satisfaction either.

Looking at the needs of the workers in light of the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the workers have deprivation needs.

Peter Roberts – He was in his early twenties, married, and had a good build. As observed by most workers, he liked to show off his strength in front of others.

Peter has a need for self actualization. According to the theory of needs developed by Abraham Maslow, if the individual/employee behaved in a way that he could fulfill his potentialities at work, that person has the need for self-actualization. Peter has been very serious in exercising his role as the production manager and so become so strict in implementing the 'reduce waste, lower production costs, increase production' objective of his father for the company. He wanted to achieve the satisfaction of being in command, not because his family owns the company but because he is capable to be the manager.

In relation to Frederick Herzberg theory of motivation, Peter is highly motivated by his responsibility. Being the manager motivated him to change the attitude of his workers towards work and hence, very firm in the implementation of his cost reduction program.

In relation to McClelland's need theory, Peter has the need for power-he has the desire to influence his employees and he places a high value on discipline.

Bob Green – He is the assistant of Mr. J. K. Roberts and was responsible for seeing that the company achieved the goals established by Mr. Roberts. He was considered as hardworking and persuasive by most of the employees

and had a reputation of not giving in easily to employees' complaints. Bob's need is best captured by McClelland's need for achievement because he prefers to master a task or situation.

J. K. Roberts – Even as the owner of J. K. Roberts Company, Mr. Roberts has the need for affiliation (McClelland's need theory). As mentioned in the case, he was generally on friendly terms with all the employees and he participated freely in the daily operations of the company.

- Discuss the case in terms of the uses and abuses of power.

The workers in the production department were obviously overused the trust given to them by Mr. J. K. Roberts. They were given the power to comfortably work in the company but they have abused it to the point of having too much relaxing hours than working hours. As mentioned in the case, the workers take frequent breaks, working overtime, and 'taking small items home at night'. And most of the workers who worked overtime either worked very little or slept during overtime hours they reportedly worked.

Assessing the behavior of the foremen, they have used power in abusive manner. It was mentioned in the case that Mr. Roberts have very lenient working policy for his workers: allowing them to have company party after working hours oftentimes, allowing workers to work overtime unsupervised, etc. It is the responsibility of the foremen, as the immediate supervisors in the work area, to discipline workers in such a way that they work for the benefit of the organization. However, what happened in the case was that even the foremen played cards along with the workers. That is to say, the foremen tolerated the tardiness and inefficiency of workers in the production department. It is in their power to discipline the workers but they did not do

so. And since the workers were all used to such lax supervisory practices of foremen prior to Peter's management, it became difficult for the management to implement the new rules/policies which were supposed to help the organization in attaining its production efficiency objective.

On the part of Peter, the very simple act of using the company employees and materials to build a swing set for his children and to repair his camper was already a form of abuse of power. Even as the son of the owner of the company and as the production manager, having the workers do tasks for personal purposes is already a misuse of power. The workers were hired to do tasks for the organization and not for single individual's satisfaction. In terms of managing the production department, Peter did not fully exercise his power as the manager. He could have at least directly talked to the resenting workers so that he could hear directly all their qualms and complaints. Also, he is in authority to impose the punishments necessary for abusive workers. However, what happened in the case was that, he left the reprimanding and firing of workers to his assistant.

Moreover, the very idea of implementing strict policies abruptly without proper consultation or information to the workers is an abuse of power. The workers have the right to be informed for any change in policy because they will be directly affected by such policy.

- Knowing what you know about work motivation, what would you do if you were confronted with the situation outlined in this case? Be as specific as possible in responding to this question.

The first thing that I would do, if I am Peter, is to hold a meeting with the foremen and workers. Since I am directly responsible for them as the

production manager, I have to know my workers well. The meeting will not be solely about the implementation of the new rule but rather a capability-building meeting wherein I could hear their sentiments and views about the company and policies. Also, I will use the meeting as the venue where I could make them realize the need for a cost reduction program.

As mentioned in the case, the workers receive low wage in their job at the company. The most motivating factor for an employee, I learnt from class, is high salary. This is especially through for workers who have deprivation needs. The meeting could also be a venue where I could present to them higher wage proposition as long as they would adhere to the company's cost reduction program. The wage proposition will be presented along with the pros and cons of working under lenient policies versus the new strict rules in the department.

Aside from new wage proposal, I could also present during the meeting some additional incentives to the workers. The incentive proposal would be: (a) in six-months time, if the workers could work for the success of the cost-reduction program that will enable the company to retain its existing clients and capture more market, then the savings from the program could be given back to workers in terms of health insurance and related benefits, trainings and monetary bonuses; and, (b) after 3 year's time, if the company could be able to expand its operation, promotion could be given to deserving workers who have exhibit commitment and hard work for the company.

The strategy used by Bob and Peter were not effective and resulted to even more resentment, firing, and voluntary quitting because the change in the policy was so abrupt. Also, the workers were not even oriented as to why

there was a need to change the old practices and even become strict with work rules. Obviously there was a communication gap between the manager and the workers. I believe that to solicit acceptance and coordination from the workers, the management, especially the new manager, have to make the workers feel that their efforts are needed by the company to achieve its goal.

References

- Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1959). *The Motivation to Work* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and Personality* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper and Row.
- McClelland, D. C., Atkinson, J. W., Clark, R. A., & Lowell, E. L. (1958). A scoring manual for the achievement motive; R. W. Heyns, J. Veroff, & J. W. Atkinson, A scoring manual for the affiliation motive; J. Veroff, A scoring manual for the power motive. Respectively, Chapters 12, 13 and 14 in J. W. Atkinson (Ed.), *Motives in Fantasy, Action and Society*. New York: Van Nostrand.