Cracking the whip-case study essay

Cracking the Whip Cracking the Whip 2011 12/20/2011 2011 12/20/2011 Prepared for: Dr. Azhar Kazmi Prepared by: Khalid Al-Shuwaikhat 199432180 Abdullah Al-Khabbaz 199893620 Mohammad Al-Miyad 200339590 Prepared for: Dr. Azhar Kazmi Prepared by: Khalid Al-Shuwaikhat 199432180 Abdullah Al-Khabbaz 199893620 Mohammad Al-Miyad 200339590 Table of Contents Introduction It is a case that needs a decision making manager with political skills where

Problem Identification and Problem Solution have high uncertainty. It involves many departments, multiple points of views, various conflicts which are beyond the scope of an individual manger. Also, the objective of the comprehensive reform survey for the organization structures and processes are not clear, specific or agreed on. It includes various departments with different interests, values and priorities that make the department managers come into conflicts. Background Harmon Davidson was appointed as the director of headquarters management succeeding Walton Drummond who had taken early retirement.

Immediately after starting his new job, Davidson learned that one of the first things he would be responsible for a comprehensive six months survey of the headquarters management structure and processes. The survey will be given to the White House as an introduction to the agency's next phase of management reform. Prior to his retirement, Drummed had already pick the five persons survey team consisting of two experienced management analysts, a promising younger staff member, an intern and Al Pitcher who is

the team leader. At first, Davidson had been impressed with Pitcher's energy and motivation.

He worked long hours, wrote a lot of things and was full with the latest organizational theory. Pitcher's had other characteristics, however, that were disquieting, uninterested in the Department of Technical Services (DTS) history and culture, and was conservative toward top managers assuming they were unsophisticated and unconcerned about modern management. However, after a week of starting the survey, Davidson received his first feedback of any kind and it was negative about Pitcher's behavior with the department of Public Affairs.

Davidson confronted Pitched and gently blamed him, but he did nothing else for two more weeks until the second complaint came in from the director of Technology Development. After that, Davidson started calling other department managers to confirm these complaints and all of them criticized the team especially Pitcher, as rude and uninterested in the rationales behind the existing structure and processes. Then, Davidson commenced a review about the survey with the team leader who had been in no mood for self-examination or reconsideration.

Pitcher said that he would not be able to meet the survey deadline since he was working with mangers unwilling to cooperate with outsider pushing unpopular exercise. Also, he blamed Davidson for not holding the line against unnecessary criticisms from managers trying to discredit the survey. Eventually, many questions came in Davidson mind about how to overcome all of these challenges and proceed with survey. Problem Statement The

case has high uncertainty about many problems and their priorities which could be summarized into the following three questions: 1. Is it a case of resistance to change by the other department managers? . Is it a case of inappropriate management skill and style used by Davidson? 3. Is it a case of interpersonal issues by Pitcher, or lacking the required competencies in handling the survey by his team? Data Analysis In analyzing the case data, we were trying to determine the cause and effects for the problems identified and who the main affected stakeholders by this issue are. Thus, we selected the Contingency Decision-Making Framework, which bring together the two dimensions of problem consensus and technical knowledge about solutions as show in the exhibit below:

Using this framework has enabled us to concentrate and focus on each quartile and cell which fit and represent an organizational situation that is appropriate for a specific decision making approach. Thus, three alternatives were generated which will be discussed in details in the next section. Generating Alternatives a) First Alternative: characterized by high uncertainty about problems and their priorities. Tackling and solving one problem might delay action on the other issues. These problems can be seen and realized in terms of the following: The agency was demoralized by the downsizing and change that was going. The survey creates anxieties between managers and other employees because they believed that the survey results will affect their jobs. * Davidson ignoring all the signs in Pitcher lack of interest in his new agency's history and culture and his condensing attitude toward the agency managers. * Pitcher was abrasive, arrogant, proudly superior and tactless with the nervous and upset managers

who were uncomfortable by the team behavior and the assumption they perceived that the existing structures and processes were unsound and unreliable.

This scenario represent cell # 2 in the contingency decision-making framework. Thus, the Carnegie Model applies in this situation because there is disagreement about organizational problems and groups within the agency are in conflict, and therefore bargaining, negotiation and compromise are required. Using the Carnegie model, a political and social process is needed to adapt the following proposed solutions: * Apology should be given to the upset managers contacted so far (Dove in Public Affairs and Canseco in Technology Development) and other employees.

They must believe that the results of the survey have not been predetermined and their valuable input will be factored in to ensure their honesty and cooperation and reduce sensitivity. This will resolve and overcome the conflict about the diverse goals, opinions, values, experience, and problem priorities. * A coalition between Davidson, Pitcher & his team, and the other concerned department managers should be built. Starting with holding joint meeting to discuss and interpret the goals of the survey, prioritize the existing problems, share opinions about the agency mission and how to accomplish the survey objectives.

Then, they should adapt and obtain a social support for the first alternative solution that is acceptable and satisfying to the whole coalition. * Whatever the agreement is, they should seek the top and senior management support to work this agreement out. b) Second Alternative: characterized by have

high uncertainty about the alternative technical solutions. The problem here is well defined and identified which is the obvious and clear inappropriate style of management by Davidson. It can be seen and realized in terms of the following: Davidson was not familiar with the skills and knowledge of his team members and had a little background on the survey. * Davidson was responsible for the survey team and based on his experience should have recognized how sensitive the department managers are to survey of this nature. Also, he did not appear to prepare the team or the customer adequately for the resulting sensitivities. * Davidson did not kept abreast of what the team was doing by calling some of the managers who'd been visited by the team. The fact that a week passed before Davidson received his first feedback of any kind which was a negative feedback should have set off the alarm. Although, Davidson confronted Pitcher and gently blamed him, he did nothing else for two more weeks until the second complaint came in. * Davidson let Pitcher fail repeatedly without proper assistance or coaching. This scenario represent cell # 3 in the contingency decision-making framework. Thereby, the Incremental Decision Model applies in this situation because there is clear problem, but not knowing how to solve it.

Using the Incremental Decision model in such situation will eventually acquire the technical knowledge to accomplish goals and solve the problems. Since the problem is identified, a sequence of small steps will enable the agency to learn a solution by adapting the following proposals: * Davidson should meet again with Pitcher to apologize and takes some of the blames for moving ahead without all the information and not having more substantive discussion with the team members before the survey proceeded.

Also, he should explain and discuss how sensitive this survey is and establish a plan to gather information and minimize employee fears. Davidson should keep close follow up in what the team was doing and obtain some feedback from the managers who will be visited by the team at least by calling if not visiting them in their offices. * Davidson should consider changing some of the team members by adding someone who is loyal to him for reporting back and updating him with what is happening. Also, he can appoint someone with proven interpersonal skills to complement the technical ability of conducting the survey. * If all of the above solutions continue to fail, then Davidson should get rid of Pitcher by transferring him to another department.) Third alternative: characterized by high uncertainty about both problems and solutions and this are really difficult for decision making. Currently, most the agency employees, department managers, Davidson, and the survey team are upset and accusing each other that they are the reason behind all of this mess, but all of them could not decide on the direction the agency should take to overcome these challenges. These problems can be seen and realized as mentioned above in the first alternative: * The agency was demoralized by the downsizing and change that was going.

The survey creates anxieties between managers and other employees because they believed that the survey results will affect their jobs. * Davidson ignoring all the signs in Pitcher lack of interest in his new agency's history and culture and his condensing attitude toward the agency managers. * Pitcher was abrasive, arrogant, proudly superior and tactless with the nervous and upset managers who were uncomfortable by the team

behavior and the assumption they perceived that the existing structures and processes were unsound and unreliable.

This scenario represent cell # 4 in the contingency decision-making framework. Therefore, Carnegie Model combine with Incremental Decision Model applies in this situation to cope with this high uncertainty and complexity. Techniques from both cell 2 and cell 3 will be used, but logical decision sequences starting with problem identification and ending with problem solution might not occur. The Carnegie description of coalition building is especially relevant for the problem identification stage while when the problem solution is unclear, a trial-and-error solution may be designed.

Thus, the proposed solutions will be as follows: * Quickly determine the political and social sensitivities and other factors driving the need for the survey, and then decide whether there should be a change in the direction. * Apology should be given to all employees. * A wide spread discussion of problems and idea proposal should be encouraged between all the concerned employees in order to facilitate the opportunity to make choices.

The discussion should cover how to lay new basis for the survey, including whether there is adequate time to complete the survey, if the team members are right for the task and ideas on how to reengage the customers again. * Pitcher should adjust to change in culture from Treasury to the current agency. * Seeking senior management support. * Eventually, through judgment, intuition and trial-and-error, the agency might solve the problems. Conclusion and Recommendation: Our group has concluded to follow alternative # 3.

This alternative is applying a comprehensive solution to the whole problems as described in the problem statement. By combining the Carnegie Model and Incremental Decision Model, most if not all the problems of this case will be handled properly, tackled, and resolved by inspiration or imitation. Eventually, this combination may evolve into a situation described in the Garbage Can Model which will enable the agency to move toward better performance by proposing new ideas, spending time working in significant areas, and persisting with potential solutions.