

Timber products corporation case study



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Lawler uses an effective strategy when entering the contracting process. He begins by setting a meeting with Richardson and Bowman for briefing on exact nature of services they require from him. He then analyzes the information given and gives his potential employers three different course of actions which they should take regarding a decision to hire him. He proposes recommending someone else, using his consultancy skills or receiving assistance from his students. Richardson and Bowman opt for the third alternative. Lawler also opts to develop an independent investigation of the plant in order to disclose the issues facing it as opposed to relying on the management to provide information on the same. He uses his students' judgment skills together with his personal skills to analyze the perception of the problem from both the employees' viewpoint and the consultant's viewpoints. This information forms the basis of developing a report. This independent report forms gives recommendations which may solve issues facing the plant. Lawler is also careful to discuss the issues of payment with the management. He decides to charge them for three consultancy day every week in addition to expenses occurred in visits to the plant with his students.

3. Do you think Lawler faces any resistance in getting the manager and supervisor to support this effort? Why or why not? If yes, what can be done to reduce any resistance? (10 points)

I think that Lawler faces challenges as far as the supervisor and manager are involved in supporting his efforts. This is due to the fact that he is an outsider to the company and these employees may be suspicious of his intentions. Employees are usually suspicious of intentions of third parties

who they may view to be a threat to their careers. They are aware that there are certain weaknesses present in the plant and they may not cooperate fully for fear of being implicated in the shortcomings. In addition, recommendations are usually made at the end of the report by Lawler. The supervisor and manager are unsure of recommendations which may be made, which they may view to be a threat to their careers. Many employees also oppose organizational change due to uncertainty associated with it, which is another reason the supervisor and manager may not be cooperative for fear of change which will result as a basis of the report developed by Lawler.

4. List the problems that Richardson and Bowman see in the plant (do not include your own opinions). (5 points)

There are various problems which are seen in the plant according to Bowman's and Richardson's views. One of the major problems regards safety. Employees are seen to be working in unsafe working environments where they are exposed to injury. A while back, one employee was fatally injured when working and this led to several employees quitting work in frustration. This is a problem which Bowman and Richardson aim at solving. Another problem involved employee motivation. Bowman was under the impression that employees had low morale and that they needed a motivation course to boost their motivation levels. Another problem involved the authoritative rule which was employed by one plant manager. Bowman needed advice regarding the issue of authoritative leadership by the plant manager. Richardson and Bowman hoped to use Lawler's expertise to solve these challenges facing the plant.

5. Using the open systems framework, discuss each of the following elements as related to the information in this case: (5 points for each, 35 points)

A. Inputs

Inputs in this case are organizational change, teamwork, motivation and human resource management. These inputs are likely to change the perception which employees have on their facility and increase their motivation levels. However, they should be involved in the process if they are to achieve the goals set.

B. Outputs

The output in this case is increased safety records, improvement in employee motivation and effective leadership by managers. The organizational changes effected will trigger change among organizational players and these outputs will be achieved.

C. Each of the design components

These will be classified into human process interventions, techno-structural interventions, human resource management interventions and strategic interventions. Human process interventions should involve team building. Techno-structural interventions should involve total quality management. Human resource management intervention should involve analyzing employee welfare, remuneration and their training. Finally, strategic intervention should involve culture change where change is effected in leadership, communication and teamwork.

6. Discuss how the elements of the system fit together or do not fit together. Use this analysis as the basis to identify problems you see in this facility. (20 points)

In order to achieve higher employee motivation, employees should be effectively remunerated and trained. This forms the basis of the first problem since the system does not fit together. In the facility, employees are not effectively trained and they work for longer hours hence low morale. In order to achieve a clean safety record, employees should have safety clothing and equipment. These elements do not fit since in the plant, employees do not have access to these clothing and equipment and the ones present are of low quality. It is therefore difficult to achieve a good safety record hence the fatality in the plant. In order for an organization to enjoy effective leadership, the democratic leadership style should be employed. In the case study, the authoritative style is used and hence the system does not fit and forms the basis of the leadership problems facing the plant. The management should implement changes which will be discussed below in order to ensure that the system components fit and organizational goals are met. Some of these changes include human process interventions, techno-structural interventions, human resource management interventions and strategic interventions.

7. Chapters 9 and 12 through 22 present OD interventions. Which interventions do you believe are applicable in this case? Explain. (15 points)

There are several OD interventions which should be applied in order to solve the issues which arise in the case. These will be classified into human process interventions, techno-structural interventions, human resource

management interventions and strategic interventions. Human process interventions should involve team building where employees should be taken to a serene environment where they can interact with each other and with their managers. This will improve their motivation and communication with top leadership. Techno-structural interventions should involve total quality management. This is the improvement of all processes in the firm to achieve goals of all stakeholders. When TQM is implemented, safety issues and leadership will improve since the goals of all stakeholders will be taken into account. Human resource management intervention should involve analyzing employee welfare, remuneration and their training. When employees are well trained, remunerated and their welfare improved, they will have high motivation levels thereby solving the problem of low morale. Finally, strategic intervention should involve culture change where change is effected in leadership, communication and teamwork. This will motivate employees and they are likely to give higher output.

8. Lawler has employed you as an OD practitioner to assist with this project:

A. Who should be involved in the initial feedback meeting? (5 points)

The initial feedback meeting should involve the two organizational leaders who hired Lawler to undertake investigations into the issues facing the plant. It should also involve Lawler and the OD practitioner. All other parties should be involved in later stages in order to safeguard the investigations and prevent sabotage or interference in the investigations by employees and manager who may oppose organizational change.

B. How should Lawler describe the sources of the information? (hint: issues of confidentiality) (5 points)

Lawler should not disclose the individual sources of information and should present them as “ employees and managers”. This is due to the importance of confidentiality in such a process. Confidentiality is the major factor which enabled Lawler to gain trust from employees and receive feedback on various issues. If their identities are given away, they may not be cooperative in future. The management may also sabotage the process through intimidating employees who are perceived to have given “ adverse details or comments”.

C. Write an outline of the feedback session Dr. Lawler will use to make the presentation (15 points)

- a) The first stage involves conveying a meeting with Bowman and Richardson, the OD practitioner and I. This meeting should be convened at a time which is convenient to all parties involved and it should be held in a confidential location.
- b) The second stage is providing a summary of the report developed. This report should dwell on different issues facing the plant from the perspectives of both the employees and consultants. Individual names of employees and managers who provided the information will not be disclosed.
- c) The third stage is providing a diagnosis of the problems facing the plant. These problems which range from safety issues, poor leadership from the plant manager and low employee morale will be discussed in detail. Evidence in support of the same will also be provided.

d) The fourth stage is providing recommendations on steps which the management should take to deal with the challenges experienced. These will range from increase in employee remuneration and decrease in working hours to increase motivation, improvement in safety equipment and clothing as well as applying other non-financial means of motivation.

e) The fifth step is explaining the various stages of implementing these changes. There is also the need to involve employees and managers in this process in order to ensure effectiveness. Employees and managers who totally oppose the changes should be sacked since they will be barriers to achievement of these goals.

f) Finally periodic evaluations should be done to ascertain the effectiveness of the changes. The management will be encouraged to use tools such as employee feedback to assess whether the changes have achieved goals intended including improvement of safety, leadership and increase in employee motivation.

D. How do you think meeting participants will react to the information presented? Can anything be done to temper or diffuse these reactions? (5 points)

Participants are likely to embrace the report developed since they hired Lawler to develop solutions to problems they experienced. The initial meeting with four members is likely to beg for time to discuss the report and is not likely to reject the findings. However, managers and employees may reject findings owing to the normal opposition to organizational change earlier discussed. The management should hold dialog with employees and

managers to sensitize them on the benefits of the report in order for them to embrace it and participate in implementing the recommendations.