

# Augusta golf club



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Augusta National Golf Club Table of Contents EXECUTIVE SUMMARY2 1. 0  
 INTRODUCTION3 1. 1 PURPOSE3 1. 2 SCOPE3 1. 3 SOURCES AND METHODS3  
 1.  
 4 LIMITATIONS3 1. 5 BACKGROUND3 2. 0 DISCUSSION OF ANALYSIS4 2. 1  
 COMMUNICATION CHANNEL4 2. 2 PERSUASION5 2. 3 COMMUNICATION  
 CLIMATE5 2.  
 4 ARGUMENT5 2. 5 PERCEPTION DISTORTION6 2. 6 CONFLICT SPIRAL7 3. 0  
 CONCLUSION7 4.  
 0 RECOMMENDATION8 4. 1 COMMUNICATION CHANNEL8 4. 2 PROBLEM-  
 ORIENTED APPROACH8 4. 3 ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION8 4. 4 SELF-  
 MONITORING9 5.

0 REFERENCE LIST10 EXECUTIVE SUMMARYThe controversy over Augusta National Golf Club’s exclusionary membership has resulted in a public feud with the National Council of Women’s Organization (NCWO), one of the oldest and largest coalitions of women’s groups. This report examines the various communication issues that led to the escalation of conflict between William Johnsons of Augusta National and Martha Burk of NCWO. Five major issues were discussed: 1)Communication Channel 2)Persuasion 3)Argument 4)Communication Climate 5)Perception Distortion 6)Conflict SpiralIt is concluded that the series of communication problems that was created between Mr. Johnsons and Ms. Burk was not completely attributed to the existence of conflict between the organizations, but, was rather created by the way that both chose to deal with it.

Recommendations on the alternative communication strategies that should have been adopted by the protagonist and antagonist in the case are provided as followed: 1) Oral face-to-face communication would be a more appropriate medium to facilitate the discussion of issues between the both parties. 2) Discussion should be facilitated by an experienced mediator so as to achieve an amiable resolution. 3) Ms. Burk should adopt a problem-oriented approach where the focus is on the issue at hand instead of trying to control Augusta National by imposing threats and solutions to them. 4) Ms. Burk should have based her arguments on facts, rather than on inferences.

5) A more positive communication climate would be possible between them if both parties try to keep an open mind so as to understand each others' point-of view. 6) Both parties should better monitor their own reaction to the situation they confront.

1. 0 INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Purpose This report identifies the communication issues and considers alternative communication strategies that should have been adopted by the protagonist and antagonist in the case analysis of the Augusta National Golf Club.

1. 2 Scope The report covers the various communication issues and alternative communication strategies between William Johnson and Martha Burk. It does not cover the communication issues of other parties, such as the sponsors and the Augusta club members.

1. 3 Sources and Methods Secondary data was collected from various sources such as professional journal articles and books.

1. 4 Limitations The limitation of the report lies in the subjective analysis of the communication issues. Thus, recommendations may be based on personal

perception of the communication issues. 1. 5 Background Being host to the US Masters Golf Tournament (Masters), a world-class sporting event, the Augusta National Golf Club is one of the most venerable private clubs in the world. The exclusive membership of the club is restricted to men and by invitation only. In 2002, a major controversy was sparked off between Martha Burk, chair of the National Council of Women's Organization (NCWO) and William Johnson, chairman of the Augusta National Golf Club (Augusta) because of the club's exclusionary policy.

Through a series of communication exchanges with Mr. Johnson and its associated media sponsors, Ms. Burk relentless attempts to admit female members into the club has resulted in a public feud between the organizations (Augusta Case Study). By understanding the communication issues that are involved, the extent of this controversy could be mitigated if more effective communication strategies between the parties were adopted.

2. 0 DISCUSSION OF ANALYSIS 2. 1 Communication Channel The selection of channel and method of communicating is a critical decision concerning who need to know and what they need to know (Lewis 1975). The exchange of opinions between the parties was facilitated through the use of written communication in a public domain. According to John Markham (1977), subtleties of tone are lost when the words and expression cannot be immediately and continuously adjusted to eliminate misunderstanding. Thus, although the written communication used by the parties is meant to achieve the same goal as verbal communication, it may often transform the message, which can result in a misinterpretation of the message that was in the mind of the sender.

Furthermore, the use of a public domain is inappropriate because sensitive and controversial issues are more likely to be better handled when dealt in a private context. 2. 2 Persuasion Persuader-onus/punishment-oriented strategy was use when Ms. Burk threatened Mr.

Johnson's in her letter to open up their membership to women immediately so to avoid any issue in the approaching Masters. Research shows that this form of persuasion technique is likely to engender hostility and resentment from the recipient (McCall & Cousins 1990). In addition, her aggressiveness in her persuasion for the admission of women into Augusta was rather inappropriately executed as her communication style was dominant, contentious and coercive in nature, which attributed to the subsequent public retaliation from Mr. Johnson. 2.

3 Communication Climate Communication climate is a function of the participants, which is generated by their behaviour and by their reaction to others' behaviour. This pattern of action and reaction creates an atmospheric spiral (Putnis & Petelin 1996)". The face-threatening message from Ms. Burk engenders a defensive response from Mr.

Johnson to protect his self-concept from the attack. As a result, a negative communication climate arises from the exchange of defensiveness-arousing behaviour. Mr. Johnson set up a very defensive climate in his response to Ms. Burk when he assert that " There may well come a day where women will be invited to join our membership but that timetable will be ours and not at the point of a bayonet". When people become defensive, they are controlled by their emotions.

Furthermore, judgemental comments are bound to sour the communication climate where the receivers are unlikely to agree. (Adler et al. 2004). 2.

4 Argument Fallacies are errors of argument which may be the result of invalid argument forms or misguided strategies (Pearson & Nelson 2000).

Ms. Burk presented fallacious arguments to various sponsors and organization that are associated with Augusta. Her argument to pressure the CBS Television Network (CBS) to suspend the broadcast of the Masters was made on the first premises that Augusta was an all male club that discriminate woman, second premise that the Masters was hosted by Augusta. Therefore, if CBS continue broadcasting the Masters, it will be rendered as an irresponsible commission licensee and corporate citizen. This argument falls under the fallacies of relevance, as the conclusion is based on irrelevant premises (Pearson & Nelson 2000).

2. 5 Perception Distortion According to Dr. Philip (1975), attitude, belief and opinions are key index to behaviour and reflect the influence of

communication upon behaviour. Ms. Burk created many assumptions of Augusta with reference to her own experience, in the context of NCWO, which is an organization that advocates woman's rights and equality. Ms.

Burk's belief about Augusta as a discriminating organization reflects her own personal opinions which are based on inferences made about the organization, where she claim that Augusta was culpable of gender segregation on the basis of it being a male-only sports club. According to McCall & Cousins (1990), when inferences drawn are incorrect, the condition exists for a breakdown in communication and the many consequences that

can arise from it. The simple issue of exclusive membership in Augusta transform into a complex one when clouded by the subjective perception of Ms. Burk. Furthermore, Ms. Burk made a statement of judgement with regards to Johnson's dismissal of the sponsors in the Masters claiming that Augusta were willing to pay a lot of money to continue to discriminate against women.

Communications which appear evaluative, judgemental, or blaming tend to increase defensiveness (Myers & Myers 1980) 2. 6 Conflict Spiral Conflict can unfold in a cycle or spiral wherein one's side contentious behaviours encourage or foster those of the others (Fisher et al. 1990 cited in Wall & Callister 1995). Ms. Burk's first letter was the critical incident that illustrated the manifestation of a conflict spiral.

The conflict was further escalated by Ms. Burk as a result of repeated coercive attempts that serve as threats and her relentless pursuit to enlist the support of sponsors, which all served to build up the tension between both parties. Furthermore, the use of emotional language can be identified in Johnson's confrontational and retaliative response to Ms. Burk where he publicly announced that Augusta " will not be bullied, threatened or intimidated". According to Rackham & Carlisle (1978), the use of emotional or value-loaded behaviour to attack the other party will tend to engender a spiral of increasing intensity in subsequent attacks.

One aggressive remark led to an equally combative reaction from Ms. Burk, starting a destructive spiral between them which expanded the issue beyond the original dispute. As conflict increases, the quality of communication tend

to become more hostile, which may result in threats, misunderstandings and distortion (Wall & Callister 1995). 3.

0 Conclusion This report presents an analysis of the various communication issues that contributed to the Augusta Golf Club controversy between Mr. Johnson and Ms. Burk. The series of communication problems that was created between the two parties was not completely attributed to the existence of conflict between the organizations, but, was rather created by the way that both chose to deal with it. It is important to understand that the choice of communication medium will significantly determine the effectiveness of how the message is being conveyed to one another. Furthermore, the impact of perception and attitude can impede on one's ability to make a logical evaluation about an issue, which may be the roots to misunderstanding.

Thus, the use of an appropriate strategy to build one's argument is a crucial part in a negotiation process as it may determine the overall responsiveness towards the persuasive efforts. 4. 0 Recommendation 4. 1 Communication channel Oral face-to-face communication would be a more appropriate medium to facilitate the discussion of issues between the both parties.

An advantage of using oral communication allows parties to receive information more visually, which helps to minimize misunderstanding that is cause by written communication (Markham 1977). Furthermore, issues between them should be handled in private than to be discussed in public so as to prevent things from being blown out of proportion. In addition, the discussion should be facilitated by an experience mediator to assist in



negotiation so as to achieve a amiable resolution (Wall & Callister 1995). 4. 2 Problem-oriented approach Instead of controlling and trying to change Augusta by imposing threats and solutions to them in her first letter, Ms. Burk should adopt a problem-oriented approach where the focus is on the issue at hand.

Both parties should seek to establish a common understanding of the problem and issues together, and to find a mutually acceptable solution. 4. 3 Attitude and perception Ms. Burk should have based her arguments on facts, rather than on inferences. Furthermore, Ms.

Burk should have taken into account Johnson's positive initiatives towards female membership than to be obscured by her own belief about the organization. A more positive communication climate would be possible between them if both parties try to keep an open mind so as to understand each others' point-of view. It is important for them to communicate with empathy and to listen and respect opinions that are different from their own. 4.

4 Self-monitoring It is important for both parties to possess awareness and emotional self-control in their reaction, thus they should learn to better monitor their own reaction to the situation they confront (Putnis & Petelin 1996). For instance, Ms. Burk should be aware of Johnson's defensive response and not engage in further confrontational act to heighten the conflict. 5. 0 Reference List Lewis, PV 1975, Organizational Communication: The Essence of Effective Management, GRID, INC.

, Columbus. Markham, J 1977, *Successful Business Communication*, 1st edn, Witherby & Co Ltd, London. McCall, I & Cousins, J 1990, *Communication Problem Solving: The Language of Effective Management*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd, England. Putnis, P & Petelin, R 1996, *Professional Communication: Principles and Applications*, Prentice Hall, Australia. Pearson, JC & Nelson, PE 2000, *An Introduction to Human Communication: Understanding and Sharing*, 8th edn, McGraw- Hill Higher Education, United States of America. Wall, JA & Callister, RR 1995, 'Conflict and Its Management', *Journal of Management*, vol.

21, no. 3, pp. 515-558. Rackham, N & Carlisle, J 1978, 'The Effective Negotiator', *The Journal for Decision Makers*, vol.

2, no. 6, pp. 6-11. Adler, RB, Rosenfeld, LB & Proctor, RF 2004, *Interplay: The Process of Interpersonal Communication*, 9th edn, Oxford University Press, United State of America. Eunson, B 2008, *Communicating in the 21st Century (C21)*, 2nd edn, John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd, Australia. 'Communication and Strategy', Case 2-3 Augusta National Golf Club, pp. 36-43.