

The case of paula

Sociology, Communication



The Case of Paula

Assignment

Paula is one of the 12 workers in Department X. She has strong leadership qualities and all her co-workers look up to her. She dominates conversations with them and expresses strong viewpoints on most matters. Although she is a good worker, her dominating personality has caused problems for you, the new manager of department X. Today you directed your subordinates to change a certain work procedure. The change is one that has proven superior wherever it has been tried. Soon after giving the directive, you noticed the workers talking in a group, with Paula the obvious leader. In few minutes, she appears in your office. “Workers’ve thought it over” she said. “Your production change won’t work.”

Problem Set: Analyze the situation and explain your reaction and handling.

Introduction

This case pertains to a team of dozen workers who work under our supervision and the formation of an un-announced leader amongst them. This sub-teaming illustrates the personality traits of the specific worker Paula who is usually made the leader of the teams whenever any work is assigned to them. This paper shall discuss and analyze the various aspects of this case and lastly present a solution to this issue by formulating a recommended conclusion.

Discussion

Good communication is fundamental to effective management. Whether you are negotiating prices with a potential supplier, introducing a new duty rota,

chairing a meeting or putting together your annual budget, you need a range of communication skills to achieve your objectives. Many managers admit to some shortcomings in their ability to communicate. Whatever they are, they can impair your managerial effectiveness. Effective communication is a skill that can be learned, but it requires practice. This means continually evaluating your successes and failures and learning from them.

Organisations cannot operate effectively without effective communication. If people are to work together towards achieving organisational goals, they must communicate. The better they communicate, the better organisation works. In organizations, workers work in a complex network of organisations that are themselves complex and continually having to adapt to changes in the wider environment. Change cannot be introduced successfully unless there is shared understanding about how it can be achieved and commitment to common goals. This requires a process of information dissemination, consultation, discussion, planning and training even before implementation can begin.

Initial, often unanticipated, problems need to be sorted out, and the outcomes evaluated so that strategies can be reviewed and adjustments made. None of this can be achieved without effective communication. The more complex organisations are, the more communication is needed, and the greater the likelihood of it being inappropriate, misinterpreted or even breaking down. Managers bear the primary responsibility for creating a climate that responds to change positively and benefits the organisation, service users and staff. Good communication cannot ensure such a climate but it cannot be achieved without communication.

Workers define a crisis as any event or condition that threatens the survival of the organization (Starbuck, Greve, and Hedberg, 2005). One such crisis is declining or stagnant demand, which frequently precedes organizational bankruptcy (Hambrick and D'Aveni, 2004). Declining demand and slowing demand growth rates are symptomatic of larger problems such as a niche contraction or a downturn in the general economy that are often threats to organizational survival (Hannan and Freeman, 2003; Harrigan, 2000, 2004; Zammuto and Cameron, 2002).

Effective

Organizational

Communication

Communication is the exchange of information from the source (sender) to the receiver. The nature of the information can be words, body language, tone of voice and nonverbal cues. It is as two way process. First is the transfer of the information coming from the speaker and travel to the medium going to the receiver. In addition, the receiver will respond to the information received. In the case, Nikita is said to be the only source of leadership decisions in the group, which in reality is not a good example of what leadership in organizations should be. There is a stasis in the source of communication if it tends to be monotonic. In this case, the members of the group who are not given much opportunity would tend to deviate and would entail towards a difficulty in controlling and organizing for the better good of the entire group.

Communication can be observed in everyday lives like employers talking each other in an office, a child asking for the receipt and many others. In an organization, people almost spent 75% of their time in communication. In addition, some encounter many problems and misunderstanding between

the persons in an organization. That is why there is a need in effective communication so that the interaction whether it is interpersonal, intergroup, or intergroup will be successful and efficient when it comes to the transferring of the information. It is very important on the messenger and the receiver to know the different forms of information, how to use them, when to use them. The barriers in effective communication must also be analyzed in order for an effective communication will occur.

Benefits of Effective Communication in Teamwork

Effective communication in a team can achieve shared understanding. A good example of this situation is the teamwork of a basketball team. First, the coach of the team must be the first example to show good traits on how to transfer information effectively. The coach must communicate to its player as one group or as a sub group of players. The coach must direct his or her team in such a way that the members of the team work together, not just by one player to achieve their goal in winning the game. Next are the players of the team. It is very important that each player knows the movement and attitudes of each player in the team so that effective communication can be done while playing. An effective communication can be observed when all the players are working together as a team. This can be achieved when one or two players give direction to each player in the court. The transfer of information must be clear enough so that the receiver can response correctly.

Another benefit that can bring by effective communication is that it directs the flow of information. Consider the example when an applicant for a job is being interviewed by the human resource manager of a company. Effective

information can be attained if the applicant transfers the information in a clear and efficient way. The applicant must answer the questions in straight manner thus minimizing the confusion. It will direct the flow of information from the applicant going to the human resource manager. Effective communication also helps people overcome barriers to open discussion. This is an obvious situation because the purpose of effective communication is to transmit the information in a clear way so that full understanding between the speaker and receiver will be attained. Example of this kind of effective communication that is applied is when a group of people are in conference room. The speaker must use appropriate words that must be suitable on the agendas of the meeting. The speaker must know when to raise his or her voice and when to use body language and nonverbal communication. As a two way process, the receivers must obtain the information that the speaker wants to impart to the group of people. In this way, the speaker and the receivers of the information can achieved a shared understanding on the agendas of the meeting. The receivers may also share their thoughts and ideas so that effective communication will be achieved through internet. This kind of communication is now popular to many companies because members of the executive committee of a company will have the chance in communicating with each other even though they are far from each other. If some of the agendas were not delivered well by the speaker, they must ask questions regarding on the meeting so that the misunderstanding will be minimized.

Effective communication will stimulates others to take action to active goals. In an organization, the leader of the organization has purpose for the

organization. The leader must communicate to its members so that as a group, they will know what to perform in order to achieve their goal. The leader will give a group of instructions that will guide the members of the organization. The instructions must be clear enough to understand well by the members.

Effective communication will result to channels information to encourage people to think in new ways and to act more effectively. The benefit of effective communication mentioned above can be observed on people working in an aviation company. One of the major problems encountered by an aviation company is plane crashes. Studies shows that these instances were mostly caused by human errors. This human error can be accounted as, miscommunication of the crewmembers, and low in cognitive traits of the members like low quality traits in teamwork. Effective communication is a vital requirement for an aviation industry because the safety of the passenger's live is their main concern. There is a need in effective communication on many instances like the landing and takeoff of the plane. Communication and coordination must be done properly to minimize accidents. The characteristics of information to provide an effective communication needed in an aviation company must be clear, sufficient, precise and instructional. Prevent information that is vague, ambiguous, and in low volume to prevent confusion. Another major concern is the right time of transferring the information to a right specified receiver. Effective communication will make the actions of a people effective.

Effective communication also lessens the chance of accidents. Accidents can never be predicted if when it will happen but can be prevented. In our daily

lives workers, encounter accidents. Example of an accident is a plane crash. There are many reasons why plane crashes occur.

Obstacles of Effective Communication in Teamwork

There are some factors to consider that hinders effective communication within a team. Such obstacles that must be known and must be minimized to have an effective communication. First to consider of the barriers in effective communication is the language being used by the team. The choice of words and language is very important to achieve an effective communication. This is because if the choice of language to be used by the members of the team will affect the quality of the communication. If the language or the choice of words is not understood by one of the members of the team, miscommunication or misunderstanding will arise. Example of this case is when one member of a team uses different language or deviates a little to the majority language of the team. If one member of the team will speak to the team, there might be a big possibility that the members of the team will have a wrong interpretation on what the member is trying to say. Another obstacle of an effective communication is the transfer of information at the wrong time. This can be observed in an aviation company. It is very important that the crew in the airplane and the pilots must transmit information to have a safety flight, especially when emergencies arise.

In a Cockpit-To-Cabin Communication, almost all instances, effective communication is required. One is the takeoff and landing. It is very important for the flight attendant to prepare the cabin before and after takeoff and landing of the plane. These instances showed the highest rate of accidents. A good example of effective communication is needed is when to

instruct the passengers that takeoff or landing is imminent. In this situation, the passengers may prepare themselves for the takeoff and landing. The pilots in the cockpit must transfer this information to the flight attendants for the preparation with enough time for preparation. Right time of transferring the information is basic for effective communication. After this, the flight attendants must transfer the information that the cabin is now ready for takeoff or landing.

The quality of the information also affects the effectiveness of a communication. If the information being transmitted is not clear, vague and ambiguous, then ineffective communication may arise. If the environment where the information travels is a noisy environment, the receiver may not receive the message clearly, because the quality of the message is being blocked by noise. There will be unreliable message and inconsistency of the information.

Another to be considered is the body language that is being used by the team. The misreading of the body language, tone and other nonverbal mode of communication will hinder the effectiveness of a communication. When a member of a team, like in football team, if one of the member of the team wants to inform the rest of the team that there is a need to score, he must transmit the message clearly with the use of his body to inform the team.

Organizational

Communication

Pioneers in understanding organizational behaviour realize the complexity of human behaviour, but states as a matter of fact that an individual, an employee for that matter, is also responsible for the improvement of the whole organization, that even with the difference between the employees

and the organization as an entity, the clerical staff being managed in the company, the relationship between them defines both entity's growth and development. Relative to the individual process of learning an employee experiences in the workplace, organizational learning also occurs. Organizational behaviour shapes patterns by which an individual is enabled to understand the overall perspective within the organization more than what the individual could on his or her own.

A simple top-down message will not be sufficient to ensure the desired response across an organisation. Hunter (2001) reminds us that 'managers at all levels must be central and equal partners in this process. They should not be passive recipients of messages emanating from on high'.^[1] Changes in the structure, management and funding of organizations have been accompanied by greatly increased reliance on new information and communication technologies. These technologies open up tremendous opportunities, but managers need to develop new skills to ensure that they are used to their full potential. Newtechnology, however sophisticated, is only a tool for improving communication.

Communication needsto be managed effectively at both the macro and micro levels. At the macro level, communication should be a unifying mechanism that informs and motivates people, and harnesses their creativity. It is essential in generating commitment and empowering people so they have a clear vision of their organisation and can see where they, as individuals, fit into its overall strategy. At the micro level, communication is about how individuals interact with each other to exchange information about day-to-day issues.

Macro

Communication

As illustrated in the diagram below, communication on a macro level has several key functions. Quirke (2001), a management consultant who specialises in the role that communication plays in change management, classified the functions of communication in terms of the objectives they are intended to achieve:

- raising awareness
- achieving understanding
- gaining support
- generating involvement
- earning commitment.[2]

Quirke mapped these approaches on a two-dimensional matrix similar to the illustration below. The vertical axis represents how much each contributes to bringing about change and the horizontal axis represents how much they involve two-way interaction, time and effort. Raising awareness, for example, requires little involvement but is unlikely to lead to change, whereas earning commitment requires a high level of involvement but makes a major contribution to implementing change.

'What the organization wants from its people tends to be at the upper end. There is a mismatch between what the organization wants from its people and the channels used to try to achieve it. The most commonly used communication channels include:

- Newsletters

- Memos
- Team briefings
- Departmental meetings
- Notice boards
- Video
- Electronic mail.

'Most of these are processes that are aimed at increasing awareness and, on a good day, understanding. Employees prefer face-to-face communication and report that their greatest source of information is the grapevine and that they prefer to hear things from their immediate line manager.'

Micro

Communication

There are many other factors to consider when workers communicate. Albrecht and Boshear (2005) suggest that "... communication in all social interactions occurs through four separate channels; facts, feelings, values and opinions"[3]. Facts are real and objective. Workers believe them because they can be verified or because workers can assume they are true based on our knowledge and experience. Feelings are our emotional responses to situations and again are based on our previous experience.

Values are the norms that exist in society and where workers work. They are deep-seated beliefs about what is right or wrong and what is important and unimportant. At work, values are rarely explicit although sometimes they need to be. Opinions are our ideas about particular issues, events or

situations. They are subjective and normally limited to the immediate situation.

Conflicts and team effectiveness

The term effectiveness “ refers to how well a team accomplishes its purpose or mission” (Tannenbaum, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 2000, p. 505). Commonly, group effectiveness is analyzed in terms of work outcomes (González, Burke, Santuzzi, & Bradley, 2003). However, effectiveness also includes other results that should help perpetuate work outcomes over time (Tannenbaum et al., 2000), such as the extent to which the team experience enhances the capability of the members to work together in the future, and the extent to which group members’ experience on the team is satisfying (e. g., Hackman, 2000 and West et al., 2004).

Following the perspective proposed by (Jehn, 2003, Jehn, 2004 and Jehn, 2001), many authors have argued that task conflict can have a positive influence on group effectiveness when groups work on non-routine tasks. Non-routine tasks are typically complex tasks without standard solutions (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003a). From this perspective, it has been pointed out that task conflict in the group increases divergent opinions, interpretations and viewpoints and critical evaluation and assessment of alternatives. Therefore, groups may benefit from this type of conflict because it promotes communication and the consideration of alternatives (Jehn and Bendersky, 2003 and Mortensen and Hinds, 2001).

To examine the validity of this approach, several studies have analyzed the effects of task conflict on different dimensions of team effectiveness. The results of these studies are often contradictory. Some studies have shown

that task conflict is positively related to task outcomes (e. g., Amason and Sapienza, 2001, Jehn, 2003 and Nijdam, 2004), while others present a negative relationship between these variables (e. g., De Dreu and Weingart, 2003a, Jehn, 2004 and Thatcher et al., 2003) or non-significant correlations (e. g., DeChurch and Marks, 2001, Jehn et al., 2001, Kurtzberg, 2000 and Pelled et al., 2000).

Some studies have also analyzed the effects of task conflict on members' attitudes toward the work group (team member satisfaction and affective acceptance of the team decision). Most of these studies show a negative relationship between task conflict and these constructs (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003a). However, a number of studies have found that task conflict can increase satisfaction with the group decision, the desire to stay in the group and overall group satisfaction (Korsgaard et al., 2004 and Priem et al., 2004).

Given that task conflict can have positive or negative effects on group effectiveness, some researchers have suggested adopting a contingency approach (e. g., DeChurch and Marks, 2001, De Dreu and Weingart, 2003a, De Dreu and Weingart, 2003b, Jehn and Bendersky, 2003 and Simons and Peterson, 2000).

Conclusion

Effective communication is vital for the team headed by Paula so that they work together. When a team such as the case of Department X is working together in making a given project, the group must realize that effective communication within the members of the group will benefit to the success of the group. Working together as a group will make the project's goal be attained faster than in an individual effort. Like in the design of a building,

the engineers must work together by providing the team with information needed to make the project be successful. They must share their own knowledge and experience to come up with a good design of a building and not individual efforts because it will only cause delay of the project.

I believe that Paula alone is considered the leader of the group mainly due to her effective communication skills which let her express her views and opinions regarding the issue at hand in such an effective manner that everyone in the team looks up to Paula for any new issue. It would be interesting to analyze a situation if the group, even though it presently follows Paula, does not follow her in future. This would be a U-turn for the entire group dynamics currently being practiced and therefore it might have an impact on the team's performance. However, if the management deals with this situation in a mature and corrective way, the entire issue can be amicably resolved and the team can get back to track by performing equally good if not better than when Paula was their leader.

The manager seems to have taken the decision of procedure change a bit hastily and I believe the manager should have waited a few weeks in order to familiarize with the team and their attitude towards achieving the organizational goals. However, in case the team does not buy the change over, then a conflict might be very likely. However, based on the literature discussed above, it can be fair to state that the management should take a neutral position and have an organizational (or departmental) communication session where all parties are able to speak their minds and the pro and cons of each issue can be openly discussed. This would bring out the 'hidden' aspects of the actions of the management by the feedback

provided by the teams whereas the teams would be able to understand the benefits of the implementation of the decision by understanding the management's point of view on the issue. This give and take session would ultimately conclude all parties, which would be acceptable to all parties.

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