

Midterm q term paper

Business, Management



Often, workers and management have a difficult time reaching consensus and coming to a mutual agreement regarding how best to conduct operations. This is what happened in Langewiesche's story "American Ground" - in this story, a worker dispute rose between all of the different groups that were responsible for the cleanup on September 11th. The construction workers were attempting to clear the rubble, while the police attempted to keep the public at bay and secure the area and the firefighters went around looking for survivors. Every group had their own idea of how to go about accomplishing these similar goals, and that led to incredibly heated disputes between each group, leaving management to attempt to sort out these already impassioned workers.

This type of relationship is loosely covered in Mayo's study of the Hawthorne Electric Plant, where a series of experiments were held to find out the best way to guarantee worker motivation. They had workers come in at different times, for different lengths of time, in order to figure out exactly what combination of external environmental conditions and shift lengths would lead to the most productive worker. After that, they conducted an interview process where the workers were allowed to speak to interviewers who were (or seemed to be) part of the company itself. With this goal, they were able to find a system where the worker was allowed to speak their mind without being interrupted, without their opinions being invalidated or discounted, and where they felt like they were part of the actual company itself.

This particular part of the solution is the thing that played the biggest part in keeping workers on board with management's strategies. By allowing themselves to have a legitimate voice, or at least the illusion of one, they are

able to work together and find a way to cooperate. I have experienced this a lot in my daily life; when I play soccer on the weekend in a local league, there is a much less formal structure between team and coach, and sometimes we have trouble cooperating. A lot of anger goes into our games, and so we will fight over who should do what. However, our coach is great, as we often feel like we are heard. We are doing this for free; there is no paycheck with which to presume we will do the work anyway, even if we are miserable. We have to enjoy ourselves or else it is no fun. Recognizing that, understanding that our coach is our coach, and we will listen to each other, we have developed a much less emotional, less confrontational way of making decisions.

In the case of the worker dispute with the DDC, it is much harder to conduct the aforementioned kind of interview system. For one, these three groups already have their own established hierarchies; it is really difficult to get them to place another group's priorities over their own. They are extremely loyal to each other, and the traumatic impact of an event like 9/11, where lives were lost and a nation mourned as a whole, created unique situations where we were at each others' throats to get to our loved ones. The managers of this dispute had that difficult time as well; even though the Mayo study showed that emotions need to be removed in order to get successful interactions, it is clear that emotions could in no way be separated in such an emotionally charged environment. People had lost their friends, and people were irrationally angry that their needs were not being met. They needed someone to blame, and management/the other groups were there to take the blame. There would be no easy or simple way to

remove that part from the situation, making Mayo's advice somewhat irrelevant.

There could have been some merit to the interview process if people wanted to believe they were heard. First of all, the worker disputes had quite a bit of mob mentality to them; people gathered in groups and confronted each other. With a one on one interview system, people might feel less inclined to aggression. Also, they would be speaking with a member of management, making them feel like they were important and being taken care of. This was, at least, the intended goal of the Mayo study. The removal of mob mentality from the conversation would have made the worker disputes get settled much more quickly.

In conclusion, the Mayo study may not have been able to help the worker disputes after 9/11. It was not just another day at the office for them; they were fighting for their homes and loved ones, making the emotional stakes much higher for them. I do not believe that it could have been removed enough for the finger-pointing and accusations to stop, especially for groups that did not feel particular loyalty to the DDC over their own comrades.

References

Mayo. Hawthorne Study.

Langewiesche, W. American ground.