

Case study analysis: oakbrook medical systems

[Education](#)



In this case study, a division manager faces several potential human resource issues and communication challenges. To provide background, "Oak Brook Medical Systems" developed their "Hospital Supply Division" in response to "changes in the healthcare marketplace" and staffed the unit with highly qualified committed personnel. The company values teamwork, shares an "entrepreneurial" spirit, and the group of committed "self-starters" provides customers with quality products and service.

The division's highly qualified strategic director has been with the company for 12 years, serving in her current position for 18 months, and has been credited for developing a strategy that added "\$40 million" to the business unit. Increasing the number of qualified and committed women into management could also carry "positive implications" for the company because "shifting demographics" call for new perspectives to meet changing customer expectations to sustain market growth and to outperform competitors.

The strategy director hopes that her efforts will be recognized and rewarded with career advancement. "Division revenues currently reflect exceptional annual growth at "nearly 35 percent," but there are indications that communication and morale need to be improved within the unit. Workers in the division who largely seem to be motivated to meet corporate goals also share resentment towards their team leader.

Anecdotal reports both from management and competent people under her supervision indicate that the director's "results-oriented" communication style has generated allegations of curtness and condescension from co-workers (O'Rourke, 2010, pp. 290, 291). There seems to be a disconnect

between perceptions of productivity, fairness and effective communication, and this case study identifies both short-term concerns and latent internal threats to long-term profitability.

Senior management largely acknowledges favorable market conditions and collaborative workers for producing impressive Hospital Supply Division growth rather than singling out the division's strategy director for exemplary leadership. Although considered a "valuable asset," the strategy director's communication problems with colleagues and subordinates have stirred "greater concern during discussions of her future in the division." The strategy director, on the other hand, justifies her communication approach by considering frankness to be an integral part of "getting the job done. Despite her business unit's success, the strategy director has indicated that she feels overlooked and frustrated by management, possibly because of racial or gender discrimination. The unit lacks substantive "representation of women and people of color in its management ranks" (O'Rourke, 2010, pp. 290, 291). Gender and racial sensitivities carry serious implications for managers concerned with short-term profits and long-term viability.

Cultural sensitivity is critical to a manager's success (O'Rourke, 2010). So far, senior management has not brought concerns about discontent in the division to the director's attention. Senior managers need to address the concerns of the director's colleagues and subordinates regarding her objectionable communication style, as well as the strategy director's concerns about possible racial and gender discrimination to make appropriate long-term strategic choices for the division and company.

O'Rourke (2010) also identifies skills essential for cross-cultural communication, including "a capacity to accept the relativity of [one's] knowledge and perceptions," a "capacity to be nonjudgmental," and "a tolerance for ambiguity" (p. 288). The sensitive nature of personnel issues requires thoughtful action and the intercultural dimension in the case study highlights the need for careful message planning and delivery.

Senior management needs to convey a clear message of non-discrimination to both the strategy director and everyone else in the business unit without sending signals that authoritarian management will be rewarded. O'Rourke (2010) suggests that effective managers deliver purposeful messages in ways that fulfill an organization's mission. Managers who avoid dealing with or ignore personnel concerns about discrimination can foment misunderstanding and create conditions ripe for otherwise unwarranted charges.

A senior manager would be in the best position to communicate the division's strategic vision while addressing the strategy director's shortcomings and the unit's morale in a positive way. Newly assigned to the Hospital Supply Division, the senior manager also has a unique opportunity to become a mentor to strategy director by listening to her concerns about fairness and helping her to make adjustments to her communication approach that will improve her standing with colleagues, subordinates, as well as senior management.

Most of the face-to-face communication between the senior manager and strategy director will involve nonverbal cues that will influence long-term morale for co-workers, too. Segal (2009) indicates that critical nonverbal

cues often determine whether or not a communication partner is listening, understanding the message, or cares. Some of the “ most important nonverbal cues” include tone of voice, gaze, body position, and concentration that become significant in conversations and determine “ the way we talk, listen, look, move, and react. She also points out that building “ stressmanagement” and “ emotional awareness” skills improve nonverbal communication and demonstrate “ emotional intelligence” (para. 10, 14). It cannot be overstated that the senior manager will need to be an exemplary communicator with empathy for team members because mistrust and misunderstanding lie at the center of the current problems in the division. Ongoing discontent could undermine sustainability and declining morale could drive away otherwise effective workers if the situation is mishandled.

However, morale should quickly improve in the division with actions that reinforce the company’s commitment to attracting and sustaining quality personnel while providing a clear path for the strategy director to meet her career goals. Colleagues and subordinates will be more inclined to respect the strategy director if they witness her transformation to embrace a more collaborative communication style. In addition, management will need to be more prepared to acknowledge the strategy director’s role in the team’s continued success. With appropriate action, Oak Brook Medical System’s Hospital Supply Division will be in a strong position to retain quality personnel who can provide customers solid care.

References

O’Rourke, J. (2010). *Management Communications: A Case-Analysis Approach* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall. Segal, J. <https://assignbuster.com/case-study-analysis-oakbrook-medical-systems/>

(2009). EQ tool 3: The pulley: Improving nonverbal communication. Retrieved from Blog posted to EQ: Emotional Intelligence Central, archived at: http://www.emotionalintelligencecentral.org/eq/nonverbal_communication.html