

Ctv newsnet case analysis

Psychology, Motivation



Chapter 3 CTV Newsnet [pic] 1. Abstract In January 2000, the CTV Newsnet was confronted with a threat to its reputation and growth. A tape with offensive remarks made by the News broadcaster Avery Haines' were aired mistakenly, and it aroused great public indignation. By means of OB analysis, we found that Haines' dispositional characteristics such as low emotional stability and lack of conscientiousness, heavy workplace stress, and different attribution processes conducted by the anchor, her coworkers and the audience may all be causes of that crisis.

Therefore, we suggest that CTV Newsnet could deal with its reputation crisis and prevent the similar technical and behavioural mistakes in the future as the following: 1) communicating effectively with the viewers about the company's value and attitude toward this incident, 2) setting up positive reinforcers and punishment rules to encourage desirable behaviour and eliminate undesirable behaviour, 3) holding periodical seminar to strengthen employees' awareness of work ethics, 4) doing job redesign to verify job tasks and reduce working pressure, and 5) providing proper training programs to improve employees' cognitive abilities and professional skills.

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This incident started with the CTV Newsnet anchor Avery Haines, who had stuttered and flubbed while recording a report introduction on farmer issues. In order to cover her own embarrassment and ease the tension for other co-workers in the studio, she made a private self-deprecating joke which included inappropriate remarks about various minorities. Of course, they retaped this part, but later that day, a CTV technician mistakenly aired the wrong tape which included the error and the offensive comment to the public. Soon after, mountains of criticism and suspicions about CTV's professionalism and integrity flooded into the company. The happening of this fatal mistake indeed had adverse impacts on the company's reputation as well as its further expansion plan.

Thus, the purpose of our report is to decrease the possibility of making small but fatal mistakes among employees and to improve their sense of responsibility.

3. Casa Analysis

3.1 Personality and the Big Five Personality

can be described as the individual's personal style to deal with the world. For Haines, there is a whole mixture of features that describe her personality. When hiring Haines as a "Hostess" for CTV, Kowalski, the CTV News senior vice-president and general manager was applying one of the key concepts of OB: the fit concept (textbook P41). Indeed, Kowalski felt immediately that Haines is the right person to fit in the fast-paced and demanding milieu of TV. Kowalski was impressed by her personal and professional qualifications.

At the professional level, Haines had won many awards, shown a high level of performance, and earned wide popularity. At the personal level, and according to the five-factor model of personality, Haines showed her openness (she was creative and eager to move forward from radio to

television), agreeableness (she humbly accepted criticism and advice, and completely committed to the job) and extraversion (she was interested in everything and had quickly gained the support and affection from her co-workers) (Ng, et al. , 2005). However, her lack of emotional stability (self-confidence) and conscientiousness (responsibility) didn't appear to Kowalski until the fatal errors occurred.

In fact, Haines' self-deprecating joke to cover her embarrassment and hide her vulnerability and awkwardness is a display of the lack of confidence and consideration of the consequences. According to the interactionist approach, organizational behaviour is a function of both dispositions and the situation (George, 1992). Indeed, Haines was facing a weak situation where there are loosely defined roles and few rules, so it's hard to define appropriate behaviour (Adler & Weiss, 1988). As a result, personality tends to have most impact in weak situations, which was the case of Haines behaviour. 3. 2 Stress It was a very long day in CTV, they were preparing for a show talking about the farmers' story which attracted growing attention all over Canada, and Haines due to being stressed made her famous mistake.

Stress can be defined as a psychological reaction to the demands inherent in a stressor that has the potential to make a person feel tense or anxious (McGrath, 1970). In our case, the viewers of the broadcasting on the farmers' issue were the potential stressors to Haines, whereas Haines was also the potential stressor to her co-workers. Haines' personality which was discussed earlier can mainly determine the extent to which the potential stressor becomes a real stressor, and it also determines how she reacted to stress behaviourally, psychologically, and physiologically. This can explain why

Haines can be a potential stressor who exerted in turn stress on the work environment in which employees' actions were affected and the wrong tape mistake was made.

In terms of Locus of control (which is a set of beliefs about whether one's behaviour is controlled by mainly internal or external forces), Haines reacted in this way since she was an external person. This type of people are more likely to feel anxious in the face of potential stressors (Ng, et al. , 2006), and that's the case of Haines when she made her famous mistake; she was stressed and started making jokes to overcome her mistake, unlike if she was an internal person (which internal factors determine her personality) she would have confronted her stressors. Furthermore, Haines suffered from managerial and executive stress, since she had a work overload on the day of the incident.

Also, Haines has a heavy responsibility and her work carried considerable significance to CTV's philosophy which addresses social commitment; thus, not only she was under great pressure but also her co-workers, which increased the possibility of the occurrence of the tape mistake. Finally, other general stress factors such as work-family conflict, Job insecurity, and role ambiguity might affect the level of stress among CTV employees and led to the problem in the workplace.

3.3 Actor-observer Effect

According to Attribution theory, people's behavior can be attributed to dispositional and situational causes though they are not always accurate. When people are forming attribution to explain others' behavior, biases and errors are hard to avoid.

Thus, in the CTV Newsnet case, Haines and her colleagues in the studio did not perceive her joking as a big problem ; on the other hand, viewers were more likely to attribute her comments to her real disposition. The fact that viewers and her co-workers had different perceptions of Haines’s joking reflected the actor-observe effect in attributing process (Watson, 1982).. In this case, Haines tended to attribute her making joke to some external factors. They may include her extreme tiredness with the heavy workload, the attempt to ease the embarrassment, and the certainty of a second recording. This is because Haines as an “ actor” is more sensitive than “ observers” (the audience) of the pros and cons that the environment offered (Textbook, p83).

Moreover, she knew exactly her own thoughts and intentions which is to get herself and her co-workers relaxed. In general, people know better about how and why their behavior varies by situations, while the observers tend to guess. In terms of the perspectives of Haines’ co-workers, they would also attribute Haines’ behavior to the external causes because they understood Haines’ motivation and thoughts in that specific situation, and they also know her personality well. They usually saw Haines as a talented, reliable and unbiased person. Thus, coworkers might perceive her making improper joke as an accident due to the low consistency and high distinctiveness of her this behaviour (Medcof, 1990).

As the observer of Haines’s behaviour, CTV viewers had high possibility to commit the fundamental attribution error through overemphasizing dispositional causes and ignoring the possible environmental factors that may incur her joke making (Jones, 1979). Because viewers lacked the

knowledge about the constraints, private thoughts, feelings, and intentions regarding Haines's behaviour, they intuitively assumed that the anchor's making discriminatory remarks reflected her real thoughts. Hence, they inevitably felt horrified and annoyed. 4. Solutions: 4. 1 Operant Learning theory What happened to the CTV Newsnet indicated two main problems that threatened the maintenance of its reputation and integrity, less professional broadcasting and inferior technical error. Both behavioural mistakes should be eliminated for the sake of the entire company.

According to the operant learning theory, two approaches could help CTV newsnet to improve their operationing effectiveness. One approach is to use appropriate positive and negative reinforcement to stimulate desired behaviour. The other is to use extinction and punishment to stop undesired behaviour (Textbook P49-55). In order to avoid such basic technical misconduct on the short-term basis, the CTV managers could adopt positive reinforcement by establishing periodical employee recognition programs. They include offerring financial rewards quarterly or annually to error-free employees and employees who made significant progress in their work.

Moreover, a long-term training and development program can be conducted for technicians to learn how to operate the broadcasting equipment properly and efficiently as well as to adopt new technologies and upgrade their professional knowledge. To minimize the similar mishap made by Haines, CTV should create clearcommunicationchannel between company and employees to encourage a more direct feedback. It will give help the organization find out their employees' personal or work-related difficulties so that their performance can be enhanced (Peterson & Luthans, 2006). If

employees' problems were incurred by too much workload, managers should consider hiring extra staff or enhancing the efficiency of management to cut the workload for employees.

If making mistake was due to the lack of job interest and enthusiasm, the company could offer employees the opportunity to rotate among different positions or grant employees more controlling power over their tasks to raise their sense of involvement. Meanwhile, through the negative reinforcement, the upper management may also monitor employees' job performance and behaviour. Building up a more strict set of operational rules helps prohibit undesirable behaviours in the studio. Any breach of the rules could lead to disciplinary actions such as a verbal warning, a written warning or an ultimate dismissal. Employees' attempt to eliminate these unpleasant outcomes (warning and dismissal) can motivate them to obey the rules (textbook, p50).

Although punishment might cause unwanted impacts on employees' working enthusiasm, it is an effective way to prohibit seriously adverse behaviour sometimes. It also serves as a sound warning for other potential mistake-makers and a necessary compromise for easing the public anger. In CTV case, Haines should be fired for her unprofessional behaviour though unintentional since it already incurred a huge wave of public irritation. The technician who played the wrong tape should also be punished for his or her carelessness. However, using punishment should always be careful.

4. 2 Coping with stress

In order to reduce and overcome the stress which could occur in the work place now and in future, CTV should start implementing concrete actions.

For example, doing job redesign that changes the job depth and breadth can rebuild the job tasks with more diversity and authority. CTV could socially support its employees by planning events and activities which can improve the employee's social life. The human resource department could establish a family friendly policy for the employees, which will allow the staff to balance better between their job duties and family responsibilities (Grant & Parker, 2009). Finally CTV could also introduce stress management programs and work balance programs to allow its employees to arrange their time and tasks effectively with a wisely designed working schedule. . 3 Attribution theory Concerning the above analysis, some work-related attitudes among employees in CTV Inc. should be modified or reinforced. Since attitudes can be modified through persuasively changing people's beliefs and values (Textbook, p120), holding seminars and developing training programs can indeed help improve the work-related attitudes of CTV workers. First, employees should improve their awareness of the limitation of viewers' knowledge about the journalists' or broadcasters' personal conditions. Interactive activities involving CTV employees and CTV viewers can be conducted to help them establish better mutual understanding.

Then, managers can hold discussion panels to reinforce the belief that working in CTV requires rigorous work ethics and extensive sense of responsibility, especially as journalists and broadcasters. And through these trainings, the employees will be encouraged to ponder internal factors for their own behavior and be more aware that their self-perceived minor mistakes could be fatal to the further growth of their company. Besides, CTV Newsnet should enhance its employees' personal skills to maintain its

professionalism and reliability. According to the concepts of job performance, individual job performance is heavily affected by his or her general cognitive ability, which refers to intelligence (Textbook, P149).

Training programs can be conducted to refine speaking skills of the anchors so that they can be more careful and thoughtful about wording when broadcasting the public information. Moreover, periodical seminars can be held to retain employees' proper consciousness of political, religious and ethnic issues and to enrich their storage of the relevant knowledge. 5.

Conclusion About decade ago, CTV Newsnet anchor Avery Haines' offensive remarks were aired mistakenly and caused great controversies in the public.

The management was facing a severe challenge: the news station's reputation and growth were threatened. Through OB analysis we have found that certain traits of Haine's personality, i. e. low level of emotional stableness and ack of conscientiousness, workplace stress from too much workload and pressure, as well as different attribution processes conducted by the anchor, her coworkers and the audience may all causes contributing to the problem. CTV Newsnet could deal with its reputation crisis and avoid these technical and behavioural errors in the future by taking the right steps: communicating effectively with the audience about the company's value and attitude toward this incident, setting up positive reinforcers and punishment rules to encourage desirable behaviour and eliminate undesirable behaviour, doing job redesign to clarify roles and reduce workload, and providing proper training programs to improve employees' cognitive abilities and awareness of work ethics. Bibliography 1. Adler, S. , & Weiss, H. M. (1988).

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