Od of initech using lewin's change theory: as based on office space essay

The prevailing trend for most societies in our technologically and post modern industrial world is to fall into a pattern of decadence. Society is plunged into a global rat race that pushes to further detach individuals from the world and their nature. Hence as human beings continue to move away from their nature they are continually thrust into conflict that tears at their psyche; and as this continues the individual is pushed toward breaking away from the standards of society, which may be destructive to the social system itself.

This pattern as it is seen and observed on a large scale is also applicable to smaller units and organizations. Such is the case for Initech. When we look at this company in terms of its organizational structure we can say that it too is akin to the larger social systems that are prevalent in our world. For one, it is composed of various individuals that are bound together by a common goal, which is embodied by the company's vision and mission. In the same way, the company's mission statements serve to act as the norms of the social structure; a guideline for what to aspire for that is bolstered by the rules and conduct of the organization.

While this is all good, the core problem in Initech is the fact that the work environment has become alienating to the laborers in it. As Karl Marx has pointed out, the very basic nature of an individual is to produce labor. Marx believed that, through labor, human kind would be able to realize its " species being," i. e. , its potential for creative and purposeful activity through work. Human labor was not simply energy expended for subsistence, although it was clearly that under capitalism. What Marx envisioned was the

use of material necessity, for the creation of a society in which aesthetic as well as material needs could be fulfilled.

Labor could potentially provide such an opportunity, for it allowed persons to display creative and purposeful activity through their work under the appropriate conditions (Farganis, 1996, p. 43). This whole creative process of producing labor or being made part of a whole is negated in the work environment within Initech. The employees in this company are continually exposed to an environment wherein they are detached from their creative powers. They are made to do monotonous and repetitive jobs such as that of Peter Gibbons (Ron Livingston).

Moreover, this situation is compounded by the fact that they have a superior who imposes and makes them undergo even more demeaning and alienating situations. Restructuring Leadership Hence, to improve the situation within Initech one must move to improve the environmental work condition as well as the interpersonal relations. Assessing the current situation, the best approach one can take to achieve this goal is to restructure or change the management style that is prevalent. To be more accurate, we have to revamp the leadership style that exists within the organization.

According to the article written by Matt Hick entitled Leadership Styles and Types – Overview of skills, " Leadership Style is crucial to success…Leaders must respond to the rapidly changing world and meet the challenges it demands. " This approach would be more effective for a short term goal and increasing efficiency in the workplace as compared to restructuring the physical work environment, which in turn would be more costly for the

company. Initech's executives such as Bill Lumbergh make use of the Authoritarian (Autocratic) Leadership Style.

Authoritarian leaders provide clear expectations for what needs to be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done (Van Wagner, n. d.). Authoritarian leaders can be seen as rather hard leaders and although this style is appropriate for crisis situations or where there is no time for group decision-making it restricts the employees of their creative powers and makes them feel like isolated individuals in the company. Moreover, this leadership style can lead an individual to abuse his/her position and when that happens, as seen in Initech we have a dictator rather than a leader.

Taking into account the situation in the company, a leadership style that fosters employee participation would be appropriate. In this sense, we have to move toward a democratic or participative leadership style. This style of leadership would give Initech's executives or top man the image of being a guide. Rather than being seen as a threat or an antagonistic individual in the company, the democratic leader allows for the direct participation of members. In a sense, this type of leadership style will cut across the " status quo" within the organization.

This not only increases job satisfaction by involving employees or team members in what's going on, but it also helps to develop people's skills. Employees and team members feel in control of their own destiny, such as the promotion they desire, and so are motivated to work hard by more than just a financial reward (" Leadership Styles: Using the right one for your situation," n. d.). Moreover, studies don by Kurt Lewin have found that this

style of leadership is generally the most effective one. Leadership Styles: How to sustain the Change

Whether or not change is geared toward essentially something good it still strikes fear to individuals. It is human nature for us to remain in a place that we feel comfortable in or are used to despite circumstances being antagonistic. It is for this reason that the initial entry or even the desire to bring about leadership changes in Initech will create quite a ruckus and will certainly be objected upon by the existing manager, Bill Lumbergh. As we can see, Lumbergh makes use of the Authoritarian style of leadership and actually looms over the shoulders of his employees and constantly gives negative comments.

This is his way of assuring his position as the manager. To change his style and also allow the employees below him to participate in the whole process of transitioning from the authoritarian to the democratic leadership style and management we may make use of Lewin's Change theory. It aims to make the organization work more productively and effectively (Moseley, O'Connell, Schluth, Van Buskirk, Wilkerson, & Wilson, 2007). He theorized that there are forces keeping a system's behavior stable.

When the forces striving to maintain the status quo and the forces pushing for change are about equal, current behaviors are maintained in what Lewin called a state of ' quasi-stationary equilibrium'" (Smiley, 2001). Lewin's Change Theory is a three-stage model that is based on the idea that when a group reaches a level of change, it is difficult to stay at that level and the group will eventually return to the original place (Moseley, et al. , 2007). The

desired level of change may be achieved by the following three steps: unfreezing, movement and refreezing.

In the Unfreezing stage, resistance may be met since the employees perceive the process of change as being threatening since it would mean having to learn a new system. Edgar H. Schein (n. d.) enumerated Lewin's three-stage theory and expounded on each of them. He emphasized on redefining a person's belief using the cognitive theory. In actuality, many employees fear change because it puts them in a position of unfamiliarity, a fear of the unknown. Moreover, the employee becomes anxious about not being able to meet the company's new demands (Moseley, et al. , 2007).

Thus it becomes imperative that the employees are prepared for the change. We can achieve this by making use of the three methods cited by Robbins. First, Initech must increase participatory action in all levels of the organization. By allowing the employees in each level to have more opportunities to participate in decisions (be it simple ones such as where to hold a corporate outing) they can divert the existing behavior of authoritarianism away from the status quo. Secondly, the company should give appropriate sanctions to curb antagonistic behavior from management staff to reduce the resistance on change.

Lastly, the company can hold seminars that will inform employees of the change and at the same time motivate them to accept and participate in the changing process. This is a key element since by directly informing them of the change they are going to undergo, the company can also answer the WII-FM question. In Della Menechella's (2001) article she observed that " it is

very difficult to lead people to move forward in thought or deed unless you connect it with what is important to them. People accept new ideas or take action only when they can see how they will benefit from what you are saying" (Menechella, 2001).

Furthermore, by making use of seminars and the like the company can incorporate a facilitator that will assist in bolstering the change process. According to Mumford (1995), the facilitator is the key role in the Ethics methodology. He says there are three objectives related to the management of change: 1) allow people to influence the design of their own work situations; 2) set specific job satisfaction objectives as well as technical/operational objectives; and 3) ensure that the new technical system is surrounded by a compatible, well-functioning organizational system (as cited in George, 2002).

By making use of a facilitator the company actually already makes use of the participatory approach that is core in the democratic leadership style. The second step in Lewin's process would be the movement phase. Here, the change is implemented into the group and the progression from the old way to the new way takes place. This shift involves the intervention of new behaviors, values, and attitudes through changes in organizational structures and processes. This stage should consist of more action and performance than actual learning, for example, holding a test run for the new strategy (Moseley, et al. 2007; Smiley, 2001).

By slowly increasing participation in decision making from the top executives to the lower management staff a domino effect will take into effect. When

lower management employees see that the top executives are being consistent with allowing active participation the lower ranks will follow. After all, lower ranks look unto the higher executives to set the example and this is in stride with Bandura's Role-Modeling theory. The third step in Lewin's three-step change model is refreezing.

The purpose of refreezing is to stabilize the new equilibrium resulting from the change by balancing both the driving and restraining forces. According to Robbins, driving forces promote change while restraining forces oppose change. Hence, change will occur when the combined strength of one force is greater than the combined strength of the opposing set of forces (as cited in Kritsonis, 2004, p. 2). Refreezing is the only way to complete Lewin's change cycle without reverting to the original way the group functioned previously. Constantly reinforcing the change until it is accepted and practiced consistently is essential in assuring the continuation of the change (Moseley, et al. , 2007).

Conclusion As change is not a one shot deal, it is important for the managerial and executive staff members of Initech to be consistent in implementing the shift from an authoritarian to a democratic style of leadership. By imploring Lewin's 3-step change theory the company can be assured of a successful transition of leadership styles and move toward addressing the alienating issues that in effect lower the efficiency of the workers.

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