

Arctic mining casey study



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Arctic Mining Consultants - An OB Case Study This report examines the underlying reasons why field assistant, Brian Millar, has refused numerous offers to work for Arctic Mining or Field supervisor Tom Parker. It analyzes the issues by applying theories of leadership, motivation and team dynamics, theories found in this case scenario. It is our hope that the outcome of the analysis will lead to us to a further understanding. Why is it that Millar decided to refuse any further work from Arctic Mining Consultants?

What we have identified is that there isn't one major issue, but several smaller issues which resulted in Millar's refusal to continue with to Arctic Mining Consultants. Tom Parker assembled a task force team to accomplish a 15 stake claim up in Eagle Lake. A goal was set to complete this task in 7 days and failed. If we look to the " Team Effectiveness Model", we can identify several issues surrounding the actual dynamics of this team that were detrimental to its success. When looking at the effectiveness of Parker's team, we can see that he did assemble a sufficiently sized crew for a job with fairly low task interdependence.

This low level of interdependence can work in a team setting but what seems to have adversely affected Millar, was the actual composition of the team. Parker had established a team in which there was minimal cooperation between each of the members. In the case it describes Parker's instructions to the team, " Only one week to complete the job, everyone would have to average seven and a half lengths per day" The lack of the teaming component was inefficient and had the effect of singling out members that had struggles (Millar).

Parker's poor coordination and minimal communication with the crew, further added to the breakdown. As stated in the case, when Parker did communicate it was usually unconstructive such as, " I thought I told you that I wanted seven and a half lengths a day! " he shouted at Millar and Boyce. " Communication from Parker usually meant conflict and this team had no apparent skills for conflict management. Though the only conflict involved Parker and Millar, there also wasn't any comforting from any of the other team members. The combination of these issues led to an unhealthy psychological state for both Millar and the team.

The team design really wasn't there from the start as team members were singled out for tasks, had a lack of communication, and obsolete conflict management. It is easy to understand why Millar didn't want to come back to an environment like this. It is surprising, the lack of team development within the crew, as Parker assembled a team that had previously worked together. It would be expected that they had already gone through their forming, storming, and norming of stages of development but it was evident, by the end of the job, that there was a lack of both team cohesion and trust.

Parker had previously worked with all members on past jobs, and one would expect some level of an identification based trust or else he wouldn't have hired them. Though this may be trust, the design of the team had really converted each team member's trust level to more of a calculus-based trust. This being the lowest form of trust, it was easily broken as Millar struggled to perform. This led not only to a decline in Parker's trust but Millar, with the treatment he received, could not accept the vulnerability based on positive expectations of behaviour it would take to ever trust Parker again.

We cannot discuss Millar's refusal of further work from Arctic Mining Consultants without discussing Parker's leadership style. The "Behavioural Theory of Leadership" defines a task-oriented leader as one who "assigns employees to specific tasks, clarifies their work duties and procedures, ensures they follow company rules, and pushes them to reach their performance capacity. They establish, stretch goals and challenge employees to push beyond those high standards." This would seem to describe Parker's approach to leadership, as high on the task orientation and low on the people-orientation.

Parker was the implicit leader of the crew and used coercive power over them. He had a good knowledge of the business but apparently lacked the emotional intelligence to be an effective leader. When analyzing this case this seems apparent because he continues to offer Millar work and doesn't recognize Millar's negative feelings or that there is even a problem. Parker lacked the leadership to communicate with the crew, and specifically Millar, to clarify how to attain the goals set out for them. He never took time to give the team any direction.

Instead, he checked up on their work and gave negative feedback. It is vital to clarify the performance goals early on for how the crew will be judged later. When goals were met, and in some cases surpassed, no mention of this was made and no recognition was given. It is the lack of the clarifying behaviour's described by Path-Goal Theory of Leadership that failed to provide the psychological structure for Millar and his team mates. This lack of psychological structure is very detrimental to a team and indeed it was to Millar.

Contingent to the Path Goal theory, this was a situation where Millar lacked skill and experience in the industry and he could have benefited from a more directive and supportive approach to leadership. Parker should have taken the time out to show him the correct way to complete the tasks and when Millar was not able to meet the daily goals, he should have stepped in to help. These failures in leadership likely caused Millar to feel he had failed at his job not an experience he would choose to repeat. When exploring other contributing factors to Millar's dissatisfaction with Arctic Mining, motivation seems to be a key factor.

Parker initially tried to motivate and re-assure the team that he had confidence in them and that they were capable of doing this job to his expectations. As explained in the case, Parker states, " I know that is a lot, but you've all staked claims before and I'm confident that each of you is capable of it. If we get the job done in time, there's a \$300 bonus for each man. " As we see in the case, however, motivation deteriorated as time passed on the job site. The decline in Millar's motivation can likely be attributed to the Equity theory. Millar had a belief that there should have been equal treatment between himself and coworker, Boyce.

When Boyce didn't meet the target, he was not yelled at, while Millar felt he was always picked on by Parker. Like the time, the case explains, when everyone was short on target, Parker was furious and " with his eyes at Miller, he added, " Why is it that you never finish the job. " The perceived procedural injustice had a strong influence on Millar's lack of motivation, and also self- concept. Millar's refusal of future job offers may have been an

attempt to reinstate this sense of self concept and perhaps regain power in his relationship with Parker.

Millar was not given any advice on how to improve but was demanded to perform better. This caused loss of motivation and a sense of exclusion from the team, which may be explained by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This theory states that positive organizational behavior needs to be present for a positive outcome. As witnessed in the case, Millar received negative feedback or no feedback at all when daily targets were discussed, " Parker remained silent when the field assistants reported their performance for the day. If we were to consider the Four-Drive Theory this lack of feedback could be analyzed as denying the drive to learn. The team lacked both the opportunity to learn and to bond. Bonding was difficult with the independent structure of the tasks and the long work hours. Learning was not addressed at all as evidenced in the case when Miller asked Parker what can he possibly do to achieve the goal and he was told " you got to work harder. " This behavior from Parker made the bonus he promised each team member (drive to acquire) feel worthless and not worth the time, stress or effort.

The lack of opportunity to learn and bond soon outweighed the opportunity to acquire and in the end, Millar's refusal to work for Arctic Mining may have been explained by his drive to defend himself, the " fight or flight" response. As a result of this analysis, it has been determined that the effect to Millar's self- concept and psychological wellbeing as a result of the negative leadership, team failure and absence of basic motivation, would easily justify Millar's desire to discontinue any relationship with Parker or Arctic Mining.