A Psycho- Social Intervention/ Organizational Development

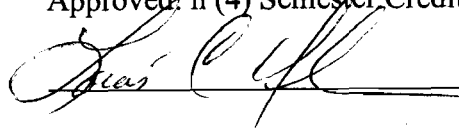Plan for a Mid-Sized Call Center

By

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ABSTRACT

This intervention plan was designed specifically for a mid-sized call center that is

not effectively communicating. An analysis was performed to determine where and how

communication was lacking. Part of the communication gap was due to the physical

environment. The design of the area surrounding the employees needs to be focused on

encouraging individuals to be productive (Read, 2005).

Another communication problem found was between the supervisors and the

subordinates. Communication is the foundation for all actions in the work environment

and it allows the supervisors an open opportunity to create better relationships with the

staff (Roper, 2005). If supervisors are not able to relay proper information to employees it

creates confusion. Constructive employee communication has been shown to increase

employee performance (Ainspan & Dell, 2000).

The intervention plan proposes that organizational development strategies are a good way to learn how to repair these communication dilemmas. Team building activities are a large part; they should create trust, recognition, and understanding (Vinzant, 2000).

After the changes have been made the company can become an organization that continues to evolve. According to Kofman and Senge (1993), a learning organization is one that continuously adapts to a changing and interdependent environment.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Several core problems exist within an office environment of a mid-sized call center. The result in ineffective communication among several employees, and the situation are currently being overlooked. If this situation continue it is likely to contribute to increased dissatisfaction, conflict and employee turnover.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine where core problems lie within an office environment. After an assessment of the situation, an intervention plan will be developed to determine the optimal steps the company should take toward correcting the problems at hand. Following this intervention guide should help the employees develop more efficient patterns of communication. It should also help the employees to relay product information more efficiently to the customers in a more friendly exchange.

Assumptions of the Study

The main assumption of the intervention plan is that the company as a whole wants to change; that they want to better their office environment and help their employees to be more effective. It is assumed that the intervention will be helpful and not harmful to the office environment. There is an assumption that if these changes are made the call center employees will improve their relationships with each other as well as with the customers.

Definition of Terms

Call center- an office set up to handle a large volume of telephone calls, especially for taking orders and providing customer service. (Jewell, Abate & McKean, 2005, p.244)

Intervention- the action or process of intervening; action taken to improve a situation. (Jewell, Abate & McKean, 2005, p. 883)

Learning Organization –"Peter Senge defined a learning organization as human beings cooperating in dynamical systems (as defined in systemics) that are in a state of continuous adaptation and improvement" (Wikipedia, 2006).

Organizational development (OD)- According to Warren Bennis, Organization development (OD) is a complex strategy intended to change the beliefs, attitudes, values, and structure of organizations so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets, and challenges. Burke emphasizes that OD is not just "anything done to better an organization"; it is a particular kind of change process designed to bring about a particular kind of end result. OD involves organizational reflection, system improvement, planning, and self-analysis (Wikipedia, 2006).

Organization- the structure or arrangement of related or connected items; an efficient and orderly approach to tasks; an organized body of people with a particular purpose, especially a business, society, association, ect. (Jewell, Abate & McKean, 2005, p. 1199)

Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations to this study. These limitations are due to the fact that the company is not sponsoring this project, employees are not required to participate. The researcher is relying on personal observation and voluntary employee input. The researcher therefore does not have access to interview each employee individually, or to interview the supervisors and upper management.

There is also a limitation to the results being exclusive to this company and their current staff. The discoveries of the research are uniquely designed to fit the situations of this call center. If the intervention plan was to be implemented in another call center, the plan would need to be modified to fit the number of employees and the depth of the situation.

Methodology

There are several steps to follow to define the core problems, where the core problems are located, whom they include, why they continue to occur and how to approach a solution to correct them. These steps will be discussed and directions for solution will be determined from the evaluation.

After the core problems are narrowed down it is important to argue which approach will be the most effective to change those behaviors and/or policies. Once an approach has been establish, exercises will be chosen to assist employee in change these problematic behaviors. Finally, a plan and sequence in which these applications should be applied and how each one is to be used is discussed.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Plato once stated, "You get the behavior you tolerate" (Jackson, 2001a). So why not command the best and conceive an atmosphere where employees have to give their best. To create this atmosphere of a proper learning environment you first need to provide your staff with a sound environment and the essential tools. A company should begin by revamping the interior design of that environment. The design of the area surrounding the employees needs to be focused on encouraging individuals to be productive and assist them in doing so in an efficient manner. The working locale affects their bottom line as well as the company's. If employee's surroundings are more pleasant they will focus more on the task at hand instead of on their discomfort and additional hassles they go through to get extra resources (Read, 2005). Interior structure changes can also help to encourage sharing and learning within the company (Tetenbaum & Tetenbaum, 2000).

Many call centers have tried to encourage this innovative behavior by establishing a workbench design where more than one employee shares the same work surface and resources. Another idea is to have the traditional cubicles but put them in a circular design with all needed resources in the center, for easy excess (Read, 2005).

According to Tetenbaum & Tetenbaum (2000) traditional office cubicles are a thing of the past. Traditional offices can be a major obstacle for proper communication, if you have no walls or barriers between you and your co-workers it is more convenient to consult with them. An open office plan creates instantaneous communication, it creates a sense of freedom, physically and creatively (Tetenbaum & Tetenbaum, 2000).

Other companies just throw out the traditional office space idea completely. At the Oticon company, employees are given mobile workstations. Oticon believes that when employees move around and sit beside different co-workers regularly, they can learn from new people and possibly learn about different aspects of the company (Tetenbaum & Tetenbaum, 2000). State Farm Insurance Company recommends using smaller areas so everyone that needs to be, is in the same area. This makes it easier for representative to collaborate one on one with co-workers. The company just divides distinguished areas with different patterns or colors of carpeting (Babcock, 2005). However, the company needs to be careful how they use their space to prevent clutter and noise that would interfere with effective agent/client communication. Such distractions may cause customer satisfaction to quickly decline (Read, 2005).

Commonly, the best way to find out what would work best for the employees comfort levels is to simply ask the employees directly. After all, the employees are the main cost-benefit center of the company. The company can combine the suggestions made by the employees and set up sample stations. The employees would have to rotate, sitting at each station for an allotted period of time. This would allow them to experience a trial run of a new call center look. The employee can then comment on what they liked and what they did not like and why. This experimental approach helps the company to save money before the big change (Read, 2005).

Once the workers' physical surroundings effectively support communication, what practices should be put into place to enhance communication? Interpersonal communication is the first skill for managers to understand and practice (Roper, 2005). Leaders are only as constructive as their ability to communicate (Cleveland, 2005). It is

the foundation for all actions in the work environment and it allows the supervisors an open opportunity to create better relationships with the entire staff without leaving anyone astray (Roper, 2005). Indeed, employees are more likely to receive useful information about their company from their managers than from the daily water cooler gossip (Jo, 2005), and such active managers share both good and bad news, which can help build an environment of trust (Cleveland, 2005).

Effective managers also learn how to develop both formal and informal channels of communication. Media may include office newsletters, meetings, visual displays of current projects, e-mail updates, voicemail, posters, intranets and informal "hallway meetings" (Cleveland, 2005). Emails and instant messaging are becoming the more convenient way of communicating with subordinates and for the employees to interact with one another (Jackson, 2001a; Read, 2005). Mangers need to be careful, in certain situations electronic conversion can be seen as impersonal. It can however, remain practical when you do not want to disrupt important working time (Read, 2005).

No matter what form of communication is used, formal or informal or a combination of the two, it is essential to remain consistent which results in also being predictable. People trust other people that are predictable as a result of making their views known and maintaing views and behavior that are consistent. Leaders that make themselves known and their position clear, are trusted by more people (Cleveland, 2005). Supportive oral communication contributes positively to individuals' perceptions of management's supportiveness and friendliness, which also in the long run creates trust (Jo, 2005).

Due to modern technological advances and the central need for trust, employees now expect to be kept "in the know" and updated instantly about changes made in the

organization or on projects. The company needs to set up distinct rules and policies to distinguish who should know what information first and how long people should have to wait for information (Jackson, 2001a). The company also needs to decide who will have access to what forms of technological communication (Cleveland, 2005). Is it necessary for everyone in the office to have their own voicemail or can a group share one voicemail box? Questions of this nature need to be addressed and clearly communicated. There is a great amount of potential if all assets are available and compatible across the board within a company (Cleveland, 2005). All of this technology enables the communication necessary for effective and outstanding teamwork but guidelines still need to be put into place so the technology can be used properly (Jackson, 2001a).

Having open communication creates meaning and direction for employees. When communication suffers clear symptoms quickly become noticeable such as conflicting intentions, unclear values, misunderstandings, lack of coordination, confusion, depleted motivation; and employees start to perform at the bare minimal required effort (Cleveland, 2005).

Constructive employee communication has been shown to increase job satisfaction and employee performance (Ainspan & Dell, 2000). It also can result in organizational success (Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, 1996). This also means letting the employees communicate their ideas, opinions, or concerns to the management team (Harrington-Mackin, 1996). Employees want a hand in decision making processes that will affect them. They want to be sure their views are heard and considered in changes, even if their suggestion was not implemented in the final product (MacCoby, 2000).

It is important to remember that no organization wants to be known as one that does not know how to communicate with its employees or that doesn't encourage employee relations. For a company to be successful in today's competitive fast paced world they need to attract and retain the best of the best from all walks of life and be known as the employer everyone wants to work for (Roper, 2005). Plus those companies with high employee satisfaction outperform the average; they have a rise of six percent in net income in their industry over a twelve month period compared to competing companies (Maitland, 2005).

These statements are especially true in the call center business. If you want the call center to be a success you need to make the employees happy, in order for them to make the customers happy (Read, 2005). You also want to make sure that you have agents with all of the right traits and qualifications.

Agents in the call center business should have the right attributes, such as attitude, personality, and critical thinking skills (Jackson, 2001b), and be trainable on skills such as sales, problem solving specific for the job and product knowledge (Unknown, 2005). They should be hired based on the fact that they already know how to be courteous to customers (Unknown, 2005), be understanding to the customers needs (Jackson, 2001b) and do not need to be trained on these aspects.

According to Jackson (2001b), the call center agents of the near future will be that of a knowledgeable worker, that are energetic, tech- savvy, people- oriented, organized and upwardly mobile. They may also have to have some type of college education, if not a degree to even be considered for the position (Jackson, 2001b), and good leaders should

not be afraid to hire individuals who have more education than themselves (MacCoby, 2000).

If your employees have these types of skills you need to be careful how much supervision you provide them. Skilled agents often hate to be micromanaged and may go elsewhere if managers are constantly looking over their shoulder (Read, 2005). A manager should design responsibilities that exercise a person's competence and values. Responsibilities are motivating when they push employees do to more and use their problem solving skills (MacCoby, 2000). Successful organizations also help employees to improve and expand their existing skills. If they are given the opportunity to expand their knowledge they are more likely to stay with the company no matter what their status and make a conscious effort to help the company succeed (Maitland, 2005).

There are certain characteristics that these types of select employers demonstrate: incredible ethics, expertise available to all, corporate trust of employees, a team orientation and generosity (Jackson, 2001b). According to a 2000 survey from Watson Wyatt, a global consulting firm various employees fell their employer does not possess these needed qualities. Only 32% of workers feel management make good and timely decisions, 35% characterize the level of trust between management and employees as strong, only 36% said their companies actively sought the workforce opinion and just 38% said the information needed to accomplish their work is widely shared (Jackson, 2001b). That leaves the other 62% to 65% basically dissatisfied with the way things are managed within their working environment. These statistics show that there is a significant lack of trust among many businesses. Good leaders would recapture this missing trust by walking the talk and practicing what they preach (MacCoby, 2000).

If communication skills are poor within the organization and trust is lacking, team building exercises can be an excellent way to work on these abilities. The exercises help break down barriers between the staff, diminish divisions and leave individuals with a sense that they can speak their minds (Merrick, 2000). Team building should also create trust, recognition, understanding, stress skills, a sense of community and getting to know others (Vinzant, 2000).

Maguire (2002) suggests a team building exercise that can also be a way of restructuring or an elimination of outdated job duties and reassignment of responsibilities, the task of writing a new manual. By writing a new manual the team learns how to properly communicate what they think should be in the manual and discover how to appropriately word the instruction (Maguire, 2002). If the team writes the manual they should be more committed to following it and making sure that others do the same. This activity helps build trust within the group, and thus facilitates open communication (Cleveland, 2005).

If this type of team building exercise works for the staff the company may want to extend the project into updating their written job descriptions (Maguire, 2002). The task is basic and a way for employees to learn more about what their co-workers do and how they can make each others duties run more smoothly. Each person should create a list of the specific task that they perform on a daily basis. Then all those that have the same job title come to an agreement on what the best description is, the purpose of the task, a list of actions required to fully accomplish the task and how often the task is preformed (Maguire, 2002). The group could also make a list of what other departments could do to

make their job more efficient. When all descriptions are completed each group shares their description with the whole staff.

Team building activities that work outside of the office can be even more effective for some. Mike Robinson used this approach when joining his new team at Lloyds TBS Independent Financial Advisers. Where he put together the "spider web" for his new team. This activity consists of finding gaps in a maze of elastic ropes, stretched between two trees. Robinson says that the activity helps build team spirit and at the same time it should aid people to develop more innovative ways of solving problems (Merrick, 2000).

Other challenges used to build team morale may include rafts such as building a raft out of oil drums and seeing if it can hold weight and float. The "sheepdog" exercise where you lead a team of blindfolded employees through some trees, on to a raft and across a river without any physical or verbal assistance (Merrick, 2000). Or there is a white water rafting race in teams, to show how the team needs to work together to get to the finish line (Vilaga, 2002).

A couple of approaches that are not highly recommended but have been used, are hiring someone to hijack your company's bus so employees can learn how to think calmly in a high stress situation. Another company in England tried walking across hot coals together and seven out of the thirteen were hospitalized for severe burns (Vinzant, 2000).

The culture that you want to create as an organization should not be left to chance (Cleveland, 2005), and team building activities can help to restructure the culture of the organization. It is important to prepare the people and the ways of business to be capable of developing as time progresses. How does one foster a workplace in which respect,

trust and honesty are built into the norms and practices of the work atmosphere rather than the exception? How do we create a work environment in which people are eager to take on personal responsibility for satisfying all their customers and a willingness to be held accountable for the outcome? How can we change from our old ways of "command and control" cultures and behaviors to an environment that will work for us and our customers, rather than against us (Jackson, 2001a)? The solution is easy; create a company that is a learning environment. However, this goal is difficult to obtain and the process can be overwhelming.

Before the process of change begins the organization should prepare its leaders for the journey. An evolving organization needs leaders that are ready to lead and help subordinates along the way. Managers should be required to advance skills such as active listening, adaptability and decision- making. These core skills can assist leaders in tackling tough issues that may come about within their environment (Roper, 2005). Listening actively is a crucial skill for managers to possess while making a change. Employees will have concerns that they want to voice to someone that can find the answer for them or help them with the problem. Actively listening to employees encourages this type of communication (Cleveland, 2005). Active listening means that the focus remains on what the person is saying, not on the response to what is being said (Roper, 2005).

When leaders listen, it gives them and the employees the opportunity to contribute ideas, which creates a sense of ownership (Cleveland, 2005). If there is a sense of being involved in the change process employees are more likely to make the change. A true learning organization gives the front line employee the chance to be in charge of new

innovative ideas (Lumpkin & Lichtenstein, 2005). These employees know first hand the demands of the customers and the problems that are faced every day in the operational process (Chen, 2005).

After leaders are prepared, the plan of change needs to be assembled, keeping a few important suggestions in mind. First, most change plans extend over too long a period of time (Grote, 2005). If your companies plan is elaborate make sure that it is broken into stages or pieces so everyone in the company can see the improvements that have been made. Manageable small steps will create motivation among the team. Second, plans often focus on trivial things. Make sure that the company's plan is specific to core problems that need to be changed and the steps in doing so are detailed (Grote, 2005). Third, make sure you understand that individuals will grow and change throughout the process and at different rates (Grote, 2005).

What should the change plan being working towards? It is working towards creating a learning organization. According to Kofman and Senge (1993), a learning organization is one that continuously adapts to a changing and interdependent environment. It also underlines improving practices and evolving into new arenas by creating new knowledge (Senge, 1990), building new understanding (Fiol & Lyles, 1985), and detecting and correcting misalignments (Argyris, 1990). Organizational learning has become an effective route for strategic renewal of older and newer companies (Lumpkin & Lichtenstein, 2005). Organizational learning can enhance a company's ability to recognize opportunities and equip them to effectively pursue new ventures (Lumpkin & Lichtenstein, 2005).

A real shift in today's organizations has taken place from training (a top-down intervention initiated by the organization) to learning (an ongoing process that lies in the domain of the individual). Informal learning has become important in the evolving workforce (Sloman & Webster, 2005). The concept is simply titled, organizational learning. Simply stated, organizational learning refers to the process that an organization, given its circumstances and culture, uses to assemble and reorganize its knowledge and management systems to adapt and compete by using some distinct tools and methods (Argyris & Schon 1978, 1996). Extending this definition one could reason that organizational learning refers to the process through which an organization constantly acquires new knowledge and makes adjustments in order to successfully adapt to external and internal environmental changes and to maintain sustainable survival and development (Chen, 2005).

Peter Senge has dedicated a whole book, The Fifth Discipline, to explaining the concepts of a learning organization. He says the workplace becomes an environment "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Cleveland, 2005).

We are talking about something that goes much deeper than a training manager that pays very little attention to the relevance of the material but looks at how much a learning course costs avoids burdening the participants with knowledge they may not understand or never have to use (Sloman & Webster, 2005). What good is any of the information to the employees or the company if it is not used or useful? New skills will decay and be

lost if they are not immediately used by the recipient (Grote, 2005). If these skills cannot be practiced or shared with other co-workers, then they are probably not worth learning.

Organizational learning not only includes changes of perception and thinking (such as discovering, innovating and selecting), but also changes of behavior (Chen, 2005). We are so caught up in the world of competing with our competitors that our competitive habits cross over to our dealing with our co-workers. Individuals want to show the boss their strengths so they are the next up for a promotion or advancement. This behavior makes for an unproductive work environment. Over indulging in competition creates a context where looking good becomes more important than actually being good (Kofman & Senge, 1993).

The overall lesson is that organizations need to redesign their way of thinking, in a non- linear fashion. That becomes half of the battle. It was once thought that the company should be broken up into pieces so different individuals can worry about different aspects of the company, but if no one is looking at the whole company, the complete picture may be lost and the company may founder (Kofman & Senge, 1993). This is where productivity is often lost; therefore someone needs to be watching over the entire organizational system to make sure that all of the pieces work together.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction to Issue

Who is the Client System?

The client system is night staff employees from a mid-sized call center. These people consist of several different groups of people: college students and high school students that work part time and there are also different ages that work full time. More specifically the client system is the employees that have been with the company for three or more years and have seen a pattern developing within the office and the night staff.

Why did they contact a change agent?

These employees feel that a change needs to be made because of the patterns that they have seen developing over time. It has been very noticeable over the last couple of years, specifically during the school year, that the two sides of the office have been segregated and non-communicative. This separation is not only physically apparent but socially has caused tension between the office staff and also with the night supervisors. The client system would like this tension to subside, they feel it would create a friendlier working environment and it would also boost production within the office. They feel that it is an embarrassment to have new employees come in and see the strain between the more veteran workers and the average employees.

What is needed and wanted?

The client system feels that the intervention should in some way incorporate the two sides into one team. The whole office needs to work together as a team. They feel that

work should be more evenly distributed and that may solve some tension and stress problems. All employees should have knowledge of a distinct definition of each job preformed within the office. This would mean a detailed definition of each job. If all employees possess this knowledge there is less room for argument regarding the correct way to properly execute the job. This should help reduce arguments and the tension that ensues.

The client system is asking the change researcher to perform the intervention unobtrusively. If the staff knows that they are being "changed" they may be less willing to cooperate. If the intervention works well for the night staff the company may want to use it in other sections of the office such as the fulltime or day staff. The full time employees have been there much longer and would be even more resistant to change; therefore it cannot look like an overhaul, but a gradual movement towards a desirable state.

The client system would like for the intervention to take place during the spring semester of 2007. This would allow enough time for all of the new employees coming in during the fall semester to get settled. They will know the job, the routine, the norms of the office and their co-worker well enough by this time.

Subject Selection and Description

Individual Level

Night Supervisor I

The first night supervisor needs to make decisions concerning the environment and the flow of the office when she is there. She also mandates the scheduling, which tends to be a common source of feuding between group A and group B. The high school students are allowed to make their own schedules with a few guidelines. One guideline being they have to work a minimal of fifteen hours per week. She makes sure that they follow the guidelines, hand their schedules in on time and she puts their schedules together. As for the college students and other night employees, she makes sure all people are able to get to work on time according to school schedules and all of the shifts are covered. These employees are required to work a minimal of twenty hours per week.

Night Supervisor II

The second night supervisor needs to make decisions concerning the environment when she is supervising. She is frequently hearing complaints about the way the office is coordinated and why some employees have privileges and others do not. She makes the decisions on who should be trained on side job or who is able do the specially assigned jobs on certain days. This is also becomes a source for conflict because it is seen as advantageous to special assignment jobs because you are usually not required to be on the phone speaking to customers. People are chosen for these jobs based on their knowledge of the company and have shown a certain level of responsibility.

Night Supervisor III

The third night supervisor needs to make decisions concerning the environment when she is supervising. She like the other supervisors is frequently hearing complaints and concerns about how the office is organized. She answers an abundance of questions concerning scheduling, office policies and other office distresses. She also has a position in the decision making process of who is assigned to special assignments. She handles the weekly performance sheets and conducts the annual night staff reviews.

Office Manager

The office manager over sees all of the decisions made in the call center and about the call center. All major decisions and changes within the call center need to be validated by her before they are put into effect. She has very little direct contact with the night staff.

Night staff employees

Each individual has their own way that they impact the system. Every employee has their own opinion of how they think the office environment should be coordinated and how rules should be set into practice. These opinions are reflected in what the employees do and say on a daily basis, who they associate with within the office and how they interact with other employees and supervisors.

<u>Customer Impact</u>

If employees from group A and group B are quarrelling near an employee that is on the phone, the customer may be able to hear the background noise. This sort of behavior may indicate to the customer that the business is unstable or that the company has disgruntle employees. These initial impressions could lead to many other assumptions. Such negative inferences by clients are unnecessary and bad for business. A customer may also make a complaint concerning the background noise, argument and/or speech used. This could further negatively affect the system as a consequence of reprimanding of individual employees or a verbal warning for the entire night staff.

Small groups

<u>Group A</u>

This group of people consists of mainly the older employees and employees that have worked for the company three or more years. The group is made up of college students and full time employees that have been picked to do side jobs and are considered by the night supervisors as more dependable and able to handle responsibility beyond normal phone obligations. Several of the employees in this group have made complaints to the supervisors about the unfair treatment that they receive as compared to group B. They feel that they do more work than group B and they are not fully rewarded for their efforts. They receive no compensation or addition pay for the extra effort. Group A is also distressed that part of group B, the high school students, are allowed to make their own schedule within a few lenient guidelines. High school students also have a mandatory fifteen hour work week, whereas college student have a twenty hour mandatory work

week. Group A feels that college students lead a more stressful lifestyle with more obligations and more important deadlines to meet than a high school student.

Group B

This group consists of mainly high school students and some college students. These individuals have not been at the company long enough to be assigned side jobs, or were not viewed by superiors as being adequately responsible to be assigned extra work. There are several employees in this group that could be responsible but choose not to show this strength at work. Several of these employees have made complaints stating that group A is afforded special privileges or favoritism because they talk to the superiors more frequently. Many are offended because they have not been chosen to take on side jobs. They see side jobs as a way of "getting out of doing real work." Others in the group have commented that they should not be obligated to do side jobs if they are not going to be compensated for them.

Friends and family of employees

These are the people that not only offer an ear to the night employees outside of work but also provide the support system outside of work. These people may have suggestions or comments to make to co-workers and/ or supervisors about the situation. They may propose a plan of action that can or should be taken by the employee. All of these suggestions could help or hinder the current state of the environment.

Night Supervisors

All three individual supervisors listed above hear and see the complaints of the night staff. It is their responsibility to handle the questions and arguments in the best way that they see fit. They all have different opinions about what is really happening and an opinion about who is right and who is in the wrong. Due to these opinions, each one has a separate, distinct ways of handling these circumstances. Each supervisor has at one time or another been approached by an employee making complaints about the other group or a complaint about the unfair treatment of their group.

Upper Management

Upper management would include the Human Resources department, since they decide which individuals will work for the company. They assign who will be part of the environment and they are supposed to see that these new employees are capable of meeting all job requirements. Upper management also includes all of the people that oversee the office operations. These people decide how the office's physical appearance is organized. Currently the office is separated in to five sections; group A seating, group B seating, training area, supervisors and customer service. Upper management also makes the ultimate decision on mandatory amount of hours per week and the flexibility of scheduling.

Organization

<u>The Company</u>

The state of the company can affect the moods of the employees. If the company's sales are down that means less work for the employees, which means less pay. People are more argumentative if they are competing for hours and wages. This in turn creates an unpleasant working environment.

The company as a whole also creates the rules and regulations. It is their duty to enforce these rules and regulations. If the employees disagree with the rules that are in place and try to go against them it only creates an inefficient working environment.

Community

<u>Work Community</u>

There should be a sense of community among the entire staff. Currently the community is split into two groups, A and B. The office "work community" is engaged in an internal feud and is not unified. However, within the subgroups themselves there is some, albeit fragmented sense of support and community.

<u>City Community</u>

The city community is fairly small so people hear details about a larger company because of the percentage of people that work there. If one bad testimony is circulated about the company ill will can be created within the surrounding community. People in the community are less likely to apply for a position if they think they are going to have to work in a hostile work environment. The company hires a large amount of younger

high school students. This may cause the community to categorize the company as one that does not want long term employees and a company that does not want to pay benefits to their employees. Also, these high school students may pass the word to their friends that this company is an easy job that pays well, creating an expectation among student applicants that this is an effortless job.

Summary

The most relevant stakeholder systems for this investigation are the small groups A and B. The supervisors also have some distress because they have to listen to complains made by these employees and they have been trying to find ways to extinguish the minor disturbances. The supervisors' communication with both groups has also been called to attention as being a problem situation.

The individuals in these three groups are involved in the main problem and in some way contribute to that problem. They are also the ones that have indicated a need to correct the misunderstanding so their office environment is friendlier. These three groups also make up the main work system; and they impact each other on a daily basis.

Due to the current circumstances the researcher feels it is best to assign the surveys to those at the small group level that have worked for the company for three or more years. By asking the opinions of these particular employees the agent will be assured that the participants have observed and been a part to the reoccurring patterns of the office. These employees then have the option of partaking in a focus group to elaborate on their comments and feelings that were briefly examined in the survey. The focus group gives the researcher the opportunity to see the interaction of employees, hear the full story from

individuals and help the employee to further discuss what they feel are the core issues

and make any suggestions to solve those core issues.

Instrumentation

The survey was based on a compilation of employee rating scales by Kathryn E. Jackson, Ph.D. (2001). Statements that were thought to apply to the current problems within the office environment were chosen for the survey. The survey was designed to describe how the employees felt about their relationships within their environment, with co-workers, supervisors, customers and the company as a whole. The participants were also able to write in any extra comments or explanations that they had about the statements they were rating.

At the end of the survey the participant was asked if they would like to partake in a focus group to discuss these topics further. Two focus groups were held with the researcher and a few employees to discuss what they considered the core problems to be. The researcher started with the highest rated statements on the survey. The groups also discussed what they thought were ample suggestions on how to control or correct those problems.

Data Collection Procedures

     A 17 question survey was administered to sixteen night staff employees that have been employed by the company for three or more years. The employees were notified that the survey was for a school project and the data will be used in the project's final results. Participants were asked to complete a survey that asks questions about their job duties and how they feel about their work/ office environment. They were given the option not to participate and if they wished not to they just followed the instructions to hand in the survey blank in the proper file, by the end of that week. Participants were informed what the survey was for, there was no misleading information.

     The focus group was an extension of the survey with a greater focus more on the consensus of reported core problems. The researcher started the discussion with the highest rated statements on the survey and asked why these were more important that the rest and proceded down the top-rated items in turn. The participants had the right to discuss other matters that were related and the agent encouraged them to add any suggestions they thought would correct these core problems. The researcher kept participants on task and occasionally had to probe for more information when needed.

     Sixteen surveys were administered to the night staff employees that have been with the company for three or more years. Out of these sixteen surveys twelve were completed and returned to the researcher. Two employees terminated their employeement durning the survey process and two employee chose not to participate in the survey. This resulted in a 75% contact rate and a subsequent 100% response rate for the surveys.

Twelve surveys were completed and returned to the researcher. Out of these twelve survey respondents ten chose to participate in one of two focus group meetings. This produced a 62.5% contact rate with a subsequent 83.34% response rate for the focus group.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analyzed based on a psychosocial intervention outline. This outline helps the researcher show and discover, through written analysis, who and what the main contributors are to the problems, what the core problems really are and what the best options are at correcting those core problems; while still making employees happy and getting them involved in the process.

Environmental Analysis

Conceptualization #1: Setting Boundaries

The main system would include group A, group B and the night supervisors.

Individuals from the individual system that would be contained in these groups include

supervisor I, supervisor II, supervisor III and the night staff employees. These are the

people that are involved in the problem, witness the problem, and are requesting the

change in their office environment.

All of the other groups or individuals in systems not listed previous are part of the

environment (the office manager, customers, friends and family of employees, upper

management, the company, work community and the city community). The environment

impacts and influences the main system but is not part of the core change and the core

problem. Some parts of the environment may have more or less impact of the main

system, and the impact can change depending on the circumstances.

Conceptualization #2: The nature of impacts/ forces on the environment

The environmental impact classification will tell who affects whom else and if their

actions are predictable or unpredictable. In this situation all of the systems interact with

one another and they all interact with the main system. The relationships and interactions

between the systems are quite predictable and there are noticeable patterns. Therefore,

the situation can be classified as a multiple clusters environment. When a problem

occurs between group A and group B one can predict that this problem has occurred

before and you should be able to predict the response from each group and the

supervisors because it has occurred before. After hearing the employees' stories several

times it also becomes predictable to friends and family what to suggest as solutions to the problem.

The office is also becoming an articulate environment because there have been spokespersons from each of the three groups (group A, group B, and the group of supervisors) chosen to talk about what they see and hear from their group. It is important to seek all sides of the story and hear the arguments from each group.

Factor 1: Means in the environment for transforming the environment

It would be possible for the environment to change itself. A few simple things could be done to force different people to interact within the office. Such as assigned desks, if the night staff was allowed to have their own desk that they sat in all the time but the supervisors decided who sat where. This would force people to interact with coworkers that they normally do not talk to or may have never communicated with. This may afford opportunities for some of the veteran employees to mentor the newer employees.

Another simple solution would be to redesign the way the office is set up. This would mean closing the gap in the office, literally. The desk would be set up so that employees worked closer to one another instead of an eight foot gap between two sections of the office. This would allow people to communicate more effectively and not allow for one group to sit right in front of the supervisors' section of desks. The design of the office should be focused on encouraging employees to learn new ideas.

There are also things in the environment that could work to an advantage of solving the communication gapping problems. There are individual people that get along

between the groups. This could be factored in and these people may be willing to work as mediators or relayers of information.

Factor 2: Structures of power and authority in the environment

The locus of control is internal. There may be suggestions and opinions from the environment but the system can control itself. There is very little power that is exerted from outside the main system in the environment. Most of the power for this situation lies with the supervisors. They have the power to enforce the rules and policies. If rules and policies are perceived as invalid by a large group of employees the supervisors have the power to argue this to upper management and have the power to explain to upper management why the rules are ineffective for the group as a whole. Power being in the hands of the managers impacts the system in a negative way when they do not use their power effectively. Commonly, they do not delegate responsibly among the employees evenly. If certain employees are given the choice to be responsible or not they will choice the easy way out. The supervisors also do not demand respect of fellow co-workers. As a result the main system suffers.

Factor 3: Resources in the Environment

There are several resources that exist in the environment that are needed by the system for survival. The primary resource is the customers' continued business. If there were no customers purchasing items then there would be no business and no jobs. For this reason customer satisfaction should be the first priority of the company, the supervisors and the employees. This resource can be replenished by great customer

service and an outstanding product. Since, the problems that exist between group A and B affect how these employees are able to effectively deal with customers, global customer service skills suffer.

Other resources needed for survival are supervisors, managers and upper management. All of these people advise the office environment. They are the people that make sure that tsks and assignments are performed in a timely manner, there are enough employees on staff at all times, schedules are made, employees are trained and they are taught all the knowledge they should need to perform their jobs efficiently. They make sure that employees have all the resources they need to perform their jobs effectively. These high-level personnel resources could be replenished or replaced if necessary; however, to replace these staff takes a great deal of training, which takes time and money the company would rather not spend unless absolutely necessary.

Employees need certain physical resources to perform their daily tasks such as desks, chairs, catalogs, a product to send, phones, computers, forms, models of products and notes of product specialties. If employees did not have all of these resources they may be able to do their job but it would take them a lot longer to do it. With all of these resources readily at hand it makes the employees self sufficient and they need less help from a superior. All of these resources can be easily replenished, again just taking some money to do so.

The last resources that are needed are employees that are knowledgeable about the products and the systems of the company (such as company policies). If employees are not knowledgeable or not adequately trained about the products and the systems of the company they will not be able to answer questions the customers may have, they will not

be able to explain policies or procedures and they will not be able to sell or promote the products. Dedicated and knowledgeable employees are hard to come by and harder to replenish.

These are the resources that are needed for survival. There are additional psychological resources that are needed for a continued survival. This would include self confidence. Employees need to show that they have confidence in what they are explaining when discussing products and polices with the customers. They need to have self confidence to feel good about their jobs and how they do that job.

Respect is needed to continue survival. Not only respect for yourself but also respect for the customers and your fellow co-works. This resource is obviously lacking because a lack of respect sits at the core of all the misgiving between group A and group B. If each group had a little more respect of the other group there would be less problems or the problems could be worked out with more ease.

Patience is also a psychological resource that is needed for continued survival. The employees need to have patience with customers, their co-workers and themselves. Not everyone works at the same pace; sometimes you need to wait for co-workers to finish what they are doing before you can start what you are doing. Or the employee needs to wait for the customer because they are not as prepared as they should be.

These are resources that cannot be easily replenished. They are resources that need to be built up gradually. They cannot always be easily taught, therefore they are resources that need to be sought in the hiring process and nurtured thereafter.

Factors 4&5: Access & Utilization of information from the environment

There are many information sources that currently exist that would provide information to the client system. As stated before there are a few people from each group that intermingle. These people would be a great source of information because they are willing to express their attitude toward the opposing group, their own group and the group of night supervisors. Although, the majority of the employees within the night staff will just directly offer you their opinion if you just ask them. A few of them find it a problem that their opinions have not yet been asked concerning the issues at hand.

The night supervisors would also be an outstanding source of information. They would be able to say what they observed about the two groups from an outside perspective. They would have more of an unbiased opinion. Also, ask them what they want to see from their workers, to get a feel for what they truly expect of the staff.

Another source would be some of the day staff that previously worked the night shift. They could relay what problems there were when they were on that shift and see if the situation is still a problem. They could also give a comparison in the environment between the day shift and the night shift.

Another inforamational resource would be the office manager. The office manager would be able to give a list of all of the things that are expected of an "average employee" and then the list of expected behaviors of an "excellent employee." This would give a general idea of how each individual employee rates according to the office manager's responses. After hearing this list there maybe indications that the employees of the night staff need to take on more responsibilities and acquire new behaviors or maintain their current performance.

Summary

All of the people and groups that affect or interact with the client system have been identified and how they interact was explained. There were a few suggestions made on how the environment could be changed naturally without any type of intervention, along with the possible positive and negative effects of these physical adjustments. The main idea was changing the physical appearance of the environment to make the employees interact with people they normally would not interact with so they could hear different opinions and observe different behaviors.

It was discovered that there are several resources, physical and psychological, needed for the system to survive. Without these resources the system may survive but it would be working at a much lower level and lower capacity. Without these resources the employees would be handicapped.

It was determined that most of the power lies with the night supervisors and there is little power that lies within each individual employee. The employees do control their own actions and still have the choice to do right and wrong. It was also determined that several question could be asked of the staff to determine people's opinions of their current environment. The majority of employees within the office could be informants, along with all three night supervisors. However, it would be crucial to speak with the office manager to obtain her opinions of what an average employee should accomplish within their position.

Implications of the most salient environmental issues

Knowing where most of the power and control exists is important to know for the main system's current problem. The most power and control is in the hands of the three night supervisors. Determining optimal ways to use their authority to address the problem is crucial. If their behaviors need to be changed, clear guidance needs to be provided. The type of intervention(s) would depend on if the night superiors' power can be refined and/or extended.

Another important issue is selecting key informants. If the right questions are asked a great deal of information can be obtained from all of the night staff. The more sensitive and controversial questions would need to be reserved for certain employees that are not afraid to express their options about their own group, the opposing group and the group of night supervisors. The type of intervention(s) that is planned would be determined from the responses of the employees.

Diagnosis: What type of problem is it?

Group Theory & Theory of Logical Types

First order change is what is frequently being attempted within the office to fix the situation. Employees are moved to different desks to see if individuals can be meshed into the opposing group, but it just creates more drama. The night supervisors move more and more employees around and this is just doing more of the same, which is the classical sign of first order change. These actions just incorporate more employees into the situation and cause it to be more difficult to correct.

Another example of first order change would be changing the computer system and revamping some office forms to try to make the jobs easier and more efficient. Work is still unevenly distributed between group A and group B. You cannot do the work if you are not trained properly on it no matter how "easy" it now is.

Second order change has not been attempted within the office. It could be accomplished by changing some of the principles of the company. Employees are only mildly rewarded for the work that they do. What about the opposite side of that, notice should also be brought to employees' attention when mistakes are made or procedures are forgotten. If the same mistake is being consistently made then a training procedure needs to be changed or revamped.

Internal order must be adjusted. Rules are implemented for a reason, they need to be applied to employees and set into motion. If a few rules are not enforced employees begin to think that none of the rules really need to be followed or that the rules do not apply to them. Management responsibilities also should be adjusted. These individuals are looked upon for guidance and support; they need to lead by example. If they are not following company policy how do they expect their inferiors to act?

Problems due to relationships internal to the main system

Power distribution

There is a definite faulty distribution of power among the supervisors of this system. The inconsistent amount of power and the power struggle among the supervisors maybe part of the reason why the problem at hand has been overlooked. There are three supervisors at night that see the problem consistently but there are also four day

supervisors and the one manager that spend a couple over lapping hours during the day with the night staff. That means that there are eight people that see the problems erupt on a daily basis. With all of these people "in charge" they think that someone else will deal with or already has dealt with the employees arguing, but no one really does. The night staff is also overlooked because the supervisors are too preoccupied with their own power struggle.

One suggestion maybe to have fewer supervisors, this way they can divide up the time by days or by hours of the day. By doing so each supervisor would have an equal amount of duty being in command. Another approach would be to have the office manager use more of their power to be more actively involved with the night staff, either way someone would be forced to see the whole problem and deal with it more effectively.

This situation could be classified as a utopia-projective because the supervisors are passing the blame amongst each other. It would be easy to do so when there are so many of them and they are fighting for more personal power and more personal gain within the company.

Energy mobilization

Energy within the system is not mobilized optimally in several ways. More energy is spent arguing between the groups, A and B, when energy should be spent serving the customer to the best of the employees' capability. This also leads to supervisors regularly using their energy to deal with conflict and complaints rather than working on other projects.

Energy is also spent on organizing side jobs. Everyone does the side jobs their own way, there is not just one way to do them nor is there a defined right way to do them. So individuals often consider their way the correct way and the other employees' way not as ample. Group A also gets upset about the side jobs because they do more of the side jobs and group B tends to do less and have less people trained on the side jobs. Many of the side jobs are pretty simple and take very little training time.

This situation could be classified as a definite over-simplification of how the employees place their energy. The employees over-simplify how important customer service and customer satisfaction is to the company. They do not detect how their energy is being wasted on arguments and how their energy could be focused in a more positive manner.

Internal communication

There are several problems with internal communications on all levels. The most obvious is the communication between group A and group B. Communication often includes arguments or snide remarks. If there is an intended honest communication from one individual in one group to another individual in the other group, one of the people often seems to misinterpret what is being said, hence there is a habit of assuming from the beginning that the other person is trying to make a negative comment or be sarcastic.

Even the supervisors misinterpret the communication between the two groups. The problem has been brought up to each of the night supervisors on more than one occasion; the common response is to play down what is being said. They would rather not recognize it as a problem. The supervisors have also been told that there is a lack of

communication between the groups on simple work, projects, customer calls and computer changes. Their response again is to play it down and say that it will improve with time or they say that there is nothing that they can do about it.

These responses by the night supervisors shows there is a communication problem between them and the employees. The employees have shown that they are trying to communicate their concerns but with very little response from the night supervisors. This lack of communication often causes tension in the office. The supervisors also have a hard time communicating mistakes that have been made by certain individual employees. It has been reported by a few employees that they were told of a mistake they made a month or more after they made it; by this time it is hard to remember the specifics of the situation. There is a chance that some of this wait is due to the fact that the problem does not arise until a customer calls to complain.

These situations could be classified as over -simplification and utopia – procrastination. The night supervisors show that they have over – simplified the communication problems between the groups A and B and between the night staff and themselves. There is also a sense of utopia- procrastination from the night supervisors saying that the communication will get better with time. Communication problems cannot and will not fix themselves, they need to be worked on and an effort needs to be made from everyone.

Problems due to relationships external to the main system

The theory that seems most relevant is the utopian syndrome, specifically projective. It has been shown in several statements above that employees tend to blame other employees for the lack of development or movement within the company.

During psychosocial intervention employees would be helped to realize that some things are not the blame of others but themselves. Employees have shown that they need to take responsibility for their own actions. They should also understand why they feel they need to shift the blame to a co-worker.

Over simplification of the problem also seems to be helping to preserve the problem. It is evident that the night supervisors do not consider this issue to be a problem maybe just a difficulty that they need to face frequently, but that is not the case, it is a problem because it has been on going. The night supervisors also over simplify the fact that there is a lack of maturity in dealing with this problem and other issues in the office.

In dealing with the theory of over simplification during the intervention it is important to show the night supervisors and the office manager just how complex this problem is across several layers. They need to be served with a full list of complaints and disappointments from the entire night staff. If they are confronted with all of the problems at one time it may be easier for them to see the situation as whole and not just little day to day occurrences.

As detailed above it can be concluded that this problem is due to the relationships internal to the main system. The most pertinent aspects are the internal communication problems. Communication seems to be lacking at all levels of the spectrum which causes predictable arguments and misunderstandings. The lack of communication also helps to

sustain the problem, one that could easily be avoided if communication was more open and was received in a more respecting manner.

During the intervention all individuals within the office need to be taught how to use better communication skills. These skills cannot be reduced to just one or two areas; and it needs to incorporate the entire night staff. The staff may be able to incorporate a communication workshop or a group sharing activity to strengthen these skills.

It also has been discussed how energy mobilization is dysfunctional within the internal main system. Energy is being used to create and maintain arguments and resentment within the office instead of using the energy to please the customer and do the job efficiently. The night supervisors have also been involved in wasting energy on mediating heated discussions and being in disagreement with one another. Their energy should be used for more positive and productive activities as well.

In the intervention it should be pointed out to the night staff and the night supervisors how much energy they are wasting on petty things and situations. They need to think about how stressed they feel when they are coming to work and how drained and/ or exhausted they feel when leaving work. These feelings would occur less if their energy was being put forth in a positive manner.

There are very few problems that are due to relationships external to the main system; yet, the dispute between goals and values seems to be a hefty part of maintaining the problem. The employees in both groups A and B along with the upper management all have different goals and values that they think need to be retained though out their working day. These clashes of goals and values cause heated discussions within the office environment. This is one concept that is not easily changeable within the

confinements of an intervention. The intervention should help the employees agree on common goals and help them describe the advantages of having shared goals. However, people's values are something that they carry at the core of themselves, you cannot change those overnight or force someone to change them. Their values may alter and change as they go through the process of the intervention and/ or they may find that they do share certain values with other employees.

Analysis of Change & Resistance Factors

The researcher needs to recognize the most important change forces and make sure that they are recognized by the night staff. The most important change force is the reduction of stress levels in the office. The rift between group A and group B causes heightened stress levels in the office environment. If the employees understand that the intervention will help to reduce some or most of this stress they will be more prone to change.

The researcher also needs to be familiar with those individuals that will help drive the change. Most of the people in group A can be recognized as change forces, because many have been with the company for several years. Other people outside this group are individuals that have been with the company for a few years and that are concerned with its success, such as the supervisors. These individuals will help to motivate those that know a little bit less about the company but have seen some of the patterns of argument arise.

The researcher will need to keep their ear to the ground to find out right away who the resistant forces will be. Once these people are identified it will be easier to

discuss with them what will happen and what they do not like about the plan. It is essential to give notice to everyone's feelings and take them into consideration. The individuals already profiled to be resistance forces are those that fly under the radar of doing any real work during their shift. They will not want this normal way of life disturbed because things are so uncomplicated for them now.

The other resistance forces that may come as a surprise are night supervisors or the other day supervisors, if they are to get involved in the change. A few of these individuals may think that there is not a problem and all of these activities are a waste of time and company dollars. That is why it is important to show all of the supervisors the complaints as a whole. They need the full package to recognize the impact.

The researcher should always include the employees in the planning of the intervention and changes made to their environment. By including the employees the researcher will gain the trust and respect of these employees. They will see that the researcher is working for the betterment of the employee group and not just for an increase in sales. The employees will also have something invested in the results and they will work harder to make sure that everything happens that should. Even the resistant employees should be included and listened to; their complaint may create valid points.

The researcher will also need to make sure to set realistic goals for the employees. If goals are set to high they will consider the task impossible and not want to put the forth effort. If they are assigned smaller goals so they can see immediate results as they move forward, it will be easier for them to want to get to the next level.

Problem Resolution Strategies

Four different change strategies have been recognized and examined to determine which one or ones are suitable for this particular intervention plan. The two that were concluded to be the most appropriate are the second order change and the normative re-educative.

Second order change strategy means recognizing core problems within the organization and trying new solutions that go beyond the surface changes. Meaning and perceptions of the problems, changes and environment are adjusted. Core problems need to be recognized in this situation because they have never been dealt with before. There maybe several core problems that have not yet been recognized.

Normative re-educative strategy changes norms within the environment. Values and attitudes are altered among the entire group and the atmosphere of the office. This strategy uses group building activities which would be ideal for bring groups A and B together as a team. It also assists in creating a new more inviting environment for incoming employees, at all levels.

The two strategies that will be incorporated less into this intervention plan are the empirical rational approach and the power coercive strategy. The empirical rational approach make the researcher assume that all individuals involved in the program are thinking and acting in a rational manner. The researcher in this situation cannot assume this to be true because the agent is dealing with several different age groups with different levels of thinking, morals and maturity. May of these employees are also naïve as to how the company operates and have a lack of information on how certain changes can effect the company in a immense way, good and bad.

The power coercive strategy is when the company is forcing the employees to do things and change is mandated. The researcher would like to avoid forcing the employees to do things they may feel in not within their job description. Making the people happy that make the company its capital is very important. The more involved the employees are the more they will fell attached to the project.

The company has not involved the staff in the past and they have not been very successful at making big changes. We have looked at the major changes in the past within the company, they have shown to be few and far in between. Nothing of this nature has been introduced to the company before so it is essential to take extra precautionary steps to assure success.

Limitations

The study was limited by the information that was provided and the observations that were made. The study would be more in depth and more detailed if the researcher were able to interview all of the night staff employees, supervisors, and the office manager. It would also be more detailed if there were more than one researcher observing the behaviors and interactions of the night staff on a day to day basis. It is possible that an additional observer could catch a valid behavior or point that the first one missed.

Summary

Through an analysis of employee surveys and the researcher's observations ten core problems were discovered. All of these problems in some way relate to why

employees are separated into groups A and B, why these two groups do not agree within the office environment and why employees are feeling stress at work. Discovering these ten core problems also helped the researcher to map out the intervention plan. The steps that are included in the intervention plan are directed at aiding and correcting these ten core problems. The program will start from the smallest, simplest problem and work its way up the list to the more complex problem. The ten core problems include:

1) Communication

2) Need for team building

3) The enforcement of rules and regulations

4) Lack of trust among employees and employee to supervisor

5) Unevenly distribution of work

6) The responsibility levels of employees vary

7) There are no detailed job descriptions

8) Upper management is not involved in what the employee do and what they know

9) The physical environment and necessary resources are not atomically correct

10) There is not a uniform procedure for several processes

Chapter IV: Results

Item Analysis

Process of Planned Change

<u>7 stage model of change process</u>

These are steps that the agent should take with the staff through out the change

process. The steps have been specifically detailed to how the researcher should act with

this particular group and their circumstances.

1. Development for a need for change

2. Start establishing the change relationship

3. Diagnosis of the client system problem

4. Examination of alternative routes and goals

5. Trying to put it into action

6. Generalization and stabilization of change

7. Terminate the relationship between the client and the agent

<u>Researcher behavior</u>

A combination of Accepted/ Catharsis and Catalyst systems would need to be

used by the researcher in this case. On an individual basis the employees need to deal

with their personal stressors at the work place. On a group level the separated groups A

and B need to find ways to build their office night staff into one team. Some types of

team building exercises and getting to know one another activities will be important. The

employees will also require the knowledge of what everyone does at their job on a daily

basis and what defines these jobs so myths can be dispersed.

The Intervention Plan

The actual intervention plan is based on these ten core problems. The core problems tell the researcher and the company what area need to be worked on, changed or fixed. The activities of the intervention plan will do just that, they will try to change old habits into new relationships and new beginnings. The researcher has selected the order in which the intervention plan should be conducted. The order will help the employees start off with some tasks and small changes so they can see gradual results. These small steps should also assist in preparing them for the more difficult tasks, with greater changes and larger results.

Order of Intervention

- On every desk in the office there should be a file stacker with all of the catalogs in one and all of the paper work needed to do extra jobs in the other. These stackers should be labeled accordingly.

- Updates on merchandise changes, company changes or computer changes should be made weekly. For example every Monday messages are posted in the opening messages when logging into the computer or noted with the corresponding merchandise. This would avoid further mistakes in the future.

- There should be a web board where employee can post suggestions or comments made by customers that the employees think are insightful and useful to other employees and/or customers. The employees could also post computer errors that they discovered.

- There should be something posted either within the handbook what classifies an average employee and set goals to work to be an excellent employee. The employees should know what level of excellence is expected of them.

- Training - There should be a uniform way to perform tasks for future employee coming into the company; this would avoid employees getting into bad habits. In order for this to be effective the company needs to make sure that all of the trainees are qualified to be trainees. Trainees should be shown how to train incoming employees the proper way and know the proper information to give the new employee (French & Bell, 1999, p. 243)

- Behavior Modeling- Behavior modeling has been shown to be an excellent way to make supervisors more effective and to improve organizational performance. The basic premise of Social Learning Theory is that for persons to engage successfully in a behavior, they must perceive a link between the behavior and certain outcomes must desire those outcomes and must believe they can do it. For example, many supervisors find it difficult to discipline employees. To learn this behavior they must see a link between successful disciplining and desired outcomes (like favorable recognition from management or less hassle from subordinate employees) and must come to believe they can do it.

A simple problem –solving model underlies most behavior modeling training. Such as:

1. Behavior description- The ability to describe behavior of self or others in specific concrete terms and to avoid generalizations or inferences drawn from observed behaviors.

2. Justifications- The ability to clearly explain the impact of an observed behavior on the individual, the observer, or the organization.

3. Active listening- The ability to accurately reflect both content and feelings of another's communication.

4. Participative problem solving- The ability to involve another co-worker, meaningfully and appropriately, in the process of solving a work- related problem.

5. Positive reinforcement- The ability to compliment another in a sincere and authentic way.

Behavior modeling works; it teaches the skills and behaviors needed to deal with interpersonal problems (French & Bell, 1999, p. 245).

- There should be a file with each employees name on it. When mistakes are made by a certain employee they can be printed off or copied and put in their file. These issues can then be addressed with their weekly performance sheets.

- Manage by Objectives and Appraisal (This step could be used to aid performance reports and the above suggestion) - Goal-setting and performance review processes should have a team force and should be both participative and transactional. By participative and transactional it is meant that in goal setting, employees should have meaningful ways to provide inputs; and in reviewing performance, a collaborative examination of the major significant forces in the situation needs to be made, including the superior's and co-worker's impact of the employee's performance, not just an appraisal of the employee's performance. Manage by Objectives programs helps performance review designed to increase the frequency of problems- solving discussions

between supervisors and subordinates and within work teams (French & Bell, 1999, p. 224).

- There should also be a mission statement posted within the office, what common goal are they all working for.

- Role Analysis Technique

    o The role analysis technique (RAT) intervention is designed to clarify role expectations and obligations of team members to improve team effectiveness. In organizations individuals fill different specialized roles in which they manifest certain behaviors. This division of labor and function facilitates organization performance.

    o In a structured series of steps, role incumbents, in conjunction with team members, define and delineate role requirements. The role being defined is called the focal role.

    o The first step consists of an analysis of the focal role initiated by an appointed supervisor and all individuals that perform this job. The role, its place in the organization, the rationale for its existence, and its place in achieving overall organization goals are examined along with the specific duties of the office. The specific duties and behaviors are listed and discussed among all individuals in the room. Behaviors are added and deleted until the group is satisfied that they have defined the role completely.

    o The second step examines the focal roles current expectations of others. The employees list their expectations of their co-works that most affect

their ability to complete the job effectively. These expectations are discussed, modified, added to and agreed upon by the entire group.

o The third step examines the focal roles current expectations of the supervisors. The employees list their expectations of their supervisors that most affect their ability to complete the job effectively. These expectations are discussed, modified, added to and agreed upon by the entire group.

o When the third step has been complete an individual employee is appointed to making a typed summary of the role as it has been defined by the group in steps one through three. This summary is called a role profile.

o After all role profiles are complete for every job they are put together in a booklet. This booklet should be distributed to all employees so they know what they are suppose to contribute to the group and how they can make production run more smoothly. When a new employee is trained on a job they can reference the booklet to know what their job duties are and what they can expect from their co-workers and supervisors. All employees will know what "those people" are doing and what type of outcome there should be (French & Bell, 1999, p. 166).

▪ Group activities should be introduced such as projects with nonprofit organizations. The company already works with one specific organization; why not get the employees involved not only in donating money but in the planning of future fund raisers in the community and running these events. There are several college students, with different majors, among the companies employees; they are a great resource for new ideas and strategies.

▪ The role negotiations should come after the group work because this gives the group a chance is bond on a different level other than just work activities. The employees also may not like how certain people conduct business practices. The next step will give them a chance to vent their frustrations and their praises about the group activities program.

▪ A role negotiation technique - The technique is basically an imposed structure for controlled negotiations between parties in which each party agrees in writing to change certain behaviors in return for changes in behavior by the other. The behaviors relate to the job. Specifically, I ask you to change some of your behaviors so that I can do my job more effectively; and you ask me to change some of my behaviors so that you can do your job more effectively.

It is recommended that meetings occur between two smaller groups of employees (group A and B) and the night supervisors. The role negotiation technique usually takes an average of three days to conduct. A two day session with a follow- up meeting a month or so later to make sure things are moving along as planned. Due to the fact that there will be smaller groups it may take a little longer, no more than one day for each group, then the follow up day for the whole office (French & Bell, 1999, p.170).

▪ "Getting the whole system in the room"- Have a delegated employee member to sit in on meetings and explain proposals and any new ideas of the group. The ideas would come from the posted message board, where other employee put their ideas and ideas from customers. These meeting should occur once a month (French & Bell, 1999, p.190).

Chapter V: Discussion

Limitations

The results of the study are limited by the fact that its current form is a plan; the plan has not yet been put into action. The outcome of the plan and the interaction of the employees during and after the intervention become the real results that are needed. Also, the same factors that have limited the study as a whole have in turn limited the study's conclusions.

Conclusions

Through the process of observation, surveys and the focus groups the researcher was able to map out the main contributors and factors to the problems within this office environment. The researcher also reviewed past studies and other major call center protocol to essentially develop an intervention plan for this mid-sized call center night staff. The plan is designed to take small steps so the environment can be more controlled by the researcher and make sure that the steps are follow through to full completion. The staff will not be pushed into something new until they are ready.

The researcher found that what worked for other larger organizations may not work for this company because it is so much smaller. However, it could work if they modify the plans. Other research found on smaller companies seemed to fit the scheme of what the client system was looking for. The one finding that the researcher and the client system agree on for the intervention plan and the future of the company was that it

was wise to turn toward becoming a learning environment to allow the company to evolve with its future employees and customers needs.

The intervention plan first described creating workspace using a more nontraditional approach, without cubicles. Creating a space like State Farm Insurance has suggested where the office is open and there are common spaces shared yet have a grouping of peers together in work areas. The open space creates an area that encourages communication.

Throughout the intervention process, but especially in behavior modeling, the supervisors learn how to work more as a team having more open communication between themselves and with the night staff. They learn how to communicate to get the best out of their employees. The employees will now have the same opportunity to communicate their idea with their superiors through their suggestions web page and monthly sit-in meetings.

The night office staff was also able to work together to stop misconceptions of what is expected in different job performance roles. They worked together to define jobs so they know what needs to go into completing a job and what co-workers need to do to assist in this process. This process should also help to suppress many competing emotions and may help others ask about taking on more responsibilities.

Many companies increase their communication and trust issues with team building exercises and the researcher has coordinated this into the intervention plan by having the staff work together to help others through a non-profit organization. Not only are they building team skill among themselves but they are building bridges within the community.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further research would first and foremost involve a follow up with the night staff employees one year from the completion of this assignment. Did the employees view the experience as being one of a positive nature, or if not, what would they change? Has the experience helped them interact with their fellow employees inside and outside of the office setting? How do they now interact with their supervisors? Is there a change in the office environment and is it noticeable when new employees now enter the work space? Are there noticeable improvements in work ethics, customer service interaction and sales quotes?

A second recommendation would be to get the rest of the staff involved with the changes. This means using a similar or modified program for the day staff. They are not divided like the night staff is but may have communication problems of their own. Due to the fact that there are several more employees on the day staff additional researcher help would be needed. There would need to be several focus groups and employ interviews versus surveys, including the day supervisors and office manager because these individuals work more closely with the day shift staff.

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Appendix A: Survey (Sample)

Survey for the Call Center's Night Staff

This survey is anonymous. You will not be identified in any way by your responses and

you will in no way be reprimanded because of your honest opinion or honest responses.

This survey is being conducted in responses to observations made within the office

environment and reoccurring patterns. You may choose not to answer any question that

you may find to personal.

The length of time you have you been with the company?

3 years   4 years   5 years   6 years or more

Do you consider your self to be in an unofficial social group within the company?

YES ____;   NO _____

If YES, how would your describe this group?

_____

To what degree is there is a communication problem within the office?

A large problem // Somewhat of a problem // A normal amount // Very little problem // No problem at all

Please answer the questions below using the following scale.

1 completely disagree   2 disagree   3 neutral   4 agree   5 completely agree

	1 2 3 4 5	Please write any additional comments to individual items in the spaces below
I receive honest feedback on my performance.	1 2 3 4 5	
Managers treat everyone fairly.	1 2 3 4 5	
My supervisors insist that I always tell customers the truth no matter what.	1 2 3 4 5	
The day-to-day decisions and activities in my department demonstrate that quality is a top priority.	1 2 3 4 5	
My company is committed to providing equal opportunities for all employees.	1 2 3 4 5	
Work schedules are created and assigned fairly.	1 2 3 4 5	
I feel safe in our workplace.	1 2 3 4 5	
Our customers can trust this company.	1 2 3 4 5	
My company encourages me to behave in a way that respects individual differences.	1 2 3 4 5	
I know who my customers are.	1 2 3 4 5	
I know what I must do and how I must act to be successful in this job.	1 2 3 4 5	
When a customer is dissatisfied, I can usually correct the problem that caused his or her dissatisfaction.	1 2 3 4 5	
I have the authority to make decisions that improve the quality of my work.	1 2 3 4 5	
When I make a suggestion regarding how to improve our company, I know that my suggestion is considered.	1 2 3 4 5	

When you have completed the survey please return it to the file marked "School" on the back credenza. Please complete and return by the end of the week. Thank you for your participation in the survey.

***The researcher will also be conducting a focus group to discuss similar issues. If you are interested in joining the focus group or would like to set up a one on one meeting to discuss the topic further, please contact the researcher through one on one conversation. (The focus group will only consist of fellow employees, no supervisors or management).

Thank you

Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research
(Please remove this consent form if you are or are not participating in the survey)

Title: A Psycho-Social/ Organizational Development Plan for a Mid-Sized Call Center

Investigator:
Nicole Streets
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Description:
A survey from the employees will aid in finding what areas of the office environment require change. The intervention plan will be drawn up based on what the employees think is important to change.

The reason for the needed intervention is an oversight of the management team. There are several problems within the office that continue to grow and expand, they are currently being overlooked. The plan would give some insight into how these situations could be easily changed. The office environment could grow and expand because of these minor changes.

The purpose of the survey is to identify patterns that employees have seen maintained over time. This surveys is being distributed to all night staff employees that have worked at the company for three or more years. The surveys will be distibuted over a one week time period. Names are not to be printed anywhere on the survey. You may return the survey at any time within this week to the specified file, completed or blank. You may choose not to participate in the survey, you simply can turn the survey in blank. The file will not be opened until the end of the week, this way the survey is kept more confidential.

At the end of the week the surveys will be collected and the data will then be compile along with the direct behavioral observations of the agent to analyze the major concerns of the office environment. Solutions will be discovered for these problems in a psychosocial intervention/ organizational development plan.

*****Please note** that this is a school project, it is just a mock plan, actual intervention measurements will not take place at this time.

Risks and Benefits:
As a participant you are being asked your personal opinion on matters of your job and feeling toward your job and co-workers. This may cause some personal stress. If you find it hard to comment about a certain question you are may free to decline to answer.

Time Commitment:
The survey should take less than twenty minutes of your time to complete.

Confidentiality:
Your name will not be included on any documents. It is believed that you will not be identified from any of the information provided. Nor, will it be known who and who did not complete the survey.

Right to Withdrawal:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. However, should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, there is no way to identify your anonymous document after it has been turned into the investigator.

IRB Approval:
This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin- Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

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Statement of Consent:
By completing the following survey you indicate that you understand the purpose of this study and that you agree to participate in the project entitled, A Psycho-Social/ Organizational Development Plan for a Mid-Sized Call Center.

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

1. What part of your daily routine at work would you change? Why?
   - Probe as necessary

2. Do you feel there are standards within the office environment?
   - Probe as necessary

3. Do you feel everyone is treated equally and fairly?
   - Probe as necessary

4. What do you disagree with that other groups (demographic groups or superiors) within the office do?
   - Probe as necessary

5. Do you feel that you serve every customer to the best of your ability?
   - Probe as necessary

Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research

Title: A Psycho-Social/ Organizational Development Plan for a Mid-Sized Call Center

Investigator:
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Description:

The purpose of this study is to determine where the core problems are within the office environment. The outcome will be a plan on how to correct these core problems in an intervention plan, suggesting activities to correct such problems.

A survey completed by the employees and a focus group with employees will aid in finding what areas of the office environment require change. The intervention plan will be drawn up based on these results.

The reason for the needed intervention is a lack in corporation and communication among several employees. These situations are currently being overlooked. The plan would give some insight into how these situations could be easily changed.

The focus group discussion will go more in depth on topics covered in the survey. The main topic will be what changes the employees feel need to be made within their office environment. The focus group discussion will last approximately one hour. The discussion will be auto taped only for the sake of the researcher, no names will be mentioned of the participants and the tape will property of the researcher only (not the company).

The data from the survey and focus group will be combined to analyze the major concerns of the office environment. From this information a combined psychosocial intervention and organizational development plan will be produced. The plan will be presented and reviewed with the Human Resource team.

***Please note** that this is a school project, it is just a mock plan, actual intervention measurements will not take place at this time.

Risks and Benefits:

As a participant you are being asked your personal opinion on matters of your job and feeling toward your job and co-workers. This may cause some personal stress. If you find it hard to comment about a certain question you are may free to decline to answer.

Time Commitment:

The focus group will last at least one hour. Participants that wish to continue the discussion may stay longer, but it is not required.

Confidentiality:
Your name will not be included on any documents. It is believed that you will not be identified from any of the information provided. Nor, will it be known who and who did not participate in the focus group.

Right to Withdrawal:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. However, should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, there is no way to identify your anonymous document after it has been turned into the investigator.

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Statement of Consent:
By completing the following survey you indicate that you understand the purpose of this study and that you agree to participate in the project entitled, A Psycho-Social/ Organizational Development Plan for a Mid-Sized Call Center.

Appendix C: Raw Data

Person 1	Person 2	Person 3	Person 4	Person 5	Person 6	Person 7	Person 8
4	4	2	4	3	3	4	2
1	2	2	1	1	2	2	3
4	2	1	4	3	1	2	1
3	4	2	3	3	1	4	2
2	4	1	2	1	3	4	2
2	2	1	3	1	3	4	4
4	5	5	5	4	3	5	4
4	4	3	4	3	2	4	2
3	4	4	4	3	2	4	1
4	2	2	2	3	2	3	4
4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4
4	3	5	4	4	4	4	1
2	3	2	2	3	1	5	1
2	3	1	2	1	1	2	1
Large yes	Somewhat yes	Large yes	Normal yes	Somewhat no	Large no	Somewhat no	Large no

Person 9	Person 10	Person 11	Person 12	Average
1	3	2	2	2.83
3	3	2	2	2
2	4	3	4	2.58
2	4	2	3	2.75
2	2	3	2	2.33
1	4	2	1	2.33
5	3	4	4	4.25
2	4	3	5	3.33
3	3	3	5	3.25
3	3	4	4	3
4	3	5	5	3.83
3	4	5	5	3.83
3	2	5	2	2.58
3	1	2	2	1.75
Large yes	Somewhat yes	Somewhat yes	Somewhat no	somewhat yes