Case Study 1: Teamwork at Marshall's Processing Plant

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Response to Question1

This case study deals with Marshal having trouble in implementing a team management system to enhance the performance of employees in the plant because most of the workers were not willing to take part in the team program. The team management system made two teams, one had to meet weekly, and the other had to meet monthly. One team was responsible for discussing work process improvement ideas, and the other was to discuss the issues facing plant as a whole such as benefits and major investments. The team management apparently looked effective, but further analysis revealed that the program as not as affected as some employees refused to participate in it. Review of the program shows that it may have been successful in soliciting ideas, but it did not appeal to employees. Three groups of employees refused to participate in team management fully.

The analysis of case exposes the fact that the original goals of team management at Marshall's Processing Plant comport more with the human resource management philosophy. To increase the productivity of the organization, Marshall introduces participation to benefit from the innovative ideas held by the workers. The human resource management philosophy emphasizes the need to maximize the organizational performance and employee satisfaction by the efficient use of human resources in an organization (Miller, 2008). In this case of team management at Marshall’s Plant, management realized the role of employee morale in enhancing employee productivity, especially the hierarchy of needs that needs to be addressed to ensure employee wellbeing.

This hierarchy of needs as defined by Maslow. The Maslow Hierarchy of need is a theory proposed by Abraham Maslow in a paper “Theory of Human Motivation” in 1943. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards. These include physiological needs or basic needs, safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs and needs for self-actualization (Mcleod, n.d.). To attend the needs higher-ups, the needs at the lower ends must be satisfied. The team management approach at Marshall’s plant sought to address the needs at a higher level such as esteem needs, affiliation needs and needs of self-actualization by soliciting feedbacks and creating the communication channels which followed in all directions. By introducing the discussion among the members of the group, management wanted to create the social relationship and affiliation among the employees. Management also wanted to increase esteem by empowering employees to share ideas about rewards system and process improvement. The outcome of these groups and meetings were communicated to the management team. However, the non-participants believe that their needs are not satisfied and they are not going to reach self-actualization.

The group of employees who felt that their input would not listen to is the most disturbing ones for the company. McGregor divided the managers into two theories theory Y and theory X. According to him, there are two types of members one who have little motivation for work and need authoritarian style to get the work done; he named this theory as X (Kopelman, Prottas, & Davis, 2008). on the other hand, a group of people who are intrinsically motivated and take pride in work needs a participate style of management. Team management at Marshall’s plant is based on theory Y, but the management is just soliciting opinions without the intention to implement them. This results in perceived "pseudo-participation," and in this way employee’s need of self-actualization are hit. This can be referred to as the issue with the third group of employees.

Likert's management systems describe the relationship, role of managers and subordinates and involvements in industrial settings (“Likert’s management systems,” n.d.). In this case, the climate at Marshall’s plant is consultative. According to the consultative system in the Likert’s system of management, subordinates get motivation through rewards and involvement in decision making. Management has confidence in subordinates but to a certain extent. Upper-level employees make decisions by getting inputs from the lower level of employees. Upper management takes control over the decisions and policies that affect the organization. Decision power is still in the hands of upper management, and therefore employees do not participate in thinking that their input is useless and they do not have the authority in decision making.

The Blake and Mouton managerial grid is a popular framework for thinking about leader’s orientation of task versus person (Fisher, 2009). Employing their managerial grid, it is identified that managers are using the "Middle of the Road" management. They are also concerned with people and production and efficiency, but they are unable to reach the full potential. The goal of management at Marshal is team management, and they can achieve that by satisfying their workers. This will eventually increase the efficiency at the end of the day.

In a nutshell, to achieve full participation from the workers, management at Marshall needs to implement the ideas of all the theorists aimed at satisfying the needs of workers and persuade them to participate fully. The management has to consider Maslow theory to meet the unmet needs of employees and should practice McGregor's Theory Y to make workers feel motivated value their ideas and McGregor's Theory X to motivate Bill. In addition, Marshall's management must adopt and implement a Likert system to enhance the use of human recourse and correct the attitude of higher management to value ideas of subordinates and involve them in decision making. Moreover, the team leader at Marshall must be cycled every year to get everyone’s voice and thoughts noticed and so that their achievements can be reviewed.

References

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