Case Study: Open Space Work Place

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[Name of the Institution]

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***Reasons for Resistance:***

An open-plan office is an office floor that generalizes the workplace environment. Since the firm was growing a lot faster, the partners of the law firm Mark and Cathy presented an open-plan office working environment. The benefits of open-plan include more economical use of space, more flexibility and opportunities for teamwork. There was resistance to this step by almost all members of the firm. The senior associates complained that they have lost their status without their own offices and now they do not get the same respect that they used to have. One other major problem was privacy; now that everyone was sharing a commonplace some secretaries complained that now they can't talk with their boyfriends because other people can listen to them. One employer Candy Wood complained that they are now too far away from shops. Brian Talanoa complained that there is no privacy and you get a feeling that a big brother or sister is always spying on you. Some lawyers also complained that they need to discuss some private matters with clients and cannot take calls in conference and meeting rooms.

***Minimizing the Resistance:***

 An open-place office space eliminates the traditional environment of private offices and meeting spaces. For a conference or meeting, there may be a specified room but apart from that, most businesses are operated by everyone working on the same floor. The first thing to improve while working on open-plan offices is to match your tasks to spaces. If there are a whole bunch of conversations that are essential, then the best way to manage them is to cluster them one by one and assign a specific spot of the office to them. The next thing is to create and design your workspace in such a way that it allows and maintains privacy. Another problem that is a major concern while working in an open-place is the noise. To minimize the noise, one should get rid of glass hard ceilings and hard floors because all of these things fail to absorb sound. Hurdles, rooms or moveable barriers, like rolling whiteboards, are another way to ensure privacy and let people focus on their work instead of listening to others. The main purpose of open space design was to encourage employees and teams to pursue a stabilized form of work (Thanem et al., 2011).

***Communication Barrier:***

Communication issues can be divided into two types; one is in the shape of "noise". In this case, people are unable to understand what the other person is trying to convey due to an abundance of different voices or sounds. While the second reason is the presence of a barrier or gap due to which employees are unable to communicate properly with their supervisors or managers. The problem here, in this case, is that there is no proper way of communication between the owners and employees. The review and evaluation systems are so bad that it is difficult to recognize and distinguish people based on their performances. Bonuses and increase in salary should always be made based on performances of the employees and for that, a proper evaluation and reward system should be in place. This system should be directly monitored by the firm's partners and the rewards should also be given by them directly. This will help bridge the communication gap and will also give employees a sense of familiarity with their workers. Also, more than half of the people working in open-plan offices usually have problems with visual and sound privacies. Workers often complained that there is so much noise that it is very difficult to focus on your work. Majority of the negative effects in a workplace environment are usually connected to an increase in background noise and ensuing distraction (Jahncke et al., 2011). It is human psychology that if a person hears someone talking, he/she will not only get disturbed but will unconsciously feel insecure of the fact that others can hear him as well. Distracting conversations and unwanted phone calls are some other things that increase noise pollution. These are some of the major reasons that not only distract you, but also increase your stress level. Communication barriers can also occur where there is prejudgment against the sender and there is a mistrust between the sender and the receiver (Mittal, 2018).

***Controlling Excessive Noises***

There are many ways through which one can reduce the excessive noise that causes disturbance to people and due to which they are unable to focus. If there is a large reflective plane, the basic idea is to break it down into smaller reflective surfaces by disturbing it with absorption products or something that is non-reflective. Tapestry, curtains, drape or decorative partitions will not only help your workplace look more aesthetic, but will also help in reducing the extra sounds produced in workspaces. Fabric-covered furniture also helps in reducing noise as compared to that of leather-covered furniture. A rug or a canvas print on the wall will also help reduce the noises in the office. One other way is to actively control the noise yourself, for example, a fan also produces noise but it is not as disturbing as human voice. Moreover, it helps in countering those noises. In this way, you are fighting noise with noise. Sound deadening materials also help to counteract noises. For example, if there is a shop adjacent to your work area or a place where you will hear a lot of noise, try to put a physical barrier between you and the source of the noise. Using quite rooms can increase the comfort level of people working there and will also help them in coping with adverse environmental effect (Haapakangas et al., 2018). Planning the right space for the right work is an important task, so is using masking techniques to prevent voices and its distraction. Choosing the right material in the right space is an important task that needs to be done while designing a workspace for a specific activity. It is very unlikely for people to continue working in a workplace unless they control and reduce the noise in it.

***Sources of Powers***

Power is often associated with a bad meaning however, power is, in fact, nothing but having ownership of authority or control over others skills usage. The usage of one's power can help businesses to take lead over their competitors or lag behind them. Power is hypothesized as a skill but it can also be conceptualized as an asset of social relation (Sturm and Antonakis, 2015). Most of these powers are used to maintain discipline and balance in the workplace. There are generally five sources of power namely legitimate, expert, coercive, referent and reward power. Legitimate power is often termed as positional power as it is an authentic power generally depicted by someone who holds a responsible position in a firm or an organization. In this case, Owen Cheetham, Jack Wayne, Mark Cheetham and Cathy Wayne are the people that can depict sources of power. The new partners Mark and Cathy when imposed the idea of open place office on others it impacted all the workers of the firms hugely. They have now many problems related to communication, privacy, and getting the rewards of their performance. Although, the step Cathy and Mark took was for the benefit of the firm so that the people in the office can work and communicate better with each other but the plan has massively backfired. Now except a few selected employees of the firm all of the workers have some kind of issue with the management.

Another example of misuse of power which was used in this case was referent power. Referent power is a power that results generally because of someone's personality in the hierarchy. There should always be a certain level of respect and gratitude in one's communication level while dealing with any person in the workplace. In this case, Mai had issues with the attitude and personality of Jack Wayne. She said their attitude is such that you would not even now that what are they expecting from you. For example, Mr Wayne pointed out that she was too slow in processing different contracts and she often makes mistakes. So, for her correctness when she asked about those mistakes his reply was very unprofessional. He brushed her off by saying that those mistakes were too many so he corrected it himself. Mai complained that Mr. Wayne did not even say one nice thing about her work.

One other abuse of power that was depicted in this case was use of reward power. Reward power is when a person in an authoritative position has to recognize and reward people. Salary hikes paid leaves, promotions and performance bonuses are some examples of what can be provided through reward power. Those managers and executives who possess reward powers can hugely influence the performances of employees. Reward power can help in getting the best out of your employees and make them work harder. On the other hand, abusing this power can also have some negative impacts as well. Any favouritism shown can reduce the productivity and morale of employees. The available informational power should be used to increase meaningful work to increase employee skills and provide them with a sense of pride and ownership to create autonomy(Zigarmi et al., 2015). A clear example of this was the case of the accountant John who was promised a role of "general manager type", who except lawyers would manage the rest of the company. However, nine months was passed since his appointment and John has only four people working under him. Its been almost a year and the restructuring of the firm was not taken place yet. When he inquired about his new position he was asked to wait and let the people settle in their new positions. However, John was not convinced that it would go through according to the position he was promised. Due to this reason, John was now thinking about and evaluating his position.

***Tactics Used for Influence:***

Positive leadership skills can improve the workplace environment. There is a relation between the development of an organization and better influence of leaders and these correlations were positive for transformational and transactional leadership (Curtis, 2018). The initial tactic of influence the new partners used was to move the office into an open space workplace to save money on different boards, separations or walls. The other purpose of this move was to remove communication barriers and create a healthy workplace environment. One other important advantage of this move was to put the employees under the direct eye of the hierarchy.

The other method of influence that the firm used was to use their employees to gain new clients and then don't pay a proper reward to them. Anna Ivanova was one of the employees who were unhappy with the bonuses she got as a reward. She complained that she got the contract of her brother's property company but didn't get any special reward for that. The company used her influence to gain new clients but didn't offer her a proper recompense. However, Anna also used the company’s influence in securing her brother’s company by giving him some confidential information about a client who was his main competitors.

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