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**Case Study IV: Alice Saddy**

**Executive Summary:**

Led by Ken MacLellan, executive director for the foundation, the Alice Saddy Association is a Canadian non-profit foundation that provides vital communal support through in-home support for people with developmental disabilities. As a foundation, their major goals revolve around providing a multitude of flexible, “people-centered” care types and services, in the hopes of fostering independent living. The Alice Saddy Association has undergone significant change and growth since its creation in 1973. From 1998 to 2007, the foundation has increased from supporting 100 care recipients to 175, and with growth, an increasing number of support workers and managerial staff as well.

With Alice Saddy’s growth, the foundation had previously undergone organizational adaptation and changes, adding employees and managers along with growing those supported. Despite their growth, the foundation has continuously emphasized “people-centered” care and support. The Alice Saddy Association has continued a practice of personalized delivery in services, best-matching support workers and those supported, valuing a continued connection between support worker and recipient. Additionally, as burnout for support workers is high, the foundation has worked to incorporate split-care strategies to help their workers.

However, several members of the organization have identified difficulties with the organizational style, which has increasingly become less feasible as the organization grows, and ages. MacLellan notes that the organizational challenges and increasing communication barriers at the foundation may lead to future challenges and ultimately, endangerment to those who are cared for. With the interest of a workable solution for the foundation itself, it is vital for MacLellan to recognize and prioritize the challenges and causes currently encountered by the foundation.

**Main Challenges:**

Issues with Organizational Structure: The complexity of each network of support for Alice Saddy’s care recipients creates problems due to over-complexity of its connections.

* Because care is split by expertise area, and balanced workloads over different support workers, each person supported by the foundation is directly supported by multiple support workers.
* These teams of support workers are managed by a manager of support services.
* Managers of support services provide training, scheduling, and organization for support care workers. Individually, they also provide performance reviews on a specific support worker.

This style of management, known as “cross-reporting”, allowed Alice Saddy to continue their pledge of individualized support to each care recipient. It worked very well with smaller numbers of people, as support managers’ roles adapted to a managerial role. However, as the foundation cares for more people, this growth adds exponentially to time required for providing oversight.

With the challenges of a far-larger organization, support managers are unable to provide the same level of support to care recipients or support workers. Their increased responsibilities from the increased number they provide organization and oversight on has led to a reduction in ability to meet and discuss specific cases, as well as coordinate support and recommendations for the foundation’s recipients.

For support workers, their voice is diminished, as requests for feedback and input from managers has become less-and-less available, and valuable performance assessments were possibly being left uncompleted. On performance management, the US Office of Management and Policy writes “If effective feedback is designed into a performance management program, individual and team performance will improve, which will make your organization more effective.” Conversely, without this regular feedback, organizational performance will suffer- in this case, worse provision of care for a vulnerable population.

Staff Overworked, and Threatened by Burnout: Employees at the Alice Saddy Association are, at multiple levels, overworked. The foundation’s support workers can work evenings and weekends, and the position is seen as highly physically and mentally demanding, with a high rate of stress and burnout. The foundation has incorporated splitting work requirements over more support workers, which has shown to be successful in reducing some burnout. At Alice Saddy, a major frustration from employees. In a look at the five largest burnout factors, Wigert and Agarwal (2018) stated five major focus factors of burnout- “unfair treatment at work”, “unmanageable workload”, “lack of role clarity”, “lack of communication and support from (their) manager”, and “unreasonable time pressure”, *all* of which are issues for Alice Saddy Association’s support workers.

The support services supervisors, too, have their work split between caregiving and supervisory tasks. With the additional responsibilities of managing both more and more support workers and care recipients, they are struggling to provide the support needed for assisting support workers as well, and they have had increasing responsibilities while remaining unchanged in managerial staffing. This has led to them often unable to provide necessary support for the many responsibilities that they now hold, particularly, in the feedback they are able to provide for support workers. Moreover, their overwork endangers a fairly-distributed workload among workers. As Knight (2016) suggests four major practices for the best utilization of a team’s skills- leadership must continually have a plan, clarify roles, and set expectations, and have personal communication with employees, all of which are neglected by case workers.

Increasingly, the nature of overwork at Alice Saddy is deteriorating- supervisors are increasingly tasked with managing the increasing issues of more-and-more workers, workers who are given increasingly-less support, yet asked to care for an aging population with growing needs. As a whole, these practices will lead to burnout, particularly dangerous for caregivers, as it directly affects care. In a study of institutional caregivers, Lin & Lin (2013) write, “[Burnout](https://www-sciencedirect-com.proxy-bc.researchport.umd.edu/topics/psychology/burnout) is one of the main chronic health problems with negative consequences on caregivers and quality of care”. Moreover, burnout from studies is dangerous for the health of care workers- Lin & Lin write that studies “...revealed that the generic health and quality of life in caregivers for individuals with ID (intellectual disabilities) were significantly poorer than those of the general population”. The nature of Alice Saddy’s overwork directly threatens the well-being of the entire organization.

Poor Communication and Deteriorating Trust: Organizational growth and employee burnout have exacerbated communication gaps between worker and supervisor. Where organizational communication was easily possible with smaller levels, allowing for ‘ad-hoc’ support structures, the close-knit “cross-reporting” structure has actually led to a growing *lack* of communication due to time pressures.

Along with a lack of performance reviews, feedback, and training, Alice Saddy has also seen a troubling change in decreasing communication across all lines. Overworked support worker supervisors are less-able to meet, communicate, and discuss important organizational issues. The support workers themselves now limit their communication to parts of the organization in order to expedite the process, which has exacerbated crossed-communication lines and further inconsistency.

This leads to an increasing lack of organizational trust within Alice Saddy. On inconsistent messaging within an organization, Galford and Drapeau (2003) warn that the organizational practices such as inconsistent standards, inconsistent messages, misplaced benevolence, and false feedback are quick destroyers of trust within an institution. Alice Saddy’s support managers’ likely unintentional neglect is eroding trust with its mixed messaging and inconsistency.

**Root Causes:**

Lack of Long-Term Goal Setting: Alice Saddy is an organization about its people. The organization is driven by its passion for helping those with disabilities, and has embraced a ‘people-first’ philosophy. However, the organization has neglected its own workers’ development and well-being. This begins with Alice Saddy’s mission statement, which contains no language of fostering its own employees. Moreover, their current disorganization can be rooted back to their lack of specific goal setting for the larger organization. Most importantly, Alice Saddy lacks a long-term vision and goal for its own success.

Historically, perhaps Alice Saddy *did* set goals earlier in its tenure, but the disorganization they now feel is indicative of, at best, being unrealistic. For goal setting, it is vital for organizations not to overreach. Partners in Leadership (2020) clearly state, “...what's the number one mistake leaders make when setting organizational goals? Trying to accomplish too much, too quickly.” Additionally, they assert that goals of this nature are often unclear and directionless.

As Feliciano (2008) writes,“Organizational goals inform employees where the organization is going and how to get there”. Feliciano states that the creation and provision of longer-term goals provide motivation for the organization and its employees, allowing all employees to better-understand what “needs to be done to succeed”, allowing for more contributions and better productivity. Lacking these goals, Alice Saddy’s upper management will continue to lead aimlessly, endangering the organization, and the employees under them. Without goals, the Alice Saddy Association will continue to struggle, especially if they continue their organizational growth.

Lack of Effective Teamwork: The communication barriers and gap between Alice Saddy’s support workers and support supervisors are indicative of a lack of effective teamwork across the organization. While ad-hoc teams worked in the past, growth has not led to the organizational changes in teams necessary for the Alice Saddy Association to effectively function.

Of high-functioning teams, Prossack (2021) claims that trust, clear communication, defined roles and responsibilities, engaged leadership, and collective goals are the tenets of effective teams and overall team success. Teams at Alice Saddy are under increasing pressure from the lack of effective teamwork (and leadership of the team) are directly impacting the engagement of workers, leaders, and their fulfillment of responsibilities to their own positions, despite their hard work and good intentions.

This teamwork exists at levels higher than support supervisors. Upper management has not taken on the responsibility of growing the support supervisor staffing for five years. They have knowingly given more and more responsibility without reward or support for those who directly report to them. Ultimately MacLellan and HR must work together with their full staff and recommit to working as a full team.

**Recommendation Table:**

| **Recommendations** | **Rationale** | **Description/Time Frame** | **Criteria for Success** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Re-create a mission statement that empowers Alice Saddy’s employees as well as care recipients at the organization. | Management must re-commit to providing the proper support and training for its support workers, to better the organization and improve delivered services. | **8/1/21-8/15/21:** HR will meet with support worker supervisors and support workers to formulate a list of concerns from both parties.  **8/22/21:** HR will draft additional employee-focused developmental language, as agreed-upon by the organization, and put it to organizational vote to amend the current mission statement.  **8/22/21 - 9/1/21:** Employees will vote to approve the amendment. | By the end of October, Alice Saddy has adopted a people-centric mission statement that incorporated a focus on development and improvement of communication, appreciation for their employees and working conditions to the current mission statement. |
| 2. Reorganize organizational teams and structures within that maintain the revised mission statement. | Current organizational structure is fully-based on patient needs, but emphasis on employee development and well-being | **8/1/21-9/1/21:** HR and supervisory staff should meet and discuss current concerns about lack of time, lack of ability to communicate with workers and perform job tasks, as required. HR should also meet with support staff workers to determine which need areas are not currently being met by supervisors, and how prevalent the need is.  **9/1/21-10/1/21:** HR will consider hiring solutions and organizational restructuring, with special considerations on whether the restructuring satisfies the revised mission statement, and for what effect it will have on career.  **10/1/21:** HR will propose these changes to Alice Saddy’s management, who will act on these changes. | By the end of October, Alice Saddy will reorganize their institutional structure to suit the needs of all parties involved, as per their mission statement. |
| 3. Develop a long-term organizational growth target for growing patient base; align shorter- term objectives towards those goals | Alice Saddy’s growth has been an issue in the past as the organization has scaled up, organization needs to rethink and develop specific, measurable growth targets and service targets so as not to endanger care recipients. | **9/1/21-11/1/21:** HR should schedule and conduct group and individual meetings of all Alice Saddy employees to share in a brainstorming session about specific organizational targets, and achievable goals that they wish to prioritize. This should include a larger organizational goal, as well as individual growth goals of each individual, as pertaining to the revised mission statement.  **9/1/21 - 11/1/21:** During this time, support staff supervisors should conduct an informal interview of institutional and personal goals with each of its employees.  **11/1/21**: Management and HR will meet and discuss their shared goal, as gained from interviews and general meeting, and combine their information.  **11/1/21-12/1/21:** HR will work to convert organizational goals into SMART goals with accessible metrics (“We will add 10 new care recipients per year for the next 3 years, and create one support supervisor position and 5 support worker positions to support the addition of care recipients”), and the same for personal/developmental goals for workers.  **12/1/21:** HR will propose three viable organizational goals, and any popular developmental goals, to be voted on by the entire organization.  **12/15/21:** Vote will complete, and employees will sign a document that outlines the revised institutional and individual goals.  **12/15/21-** Hr will work with management to break the organizational and personal development goals into achievable milestones for each employee. | A revised, yearly organizational goal is debated, created, signed, and completed by the end of the year. |

**Summary:**

The Alice Saddy Association is an organization with its heart in the right place, and a long history of success with those it cares for. However, careful interventions are required at this critical stage in growth, as well as a re-thinking of what they wish to become. Without these interventions, Alice Saddy runs significant risk at deteriorating care for their recipients, which could lead to a future tragedy.

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