Case Study #3

Draft Day

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**Introduction**

The movie Draft Day illustrates concepts that we have been discussing in Organizational Behavior. Concepts such as “stress in the workplace” which types of stress there are and how to manage stress, leadership and which qualities go into being an effective leader, decision making process, how to set goals and how to give or receive feedback. Throughout this case study I will be using examples from the movie that show how these concepts are portrayed.

**Movie Synopsis**

Draft Day is a fictional movie that follows the 2014 NFL Draft and Cleveland Browns manager Sonny Weaver Jr as he decides what to do when his team unexpectedly ends up with the first overall draft pick. On top of this, while Sonny is about to leave for work, he informed by his girlfriend and coworker Ali Parker that she is pregnant with their child. Lastly, Sonny is still dealing with the loss of his father, which is also causing tension with his mother.

**Concept #1: Stress**

Stress is a state of physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors that are usually difficult to deal with. This response affects nearly every system in the body, which influences people’s feelings and how they behave. When stress is quite severe the body goes through three separate stages: alarm, resistance and exhaustion. This is referred to as General Adaptation Syndrome which is what I will be discussing in this case study and to do that we will take a look at the main character in the movie, Sonny Weaver Jr.

Sonny Weaver Jr started to experience general adaptation syndrome when his boss, the owner of the Cleveland Browns instructed him to “make a splash” in the draft or the owner would fire him which was implied in a veiled threat that he gave to Sonny. “If you don’t make a splash, I’m going to have to.” This caused Sonny to accept an earlier trade from the Seattle Seahawks and accept their first overall pick for Cleveland’s first round pick for the next three years. The stressful situation was resolved towards the end of the film when Sonny selected the pick that he intended to all along, Vontae Mack, even though this could have cost Sonny his job. However with Bo Callahan falling further down the draft, Sonny was able to salvage his career by making some clever last minute moves to reclaim his lost draft picks and select another player that his head coach wanted. This stressful situation was episodic as this particular situation only occurred once (as far as we know) however the role of a GM would likely see Sonny find himself in similar situations either in the past or in his future career.

**Concept #2: Goal Setting and Feedback**

Goal Setting is a process for setting achievable targets that are realistic and complete in a certain time-frame. In the workplace an example of goal setting could be seen in an employees yearly performance review which could then be used as a basis for motivation (Do well in your review and you may be entitled to a higher wage increase.) In order for goal setting to be effective, participants concerned with the goals must be aware of what needs to be accomplished, accept these goals and believe that they can be achieved. In Draft Day, we see this taking place in how the entire management office comes together to select the best possible player with their draft pick. This is what I will be discussing for this section.

Throughout the duration of the movie, the management team has the goal of selecting the best player available to them in the draft. In order to accomplish this goal they must identify what the specific needs of the team are and we already see that they have come up with their two leading choices, a running back who the coach is very interested in selecting or a fullback who the GM believes would bolster their defense. When the option to potentially select the highest rated player in the draft, QB Bo Callahan, Sonny Weaver Jr still keeps the team on track to make sure that they are selecting the best available player that fits their needs as a team. Throughout the film other people associated with the team try to influence his decision, the head coach tries to make a deal behind his back, current QB Brian Drew requests a trade, outside teams offer a trade for the Browns current QB and through all of that, Sonny Weaver stick to his intended plan. After getting his management team to research Bo Callahan, his character and play are both called in to question and Sonny selects the player that he intended to pick all along which we discussed earlier.

Feedback is information that is being given to a person or a group with the purpose of modifying or improving outcomes. Using the example of the yearly performance review, this is generally the time when an employer will evaluate an employee’s performance and then offer feedback and set goals to improve the workers overall performance. This could also be a time for an employee to offer their own feedback which helps an employee feel like they are being listened to and help motivate them.

For an example of feedback we can jump to the scene in the office where the Coach comes in to Sonny’s office and lights the draft manual on fire, while this is a rather extreme form of feedback it does show how the coach lays out the situation, he is clearly upset about not being involved in the decision to trade for the number one pick and feels that Sonny’s behavior is leaving him out of the loop. What is missing from this scene is the Impact portion of the impact feedback tool as he never explains to Sonny exactly how this decision has impacted him.

**Concept #3: Decision-Making**

Decision making occurs when a person is presented with two or more alternatives to any given situation, be it something clear cut like “what color shirt am I going to wear today?” or something more complicated like “Which companies would I like to work for?” Several steps are involved in the human brain before a person actually makes a choice which could be referred to as a decision-making model. This process covers everything from how a person identifies a problem, how they come up with solutions, which solution is best, which one is the preferred solution all the way to evaluating the outcome of a decision and finding feedback.

To show the decision making model, let us look at how Sonny made his draft selection and examine it through each step of the process.

1. Verify, define the problem - Sonny has to select the player who he thinks will best help his team
2. Generate all possible solutions – Teams go through a draft analysis of each potential pick and come up with possible selections based on who they need vs who they think will be available when it is their turn to make a choice.
3. Generate Objective Assessment Criteria – Based on their analysis, teams compare stats, read over scouting reports, watch videos and analyze their own team needs to determine who they want to select the most. In the movie, even though Sonny ends up with the #1 pick, he still assesses whether Bo Callahan is still the best choice.
4. Choose the best solution – Sonny chose Vontae Mack, a player he felt could transform his team and help them win more games.
5. Implement solution – Sonny directs his staff to inform the commissioner of their selection
6. Monitor and evaluate outcomes and results – at this stage it is too early to tell if a draft pick will or will not pan out.
7. Feedback – Negative feedback is given up until Sonny is given an opportunity to reclaim his draft picks and select more valuable players which then turns into positive feedback. In a real world sports scenario, feedback wouldn’t happen until the player started their professional career.

**Concept #4: Leadership**

Several processes are involved when it comes to leadership. These processes include organizing, directing, coordinating and motivating efforts towards achievement of certain group or organizational goals. While there are many theories on what the different types of relationships are, in this case study we will be focusing on two types, Transactional Leadership which emphasizes followers accomplishing tasks (i.e. incentives, benefits etc.) As well as Transformational Leadership where a leader encourages, inspires and motivates followers to create change that will help grow and shape the future success of a group or organization.

An example of transactional leadership is how the owner treats Sonny, through the course of the movie he basically promises to Sonny that he gets to keep his job if he performs well at the draft.

An example of transformational leadership is seen through how Sonny treats his staff, especially his coach. It is very apparent at the end of the film when the coach is about to quit and Sonny pulls off those last minute trades, by then everyone is firmly behind Sonny and endorse his vision and the direction he has laid out for their team.

**Conclusion**

Draft Day has some clear examples of stress in the work place such as Sonny dealing with episodic stress during the busiest day a GM has in professional sports, we also saw some examples of different styles of leadership. Sonny again being more transformational in how he inspired his team to move towards his vision vs The Owner who was more inclined to offer incentives for good performance. Goal Setting and Decision Making were seen in how Sonny and his team selected their draft picks and we saw some examples of feedback, one being the coach burning the Draft Analysis to prove a point to his boss. This concludes this case study, thank you.