

Deviant Workplace Behavior and How It Can Negatively Affect The 21st Century Workplace

Amanda Tallman

Southern New Hampshire University

OL 500 Section 3940

Dr. Burton Reynolds

June 7, 2009

Abstract

This study examined what the definition of workplace deviance is and how it can negatively affect the workplace of the 21st century, with specific regards given to the workplace of Mascoma Savings Bank. This study used general observation of the loan servicer department of Mascoma Savings Bank and related those observations to outside scholarly resources. From these observations it has been hypothesized that there is dissatisfaction.

Introduction

Workplace deviance has been an ongoing issue for employers over the years and Mascoma Savings Bank is not immune to the situations workplace deviance can cause. But what causes deviance in the workplace and how can it be overcome? The answer to that common question has a lot to do with the individual organization, their established norms, and how management deals with and accepts these norms. Workplace deviance is defined as behavioral departures from the norms of a reference group (Warren, 2003, pg. 622).

The reason for studying workplace deviance and how it relates to the specific situations that come up at Mascoma Savings Bank is due to the fact that, in some departments, employee deviance is a much bigger problem than many managers are willing to admit. All too often it seems as though these managers are not willing to find the root cause of the deviance nor are they willing to come up with solutions to the problem and prevent future situations of deviance from occurring.

Discussion

Many people may view workplace deviance as being a negative thing in most workplaces, especially when the deviant behavior leads to things like petty theft, destruction of company property, and using company time for personal ventures (Robbins and Judge, 2009, pg. 59). In order to discourage behavior that a particular company may view as deviant, many companies implement policies that discourage deviant behavior from occurring in the first place. It is to be noted, however, that just because policies are put in place that are aimed at curbing workplace deviance does not always mean that deviant behavior will always be prevented (Harris et al, 2007).

Most workplace deviance occurs when an employee feels as though they are being mistreated in some way, shape, or form. In order to properly determine how the deviance is going to affect a particular company, one must first determine what the established norms of the individual's reference group are, then from there establish clear guidelines on what the expected behavior of an individual is in relation to that group (Warren, 2003). In addition to establishing what the norms of a given group are, one must also consider what that individual's perception of the group of which they are part of is and whether that individual perception fits with the established norms of the group. It has been shown that if a person's perception of the group is negative along with a low level of self esteem and emotional stability then an individual is more likely to engage in behavior that is considered negative and deviant (Neubert, 2004).

Recently a situation at Mascoma Savings Bank arose in which a sense of unhappiness within the workplace occurred. An employee of the loan servicing department of Mascoma Savings Bank had a sudden departure from the company without explanation. The newly vacated position was offered to the remaining servicing staff, of which three employees

expressed interest. The three employees who applied for this position were the employees of one particular supervisor who was rather new supervising employees in the loan servicing department. While this particular supervisor has been in loan servicing for several years and was quite knowledgeable in her own job functions, it has been noted by some that she is not knowledgeable in other job functions of those who directly reported to her. The vice president of the loan servicing department thought it was odd when everybody in this particular group applied for the same job and took it upon himself to find out whether or not there was a problem in that particular area and what could be done to remedy the problem.

One of the most obvious problems determined by the vice president of the loan servicing department was that the employees under the particular supervisor in question were not being given an adequate amount of work to be done during the work day, in fact, tasks were often taken away from employees and given to other employees when this supervisor perceived her staff as being overworked and not having enough time in which to complete assigned tasks. Another problem that was occurring within this group was a sense of nothing being done when problems arose. Often when issues were brought up, the supervisor in question would not follow through on correcting the problem, thus employees would tend to not voice their opinions on future issues due to the fact that previous issues were not resolved. This lack of control over what tasks an employee is assigned and how those tasks are accomplished is a constant source of stress for many employees in the loan department.

One way in which deviant behavior is occurring within the loan servicing department is that of employees engaging in activities that are not supporting of Mascoma Savings Bank and the work they have been assigned to accomplish within their given department. Typically this includes such activities as surfing the Internet and frequent socialization with other work areas as

opposed to accomplishing the tasks to which they are assigned. Both of these examples end up causing a loss of productive work time, which ends up wasting company resources and thus costs the bank money in the long run. Another way in which deviant behavior has occurred is when employees are expected to conform to the norms of the group. For example, many employees at Mascoma Savings Bank participate in various charity events held in the community throughout the year. When an employee enters the work group who chooses to not participate in a given activity, that person is often looked upon as a person who may not care about a particular cause, even though this may not be the case, and therefore may be treated differently by various employees within the department.

One important thing to point out is that workplace deviance is not always paired with certain behaviors in the workplace and can sometimes indicate dysfunction within a particular work group (Warren, 2003). One of the ways in which the vice president of loan servicing has determined deviance within the particular work group in question has been to compare that group with another, more successful group also under his supervision. It has been shown that any negative feeling toward a company can end up being a trigger for deviant behavior in the workplace (Neubert, 2004).

Two major types of deviance within Mascoma Savings Bank are present: organizational deviance, where employees are withholding information, and interpersonal deviance, where employees are hostile toward other co-workers (Neubert, 2004). For most employees at Mascoma Savings Bank, organizational deviance has been occurring when an employee expresses a concern or idea and that idea is not acknowledged or addressed. Due to the employee not being acknowledged, that employee now feels as though they are not valued and tend to not make suggestions when given a future opportunity to do so. It has also been observed that when

organizational deviance occurs and is not corrected in a timely fashion, interpersonal deviance soon follows. The employee, who is now already annoyed by the fact that their voice is not being heard within the organization, starts taking their frustration out on other workers. The employee who is being hostile may feel justified due to the fact that they feel as though they are not being fairly treated, whereas the victims of their hostility view the employee as unprofessional and downright rude.

Once it is determined that deviant behavior in the workplace has occurred it must then be determined how that behavior is effecting the work group as a whole and how the behavior can be corrected once it has already begun. The first way in which the vice president of the loan servicing department would be able to correct the problem would be to find a supervisor who is competent in the job function at hand and is well versed in employee relations and supervision. That is not to say that the current person in the position of supervisor couldn't be trained in employee relations, however if the current person in that position is not competent and is not putting forward effort to adequately address the situation, then the vice president must take steps to correct the problem for the benefit of the department as a whole.

The next thing that must be done is to create an environment where all employees are satisfied with their jobs and are willing to go above and beyond their daily tasks whenever the situation arises. Having employees who are satisfied with their jobs is the first step when it comes to creating any successful business. When employees are happy with their jobs they are more likely to believe in the particular organization and what it stands for, they are more likely to have higher job performance, they are less likely to look for alternative working arrangements, they are more focused on keeping customers happy, and they are less likely to be absent from work (Robbins and Judge, 2009).

Lastly, all of the jobs within the department should be re-designed in order to fully utilize the talents of the employees within the department and reduce the occurrences of turnover and the need to hire new employees. To do this, every employee should be able to rotate position and experience other areas of the department to which they are part of. Each employee should also have the opportunity to enlarge their own job by taking on the tasks of other jobs that are closely related to their own. Lastly, employees should be encouraged to seek out job enrichment and look for ways to move up within the company and not just remain at the level to which they are assigned (Robbins and Judge 2009). Promoting employees from within the same organization is the easiest way of gaining new managers without the need and the cost of hiring and training an outside employee.

Conclusion

It is no mystery that deviant workplace behavior and unhappiness within the workplace are having a negative effect on the loan servicing department of Mascoma Savings Bank. All too often employees are not satisfied with their work and seek to engage in behaviors that could ultimately end up costing the organization as a whole a substantial sum of money due to a lack of productivity. It is clear that a change needs to be made within the organization in order to improve employee satisfaction as a whole and reduce the amount of turnover that occurs within the department. If the suggestions made in this paper are implemented, it could ultimately lead to the necessary improvements that will end up preventing workplace deviance and improve Mascoma Savings Bank in the long run.

References

A hostile work environment... ...and how to deal with it. (2008, June 26). *The Bangkok Post*.

Retrieved April 9, 1930, from

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=1501105041&Fmt=7&clientId=49311&RQT=309&VName=PQD>

Applebaum, S. H., Iaconi, G. D., & Matousek, A. (2007). Positive and negative deviant workplace behaviors: causes, impacts, and solutions. *Corporate Governance*, 7(5), 586-598.

Daw, J. (n.d.). *Road rage, air rage and now 'desk rage'*. Retrieved April 30, 2009, from

<http://www.apa.org/monitor/julaug01/deskrage.html>

Harris, K. J., Harvey, P., Harris, R. B., & Brouer, R. L. (2007). Deviant Workplace Behavior: An Examination of the Justification Process. *Journal of Applied Sciences Research*, 3(12), 1921-1928.

Hostile Work Environment | Hostile Workplace. (n.d.). Retrieved April 30, 2009, from

http://employeeissues.com/hostile_work_environment.htm

Judge, T. A., & Robbins, S. P. (2009). *Essentials of Organizational Behavior (10th Edition)*. Alexandria, VA: Prentice Hall.

Neubert, S. P. (2004). *The Five-Factor Model in the Workplace*. Retrieved April 30, 2009, from

<http://www.personalityresearch.org/papers/neubert.html>

Understanding Workplace Harassment. (n.d.). Retrieved April 30, 2009, from

<http://www.fcc.gov/owd/understanding-harassment.html>

Warren, D. E. (2003). Constructive and Destructive Deviance In Organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 28(4), 622-632.

- Wellen, J. M., & Neale, M. (2006). Deviance, Self-Typicality, and Group Cohesion: The Corrosive Effects of the Bad Apples on the Barrel. *Small Group Research*, 37(2), 165-185. Retrieved April 9, 1930, from <http://sgr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/37/2/165>
- de Lara, P. Z., & Verano-Tacoronte, D. (2007). Investigating the effects of procedural justice on workplace deviance: Do employees' perceptions of conflicting guidance call the tune?. *International Journal of Manpower*, 28(8), 715-729. Retrieved April 30, 2009, from <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/10.1108/01437720710835183>