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Midterm Assignment

Part 1

My ideal workplace after graduation is the Lincoln Children's Zoo. Zoos have captivated me since I was a child, and the conversation with the zoo's retired CEO, John Chapo, fueled my enthusiasm. I believe I can make a meaningful contribution, which is why I would like to be the Director of Guest Experience at the Lincoln Children's Zoo, where I would ensure that every visitor leaves with unforgettable memories.

Part 2

Transformational Leadership is a powerful theory that offers detailed guidelines for leaders who want to effectively inspire and guide their teams. This leadership style, known for encouraging innovation and ongoing enhancement, is critical in guiding organizations toward long-term success. Inspirational Motivation is a key component of Transformational Leadership, emphasizing the leader's role in encouraging employees to perform at their best and fostering a sense of purpose that expands beyond individual tasks, thereby creating an environment in which employees feel inspired to contribute their skills and ideas to accomplishing larger organizational goals. In particular, Inspirational Motivation is described as the skill to "articulate in simple ways an appealing vision and provide meaning and a sense of purpose in what needs to be done" (Trottier et al., 2008). For this reason, one of the suggestions given by Paarlberg and Lavigna in

their 2010 article is to "create a picture of the future that connects to public service values",

evoking profound feelings so they can function as ethical and principled role models.

In doing so, the organization, here embodied by the zoo, publicly expresses its mission and the

importance of its role in benefiting the community. I would create an advertisement for

employment that emphasizes the critical importance of commitment expected from new hires.

More importantly, the advertisement would highlight the voluntary nature of this dedication,

emphasizing the importance of individuals actively choosing to embrace it. This approach seeks

to attract individuals who not only have the required abilities but also demonstrate a genuine

desire to fully invest themselves in the role. This promotional strategy aims to attract individuals

with strong Public Service Motivation (PSM) who share the organization's principles and values,

creating a sense of alignment and purpose among its stakeholders.

This point is extremely important to me as a leader because my goal is to ensure a dedicated and

attentive workforce. For this reason, I am focusing on attracting potential employees who have a

strong sense of PSM, which not only improves employee performance but also effectively benefits

the organization's mission (Christensen et al., 2017).

Facilitating direct interaction between zoo employees and those who use the zoo's services is

another impactful and beneficial approach that I value for attracting high performers (Paarlberg

& Lavigna, 2010). This firsthand contact attracts potential new employees because it allows them

to see the organization's values and operational ideology in action. Simultaneously, this

opportunity permits employees to see the tangible results of their efforts while also reinforcing

their commitment to the organization's values and goals. Examples of activities that would help

in this sense are activities that involve children. Interacting with children can have a profound

impact on employees, renewing the joy they find in their work. These activities serve as powerful reminders of the important role their work plays in the lives of children and families. They provide opportunities for employees to reconnect with their passions, renewing their sense of purpose and dedication to their jobs.

The third action I would take is to "provide access to information, support, and resources to learn and develop" (ibid.). I believe that transparency is essential for attracting and potentially hiring high performers because it allows individuals to proactively align themselves with the organization's values and objectives if they feel a genuine connection. This approach encourages individuals to self-nominate and become more involved with the organization, building a culture of mutual alignment and growth.

As a result, my primary goal during the hiring process is to ensure that applicants' values align with the practices of the organization. Following Paarlberg and Lavigna's advice, the recruitment process should include structured face-to-face interviews, situational assessments, and realistic job previews, during which I would thoroughly investigate the reasons that have prompted the person to introduce themselves thinking to be right for that role.

Following the recruitment and hiring phases, a critical step is to create an atmosphere that provides opportunities for growth and development. My initial focus would be to create a comprehensive and strategic socialization program that engages employees at all levels, from managers and supervisors to new hires. According to Paarlberg and Lavigna's research, "socialization leads to increased affective commitment to the organization and job satisfaction". Furthermore, it introduces new hires to the organization's history, mission, goals, and norms, as well as demonstrates how the organization achieves public service goals.

Secondly, I would provide opportunities for employees to openly discuss any potential conflicts between organizational goals and personal values. This aspect corresponds to one of the six analytical dimensions of trust-based leadership in public organizations identified by Bentzen (2023), with a particular emphasis on interactional trust at the individual level. Bentzen expands on this concept in his article, referring to it as "the interactional remedies leaders engage in to build and foster vertical trust relations between leaders and individual employees". This approach prioritizes ongoing dialogue with employees, emphasizing communication as one of the important skills leaders must possess to manage conflicts. (Bowman et al., 2016, Chapter 4).

Part 3

Bradley E. Wright describes six key factors that can have a significant impact on work motivation in his 2007 article: mission valence, extrinsic rewards, job importance, job difficulty, self-efficacy, and job specificity. As a possible leader at the Lincoln Children's Zoo, I understand how important these factors are in driving employees' motivation. As a result, I would be committed to effectively manipulating these factors in order to increase motivation and engagement among them.

According to Wright (2007), managers can motivate their employees to work harder by clearly articulating how their work benefits society, showing how Mission Valence has a positive indirect impact on work motivation. This concept is closely related to the transformational leadership characteristic of "Inspirational Motivation," which refers to cultivating commitment to the group's mission and goals. In fact, Trottier et al. (2008) emphasize that a transformational leader, through Inspirational Motivation, should "provide meaning and a sense of purpose in what needs to be done".

I think the actions outlined in the previous section about how to attract high-performing individuals address this issue effectively. Initiatives like creating a picture of the future that connects to public service values, facilitating direct interaction between zoo employees and zoo beneficiaries, and providing access to information, support, and resources to learn and develop, allow employees to see firsthand the tangible impact of their work on the lives of guests, as well as the organization's overall success.

The second factor addresses Extrinsic Rewards, which include components like compensation, possibilities for promotion, and recognition. According to the Goal Theory of work motivation, employees are more likely to put in more effort to achieve performance goals that they believe will result in significant outcomes. Furthermore, research has shown that assigning difficult tasks correlates with higher performance levels, as they are associated with greater rewarding outcomes than easier tasks. As a result, I would encourage the zoo to adopt this approach. An example is to implement a system of progressive corporate rewards that are directly linked to achievement. Consider a scenario in which children and families are offered a fun activity after completing the zoo tour. A reward system could be designed based on an employee's success in engaging guests. This approach not only encourages direct interaction between employees and visitors but also stimulates employee dedication and inspiration by linking it to reward opportunities.

The third factor, Job Importance, plays an important role in motivation. As a leader, I would be responsible for effectively communicating and articulating our organization's mission and vision (Bowman et al., 2016, Chapter 4). If the initiatives outlined in Part 2 had been successful, employees would have rejoined with the intrinsic values of their work, and new hires would have

been chosen using this criterion. As a result, their perception of job importance should have increased. In my role as a transformational leader, I would use Idealized Influence to show and foster a strong commitment to our organization's goals and values. This means providing a good example and inspiring others to support our common goal, in order to increase both perceived mission value and job importance.

Job Difficulty and Job Specificity are two other significant factors that influence work motivation. As described by the Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2002), the level of difficulty in tasks can have an impact on employee performance in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side, difficult tasks can improve performance because they require people to invest more effort and attention. On the other hand, if the tasks are excessively difficult, they can undermine performance by lowering self-confidence, potentially leading to a drop in performance (Wright, 2007; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). My hope would be to leverage the trait of Intellectual Stimulation by applying Transformational Leadership principles. Trottier et al. (2008) define this transformative quality as "stimulating followers to view the world from new perspectives, and question old assumptions, beliefs, and paradigms". Intellectual stimulation, in particular, promotes an environment that contributes to innovation and creativity. My goal would be to stimulate my employees and increase their job satisfaction by strategically balancing Job Difficulty and Job Specificity. Collaborative initiatives involving employees and visitors, for example, should be engaging but not overly intimidating or complex. I am convinced that even simple tasks can produce significant benefits if they are enjoyable and entertaining.

In terms of monetary incentives, it is critical to establish realistic targets that take into account variables such as zoo attendance, seasonal fluctuations, and average visitor numbers. Achievability is critical to ensuring that rewards remain motivating and meaningful for employees. Similarly, I would ensure that the established goals are appropriate for the employee's role, thereby ensuring consistency with the organization's values and objectives.

Job Specificity and Difficulty have been shown to influence Self-efficacy as well, which is considered the sixth factor of work motivation. Wright (2007) defines Self-efficacy as "an employee's perception of their ability to organize and execute the actions required to achieve specific performance levels" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). This perception of self-efficacy is important in shaping work motivation because it influences the direction and persistence of an employee's behavior. As previously stated, Job Difficulty can have an impact on Self-efficacy by undermining an employee's trust in their skills and abilities.

To address this issue, I would use Individualized Consideration by providing personalized recognition. I would introduce easily attainable minor rewards in order to boost employee self-efficacy and motivate them to take on tasks with greater rewards.

By strategically manipulating these factors, I would aim to create a work environment at the Lincoln Children's Zoo that encourages high levels of motivation, engagement, and satisfaction among our dedicated team members.

Part 4

Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010) define the first value-based management practice as articulating an ideology that resonates with employees' core values and creating a vision of the future that is

consistent with public service values. This initial practice translates into the Transformational Leadership trait known as Inspirational Motivation, which focuses on communicating a clear and appealing vision and sense of purpose. This concept is central to Transformational Leadership, a theory that defines leaders as individuals who raise followers' awareness about idealized goals and inspire them to transcend personal interests for collective goals. Furthermore, transformational leaders prioritize moving the organization forward by encouraging innovation and creativity (Van Wart, 2013).

In a previous section of this assignment, I described how I would ensure adherence to this approach. I believe that transparency and clarity about the organization's values are essential for disseminating organizational goals. Applying the ideas outlined in Part 2 of the assignment, particularly those aimed at attracting potential high performers, would help the development of hired employees. This is because people who choose to work at the zoo are likely to share the organization's values, making it easier to communicate a vision for the organization's future thanks to their help. Collecting input and feedback from employees can boost their motivation and dedication to their jobs. Moreover, I would ensure a direct connection between me and the single employee in order to incorporate their goal with the park's goals. By unifying the goals I would give the possibility for the employee to focus on one single goal, with the consequent increase in performance.

When it comes to hiring and retaining resilient employees, I would use a similar approach. Public Service Motivation (PSM) is a critical component of Employee Resilience, defined as "giving meaning and purpose to public employees in their work" (Plimmer et al., 2022). Furthermore, PSM is known as a dispositional concept that not only influences behavior but also provides

motivation for persevering in the face of job-related challenges (ibid.). As a result, I am confident that the proposed strategies to communicate organizational goals and values would improve employees' PSM, thereby increasing their resilience.

The second value-based management practice is the thorough recruitment and selection of ideal candidates for the organization. This practice is closely related to the theoretical concept of Person-Organization Fit, which states that people are more likely to join, stay, and perform well in environments where they perceive alignment between their personal values and the organization's management practices and mission. As a result, I would prioritize candidates who demonstrate a strong affinity for the organization's values.

Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010) suggested a variety of recruiting strategies to ensure a dedicated workforce. As discussed in Part 2, ensuring that the candidates I would hire share the zoo's values and objectives is critical to improving their performance. Again, this process relies heavily on the transparency of intentions. Bowman et al. (2016) emphasize the significance of leadership skills such as the ability to define roles and objectives. A leader can build a relationship with staff members based on mutual respect and trust by modeling values like justice, integrity, and honesty. This will provide a sense of security and a positive work atmosphere that is conducive to trust. To maintain this positive dynamic, employee intentions must be aligned with organizational goals through ongoing dialogue (Bentzen, 2023).

Furthermore, by establishing a foundation of mutual respect and trust from the very beginning, individuals will feel more at ease and confident in dealing with the challenges of their jobs, knowing they can rely on their coworkers and superiors for support.

The same concept of resilience can be applied to the third practice, which consists of implementing a well-defined socialization program in the workplace to promote direct connections among colleagues and improve workflow. Implementing such programs and activities frequently results in increased emotional commitment to the organization and job satisfaction, which eventually leads to improved performance. Furthermore, these initiatives help to develop the trust dimensions outlined by Bentzen (2023) for Interactional Trust at the organizational and team levels. In this sense, to help develop resilience among employees, Plimmer et al. (2022) talk about Pro-Social Workplace Skills. Based on this concept I would create team-building and mentorship activities, as well as workshops during the year about topics as communication and relationships.

The fourth practice focuses on encouraging interaction and communication between zoo employees and zoo beneficiaries. This approach fits in with the theoretical concept of Job Design, which holds that employees are motivated when they believe their work improves the well-being of others (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010).

As discussed in Part 2, one strategy for improving performance and resilience is to organize activities with children. These activities serve as a powerful reminder to employees of their important role, alongside the zoo, in the lives of children and their families. Employees can gain a deeper sense of purpose and motivation by directly engaging with beneficiaries and seeing the positive impact of their efforts, which contributes to their overall job performance and resilience.

The fifth practice revolves around goal setting, job explanations, and facilitating discussions within the organization. In the previous section, I explained the importance of setting the right goal in terms of job difficulty and job specificity in order to improve performance, writing that public

employees are more motivated to perform well when they have clearly understood and challenging tasks (Wright, 2007). The second aspect of this practice entails clarifying the tasks' purpose and alignment with the organization's mission. This emphasizes the importance of ongoing communication with employees in avoiding overwhelming situations. This aspect is also related to the concept of Constructive Leadership for Employee Resilience, as described by Plimmer et al. (2022), which is a kind of leadership that is "concerned with the welfare of their subordinates while simultaneously behaving in a manner that facilitates organizational goal attainment". As a transformational leader, I would ensure this by demonstrating Individualized Consideration, which includes one-on-one communication, brainstorming sessions, and precise instructions.

The final component of this practice is to facilitate discussions about potential conflicts between personal values and organizational goals. I believe that this is critical for effective leadership because it is the leader's responsibility to make sure that every employee feels heard and valued.

The last practice suggested by Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010) is about employee participation and providing access to information, support, and resources.

In particular, Dee et al. (2003) outline the benefits of higher employee participation in organizational decision-making, emphasizing its positive impact on performance. According to the study, "Increased participation in workplace decision-making aligns individual commitment with organizational tasks, provides a heightened sense of the importance of one's work, and instills the belief that work has a significant impact on the lives of others". This demonstrates the importance of providing access to information, support, and resources for ongoing learning and development. Leaders must provide such information so that everyone has an equal opportunity

to contribute ideas for improvement in the organization. Creating an innovative climate is critical for fostering resilience in this context. This includes encouraging open communication and organizing brainstorming sessions in which people can freely exchange ideas. I believe the key is to provide personal and professional development opportunities and create an environment in which everyone feels valued, encouraging them to propose innovative ideas and initiatives that benefit the organization. As the saying goes, "two heads are better than one", which means that the more people who contribute ideas, the better the chances of finding innovative solutions to improve customer experiences.