“The Forgotten Group Member” Case Study

Cassandra M. Sappington

Plainfield, IL

[cmsappington@gmail.com](mailto:cmsappington@gmail.com)

(708) 692-6450

GM591 - Leadership and Organizational Behavior

Michael Carr, Instructor

September 15, 2010

**Part I: Group Development**

Forming Stage – Members in this stage will ask a number of questions as they are still in the process of getting to know one another better. The questions asked can vary. Group members may raise the following questions: "What can I contribute to the group?" "What can the group offer me?" In this stage members are more concerned with getting to know one another better and learn behavior that's acceptable.  
  
Storming Stage - In this stage members tend to be highly emotional and lots of tension is in the air. Coalitions and cliques typically form during this stage as members compete to achieve status quo and impose their preferences on one another.  
  
Norming Stage - During this stage members are unified. There's now a new sense of harmony following the storming stage and members strive to maintain that harmony.  
  
Performing Stage - At this stage we are totally integrated! We now have a well-organized team that functions maturely. We are motivated by team goals and objectives and stable. Additionally, we are satisfied without jobs. At this point we are a High Performance Organization!  
  
Adjourning State - Once we have reached the performing stage we are ready to adjourn. At the Adjournment stage the members are able to disband if necessarily, convene quickly, and perform their duties on a tight schedule.

Based on the information provided in the case, it appears that the group is in the Storming Stage because the members appear to be highly emotional and there appears to be lots of tension in the air. Also the fact that they were meeting unannounced shows that they were forming coalitions and cliques. They could have easily informed all members of the group about the meeting to discuss the project instead of the member learning as a result of running into them while meeting. Christine could have better managed the group by understanding the various stages of forming a group and identifying the group’s current stage. Groups in the Storming Stage require more coaching, training, supervision, and communication. Christine did not provide this to the group.

**Part II: Problem Identification**

The group is facing several primary and secondary problems. Primarily, Christine herself is not an effective leader for the group. There’s a difference between leading a group and managing work. While leaders and managers have some very distinct traits, they share some too. Christine didn’t know her team well enough and did not take the appropriate steps to improve the team’s working relationship. Knowing the stages of group development was also an issue within Christine’s team. The team never went through the forming stage. They never got to know one another. Clear expectations were not set amongst the group. Frankly, Christine probably wasn’t a good pick for the team lead because of the ongoing distractions she was experiencing with her grades in school. That was more important to her, not the team’s success. Janet or Steve would have been a better choice for the team’s leader. Basically, this group never got passed the storming stage. Christine never took the time to evaluate the situation. She just proceeded status quo. Necessary steps should have been implemented to include Mike in every step of the group project. This could have been simply done by implementing some of the key indicators for “Mastering Management”, also known as the “Ten Golden Rules of High Performance”. Christine failed to cater to everyone’s need within the group which was evident because necessary steps weren’t taken to ensure Mike would be able to join the team for meetings. Christine failed to pack them in. Had she paired Mike up with Janet whose more reliable and always over achieve when it comes to the group Mike would not have felt excluded from the group. She could have even paired Mike with Steve whose more businesslike being that he ensures that things are on point and according to plan for the team’s meetings. She failed to promote creativity and definitely lacked communication within the group. With the latest technology, other means of communication should have been used as a resource. She could have suggested or used video conferencing, teleconference, or simply resulted to a simple email or chat to delegate tasks for the group’s project which ties into the constant communication with the group. Communication can make or break any relationship, especially in the workplace. The failed communication was evident when members didn’t know the team was meeting. Everyone should have been informed of all upcoming meetings well in advance so they would have been prepared to be in attendance and effectively contribute to the team’s project during the meetings. This could have promoted creativity, innovation, and initiative amongst all group members which would have resulted in group motivation.

Christine’s did more managing tasks and not leading the group. A good leader would do things somewhat differently when compared to a manager. I'd prefer a leader when picking someone to build a team for this task based on my thread earlier. I personally think that leaders have more motivational traits versus managers. I have been in both shoes. To summarize the difference between Christine’s traits versus that of an effective leader I have provided a useful table that will help summarize the differences and really drive home what it takes to be an effective leader. Upon reviewing the characteristics below of a leader versus a manager by subject matter you will get a clearer picture. This is a very useful table that I came across while researching this topic for our class discussion threads. Based on this information, managers tend to have more demotivating traits while leaders have more motivating traits. I would rather have a leader!

**Subject Leader Manager**Essence Change Stability  
Focus Leading people Managing work  
Have Followers Subordinates  
Horizon Long-term Short-term  
Seeks Vision Objectives  
Approach Sets direction Plans detail  
Decision Facilitates Makes  
Power Personal charisma Formal authority  
Appeal to Heart Head  
Energy Passion Control  
Culture Shapes Enacts  
Dynamic Proactive Reactive  
Persuasion Sell Tell  
Style Transformational Transactional  
Exchange Excitement for work Money for work  
Likes Striving Action  
Wants Achievement Results  
Risk Takes Minimizes  
Rules Breaks Makes  
Conflict Uses Avoids  
Direction New roads Existing roads  
Truth Seeks Establishes  
Concern What is right Being right  
Credit Gives Takes  
Blame Takes Blames  
  
<http://changingminds.org/disciplines/leadership/articles/manager_leader.htm>

**Part III: Retrospective**

Several steps could have been taken to avoid and/or resolve the challenges that Christine was faced with as it relates to her group. Christine should have started out by identifying key characteristics needed to create a high performance organization (HPO) and took necessary measurements to implement them. This could have increased her chances of succeeding as the group leader. Some HPO characteristics that I know would have helped Christine are: 1) Have leadership focused on business rather than administration; 2) Involve HR to contribute to profit or vision; 3) Employ/involve workers that are sensitive to operational efficiency; 4) View information flow as integral to the business operation; 5) Leverage HR technology to empower and collaborate; 6) Institute performance measurement as a daily responsibility; and 7) Build a culture of mentorship and achievement.

People, process, and technology must all be weighed, connected and leveraged in order to build a high performance operation. As organizations analyze the impact of making incremental or even “sweeping” changes in technology and processes, they will uncover many opportunities with varying payoffs and associated costs.  
  
“While the biggest impediment to achieving high performance is culture, lack of technology often restricts organizations from smoothly growing their workforce. Executives recognizing the need to address both will achieve the highest rates of return. Organizations that develop a model that continually invests in, engages and grows its human capital will improve faster than its competition and satisfy its stakeholders." <http://www.workstrategy.com/news/WS_IHRIMlink_0504.html>

Additionally, Christine was not knowledgeable with five development stages of group forming. This understanding could have identified the stage that her group was in which would have allowed her to provide better coaching as a group leader. Based on the information provided in our text about the group, it appears that the group was in the storming stage because there was a lot of tension and cliques were forming which was evident when group members were actively meeting without the other members even having knowledge of the meetings.

Christine should have provided clear expectations to every member of the group and implemented measurable guidelines to hold each member accountable. Christine could have also followed up with her members to ensure they were “satisfied workers”. It’s been proven over and over again that satisfied workers are more productive workers. They will go above and beyond to get the job done. All five facets of job satisfaction are important but the degree of importance will depend on the individual. What motivates Steve may not necessarily motivate Mike and Janet, and vice versa.

If I had to rate the level of importance for the five facets measured by JDI I would rate in the following ordering:   
  
1) The work itself - responsibility, interest, and growth  
4)Quality of supervision - technical help and social support  
5) Relationships with co-workers - social harmony and respect  
3) Promotion opportunities - chances for further advancement  
2) Pay - adequacy of pay and perceived equity vis-a-vis others  
  
I honestly like the Minnesota Satisfaction Question (MSQ) better because it's a little more detailed and have more components to measure employee satisfaction. The five main facets are detailed with 20 questions per facets. The MSQ five main facets measure job satisfaction with the following:  
  
1) Working conditions  
2) Chances for advancements  
3) Freedom to use one's own judgment  
4) Praise for doing a good job  
5) Feelings of accomplishment among others  
  
Both, JDI and MSQ measure entail components that all good managers should concern themselves with. In addition to the JDI and MSQ questionnaires managers can also infer job satisfaction by closely observing their employees behavior and interpret what they say and do while their employees are doing their work. Both could have been used as indicators to ensure that all group members within the team were satisfied workers.

**Part IV: Reflection**

Christine was not an effective team leader in this case. Christine had many obligations as a legal. She failed herself and her group. Christine would have been a lot more effective by simply taking necessary steps to create a high performance organization within her group. High performance organizations strive for excellence at all times, they value teamwork, and pride themselves on meeting goals and objectives in harmony. This was not the case with Christine’s organization. Perhaps Christine could have applied the “Ten Golden Rules of High Performance” found in our text on page 9 under, “Mastering Management”. The “Ten Golden Rules of High Performance” are:

1. Hire by committee – make sure recruits talk to their future colleagues. It also helps to have more than one opinion. This will avoid a lot of assumption making on the part of the company. Christine had too much going on with school and was not able to focus on doing what it would take to make this group a high performance group to begin with.

2. Cater to every need – make it easy, not hard, for people to perform. This will motivate employees to do their jobs to the best of their abilities. Christine did not cater to every need because she failed to seek alternate solutions when Mike informed her that he wouldn’t be able to meet at the slated time, but at the same token should have enforced Mike’s participating being that he made time to watch his favorite TV show.

3. Pack them in – put people to work close to one another. This will eliminate or reduce feelings of solitude and allows collaboration between colleagues. Collaboration alone can lead to higher performance because it can bring about new thoughts and ideas on the work that’s being performed. Christine would have paired Steve up to work with Mike since Steve was the more businesslike group member. This could have possibly enticed Mike to produce more output for the group and held him accountable for the group’s assignment from day one. Janet would have also paired well with Mike since she was the reliable one and always over achieved for the group.

4. Make coordination easy-use technology to keep people talking together. Conference calls, emails, and other media could have been used to coordinate the work that needed to be done. This would eliminate anyone being left out and not knowing what’s needed to meet the group’s goals. With today’s technology there are no excuses for individuals not to make meetings. Christine failed to implement conference calls or video conference as a means for the team to meet. They could have used this as a resource to touch bases with each group member and track the team’s progress.

5. Eat your own dog food – make use of the company products. This reduces the amount of overhead, creates a feeling of understanding and care about what’s produced by the company, and gives them a desire to improve upon those products since they have to sue them within the scope of work being performed on the job.

6. Encourage creativity-allows freedom for group members to come up with new ideas. Creativity brings about inventions, initiative, and innovation.

7. Strive for consensus- Going against the grain can create tension and cliques within the group. Remember, the more group members on board with a thought or idea, the more they will strive to successfully implement that thought or idea successfully. This idea can be the difference between whether or not the group will complete a specific task successfully, complete the project as a whole successfully, or simply agree to disagree to get the job done.

8. Don’t be evil- Leaders have to be mindful of their interactions with their group members. Leaders that lack tolerance, respect, and understanding are disliked. These leaders will find it impossible to effectively create high performance organizations amongst their groups.

9. Data-driven decisions- Use data and research from previous projects to do the analysis and stay on track. It’s very costly to start over and over again when information that was previously gathered could have been used to achieve the same results. Using previous data would simply avoid costly decision making processes.

10. Communicate effectively-hold many stay-in-touch meetings. This is the most important element of creating high performance organizations. "Effective communication in the workplace isn't so hard if you break it down into pieces. There are many tips that can be used as a guide to effectively communicate in any situation. Follow these tips for clear communication in the workplace, and you'll be on the road to success in no time.  
  
**Focus is the start of good communication.** 1). We must increase our focus when dealing with employees, managers, and customers; 2). Listening is the most important tool in communication. Listening will allow us to become better at what we do. Listening also increases creativity; and 3). Good listening is a choice.  
  
**In the Moment.** 1). We must be open and flexible to change; 2). We have no control over many things. We always control our attitude and how we react to change; and 3). By being in the moment when we communicate, we are prepared for whatever happens. Being prepared allows us to be successful and productive.  
  
The Threes C’s of communication can be paramount in leadership roles. Communicate to the other person so they feel comfortable, confident and in control. Again, this will make members feel free and open to contribute their thoughts and ideas which can enhance the project. Communication should also be clear, concise, and effective.

Christine should: 1) Be a leader and help the other person feel comfortable, confident and in control; 2) Be more detailed. Provide the right details at the right time. Everyone needs different amount of details; 3) Be patient and positive; 4) Be flexible. Each member will respond to different ways of communication; 5) Define constant communication. Understand we are all different in how we communicate. Some employees are chit-chat people and some are down to business. Communicate differently to each employee. Treat them as individuals and not as a group; and 6) Speak up when something is bothering you.

**Create a 50/50 Partnership**Involve the employees in the communication process. If the employee has ownership and is involved, they care. When the employee cares, they have passion. Ask the question: How do I make the other people around me successful. This is the hardest part of effective communication. Most people come in to work and say, “What can everyone do for me today?” The dynamic shift is asking the question, “What can I do for the people around me to make them successful?” Ask the question. Answer the question. Act on the answer."  
<http://directory.leadmaverick.com/Joel-Zeff-Creative/DallasFort-WorthArlington/TX/15/858/index.aspx>