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Barrie Super Subs		○				●	○				●	○	○			
Bridging the Two Worlds				●		○		○		●		○	●		○	
Chengdu Bus Group		○				●			●			○	●			●
Going to the X-Stream		○										○	○	●	●	●
Keeping Suzanne Chalmers				○		●	●				○					
Northwest Canadian Forest Products Ltd		●		●		○	○					●				
The Regency Grand Hotel			●		●	●	●				○		○		○	○
Resonus Corporation		○									●	●	○	○		
Shipping Industry Accounting Team					○	○			●			○				○
Treetop Forest Products			○			●			●							

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Field of Organizational Behaviour

Chapter 2: Individual Behaviour, Personality, and Values

Chapter 3: Perceiving Ourselves and Others in Organizations

Chapter 4: Workplace Emotions, Attitudes, and Stress

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CASE 1: A MIR KISS?

Primary Case Topics

Conflict, cross-cultural issues, team dynamics

Case Synopsis

This case describes the actual events in the replica of the Mir space station at Moscow's Institute for Biomedical Problems (IBMP). The Mir replica included four Russian cosmonauts who had already completed half of their 240 days of isolation, and an international crew of three researchers from Japan, Canada, and Austria. The Canadian, Judith LaPierre, was the only female participant. Trouble began when two of the cosmonauts fought on New Year's Eve. Later that evening, the Russian cosmonaut commander tried to kiss LaPierre twice. He tried again the next morning. The researchers were appalled by the behaviour of the cosmonauts and by IBMP's inaction. Japan's researcher quit and was replaced by a Russian researcher. The connection between the cosmonauts and the researchers was permanently sealed soon after. When revealed to the public, IBMP's Russian scientists dismissed the kissing incident by saying that it was one fleeting kiss, a clash of cultures, and a female participant who was too emotional.

Discussion Questions and Suggested Answers

1. Identify the different conflict episodes that exist in this case? Who was in conflict with whom?

Students should be able to identify several conflict episodes and conflicting parties in this case. LaPierre experienced conflict twice with the Russian commander who tried to kiss her. The international researchers experienced conflict with the Russian cosmonauts who were fighting with each other. The Russian cosmonauts who were fighting obviously were in conflict with each other. The international researchers experienced conflict with IBMP because of their inaction. The Japanese space program also experienced conflict with IBMP to the extent that they withdrew from the program. (Although not explicitly stated in the case, LaPierre and her husband experienced conflict with Canada's space agency over its inaction and failure to protest IBMP's response to the incidents.)

2. What are the sources of conflict for each of these conflict incidents?

Different values and beliefs – This seems to be one of the most significant sources of conflict in this case. The participants had different cultures, different genders, and different educational and professional experiences. The Russians seem to view sexual harassment as less important than do people in Canada, Japan, and Austria. Kissing a woman is apparently considered a compliment (at least, Russian men think this way), whereas it is a personal violation in Canada. The cosmonauts had a different view of their fighting and general experience in isolation than did the international researchers.

Task interdependence – Each of the conflicting parties had some level of interdependence with each other. Typically, this was reciprocal interdependence because their actions affected each other throughout the experiment. The researchers and cosmonauts had high interdependence (until they were sealed off from each other) as they shared space and resources in a small area.

Ambiguous rules – There seems to be a lack of agreement over proper behaviour. The cosmonaut fight and the sexual harassment incidents clearly violated rules for some people, but weren't viewed as important or clear rules by the cosmonauts or scientists who ran the lab. The participants did not clarify what behaviours are inappropriate (although it is never possible to clarify every behaviour that may result in conflict). IBMP's interpretation of its role differed from what the international researcher's expected of that group.

Communication -- Although not overt, these people spoke different languages and communicated through English, which was not anyone's 1st language. Certainly the potential for miscommunication as well as reluctance to communicate.

Incompatible goals – This is a relatively minor source of conflict compared to other factors. The researchers seem to have a different set of goals than did the IBMP researchers or the cosmonauts.

Scarce resources – Some students might identify this as a critical source of conflict, but there doesn't seem to be much evidence that anyone lacked resources. There was limited personal space, but no other resource seems to be an issue here.

3. What conflict management style(s) did Lapierre, the international team, and Gushin use to resolve these conflicts? What style(s) would have worked best in these situations?

LaPierre and Gushin (IBMP researcher) mainly relied on the avoiding conflict management style. Gushin denied there was a problem, at least, not a problem with the cosmonaut's behaviour. LaPierre initially was quiet on the kissing incident, although she was more active with the international researchers in complaining with the cosmonauts' behaviour.

The international researchers developed a forcing style through their letter of complaint, and the Japanese representative left after diplomatically complaining. (Implicitly, the Canadian space agency developed an accommodating style because it did not complain even though LaPierre's husband notified the agency a day or two after the New Year's Eve incident.)

It is useful to consider the appropriateness of other conflict management styles where rules of behaviour have been violated. For example, it would be silly to apply a compromising style – should the researchers let the cosmonaut kiss LaPierre once each week? Collaborating is strongly recommended in this textbook because conflicts are rarely completely win-lose. In this incident, the parties might agree on a structural solution that would satisfy everyone. They might try to find ways in which each party can behave comfortably without offending others. To some extent, this involves establishing rules of behaviour, a structural solution described below.

4. What conflict management interventions were applied here? Did they work? What alternative strategies would work best in this situation and in the future?

The main strategy tried here was to reduce task interdependence. Specifically, the scientists locked the port between their compartment and the cosmonauts. This seems to have been successful, but it is doubtful that isolating conflicting parties will work in outer space for long periods of time. LaPierre and perhaps the Japanese agency also tried to clarify rules, but without success. Rule clarification can potentially work where the parties can anticipate the types of conflict. However, there are so many potential areas of conflict, that forming rules is usually a reaction more than a proactive conflict management strategy.

What should be done here? This is a good question for debate. To correct fundamental causes of conflict, the lab should consider more diversity-type cross-cultural training and team building so everyone knows how the others will perceive their actions (e.g., trying to kiss women isn't usually perceived by them as a compliment.).



CASE 2: ARCTIC MINING CONSULTANTS

Primary Case Topics

Leadership, motivation, team dynamics

Case Synopsis

A crew of four people staked claims for Arctic Mining Consultants. The case describes their production over the seven days, as well as incidents that occurred over this time. In particular, the case describes how the leader (Parker) reacts to the lower performance of Millar and the other crew members.

This is one of my favourite cases because it covers diverse topics and has a personal touch to it. Students seem to be very involved in the case -- it is written in a way that they can easily visualize (even though few of us have worked in these harsh conditions.) We don't have an epilogue, except to say that Millar works in the forest industry in a management position.

Symptoms

The main symptoms in this case are that Millar's work effort decreased by the end of the project, Millar was thinking about quitting during the assignment, Millar did not accept subsequent job offers from Parker, and Millar felt dissatisfied with the assignment and with Parker.

Problem Analysis

The main problems in this case relate to the issues of leadership, motivation, and team dynamics.

Leadership

According to the Path goal leadership model, Parker is effective at setting goals (Achievement-oriented style). However, he does not provide enough (any?) supportive leadership. He does not treat them with respect nor is he concerned for their well being. Yet, path-goal theory says that the leader should be supportive because the work (physical labor, deadlines) are stressful.

Parker also fails to use the directive style, yet there is some evidence that he needs to clarify performance criteria. Specifically, near the end of the assignment, Parker complains that Millar is too neat with his work, that is, he should focus more on quantity than quality. This suggests that Millar (and perhaps the others) could use some guidance on the type of performance required for this assignment.

Motivation

Expectancy theory explains why Millar didn't work as hard at the end of the assignment, and why he did not accept further assignments. Millar had a low E-to-P expectancy due to Parker's poor coaching. Rather than working with Millar on further improving his performance, and rewarding Millar for his good performance, Parker criticized Millar. This criticism continually weakened Millar's perception that he is able to perform this type of work. Millar's low perception of competence made him "give up" during the last day. (This is significant because Millar's extra effort would have enabled the crew to complete the assignment on time.)

Millar's lack of effort on the last day can also be explained by his P-to-O expectancy. Specifically, Millar believed that he received insults from Parker no matter how well he performed the task. Notice that on the days that Millar completed 8.5 and 7 lengths, Parker said nothing. On days when Millar's performance was lower, Parker criticized Millar.

The P-to-O expectancy also explains the effect of pay and the bonus on Millar's motivation. Specifically, on the last day, Millar felt that getting an extra day's pay was almost as good as receiving the bonus, particularly considering the hard work (a negative outcome) he would have to endure to complete the work by the end of the day.

(Note: Rather than using expectancy theory, students can analyze Millar's motivation through behaviour modification, particularly Parker's use of punishment. Equity theory might also explain Millar's behaviour on the last day of work. Specifically, he compared himself to Boyce, who continually had lower performance than Millar yet received less verbal abuse. Millar adjusted his inputs (job performance) so that his outcome/input ratio would be balanced with Boyce's ratio.)

Team Dynamics

There are several team dynamics operating in this case. Parker and Talbot share one tent, and Millar and Boyce share the other tent. This physical arrangement may have weakened relations between Parker and the employees in the other tent. Team cohesiveness is perhaps also low due to the low task interdependence in this assignment.

It is apparent that team cohesion is low because the team norm of completing the project on time was not supported by Boyce. (Boyce said that he worked only as hard as he had to.)

Recommended Solution

It is probably too late to encourage Millar to work with this company again. However, several long term actions would improve motivation, performance, and turnover of other employees.

One recommendation would be to find out why Parker did not provide more supportive and directive leadership. If he lacks supervisory knowledge, then the company should consider providing him (and perhaps other crew leaders) leadership training.

There may be some problem with the size of the bonus relative to the size of the paycheck for an extra day's work. Depending on its cost effectiveness, the company might consider increasing the size of the bonus.

If Millar (and perhaps other employees) are paying too much attention to the quality of takes and not enough attention to the quantity, then it may be useful to provide some basic "role perception" training. This would be a short session (one-half day?) where employees learn about the performance standards more clearly.