Theory Application Paper

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Organizational Communication

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Introduction

Communication in an organization weaves threads of teamwork, cohesion and success. In organizational communication processes, there is an emphasis on the impact of professional relations and their implications on the individual employee. There are certain factors that can define if an organization is successful in helping its members navigate the professional environment and the way information flows within an organization is imperative to understanding if an organization is beneficial to the individual. This paper aims to dissect the communicative processes of an organization I was personally a member of.

The organization presented is a professional financial institution in central New Jersey. The team worked in a large regional branch of a bank that will be referred to as NJ Bank. Due to my recent resignation and contract adherence I cannot say the name of the bank. Employees of NJ Bank worked together to better assist customers and their financial needs. There are two sides to the organization that will be discussed throughout the article: the platform and teller line, and the management team. These two groups will be analyzed to shed light on the impact that communication has on the success of members within this organization. With the team being small and in constant contact with one another, communication was frequent and unavoidable. However, conflict was prevalent within this organization due to a disorganized leadership model. The key concepts that will be applied in this article include the trait theories of leadership, management styles, and the emotional processes that took place within this organization. By applying organizational communication concepts to the practical experience presented, one can uncover the navigational challenges in the workplace led by a conflicting management team. This paper will attempt to bridge the theoretical concepts in the practical setting of a regional bank.

Description of the Organization

As the content that will be discussed in this article is a first-hand source and experience, I will spend some time detailing the experience I had as a member of NJ Bank. I began my position in February of 2023, it was my first experience in a "full-time" position. I put full-time in quotation marks because while my position was technically a part-time role, due to staffing issues, I was working over the amount of hours I was originally told I would work. I interviewed in early February for a position on the teller line and received the offer a day later, and I accepted immediately. During my interview, I felt comfortable speaking with the branch's managers, something that does not typically happen in the first-encounter. I stayed with NJ Bank for ten months. My time there consisted of typical teller line duties: servicing customers, redirecting them to a platform employee who can better assist them, selling products and educating customers on financial health. In moments where the teller line manager wasn't available, I was the next teller in line to go to for help. I became a pillar of support for my team members despite my only being there a few months.

During that time, there were two other employees hired, both of whom had resigned before I had for different reasons. Management cared much for productivity and efficiency and the organization began to feel the burden stemming from the lack of support from leadership. By the end of my time at NJ Bank, four members had resigned from their positions, two of which had been seasoned employees. Throughout my time there, we developed close relationships with one another and found support and familiarity because of our positions and constant interaction. Members of the team would meet after work sometimes for drinks or dinner as a way to destress from the hectic day we all shared. These nights are fondly remembered and it helped us bond outside of a professional environment.

Communication was constant within the organization, members of the team were in continual contact with each other whether it be peer-to-peer or supervisor-employee. While the organization spans beyond our branch, the communication processes within my location would be impersonal aside from cases involving KPI or what we referred to as SR (sales referrals). These two instances would require coaching and record that underperforming employees were spoken to. Speaking with management was never an issue with topics of concern and they did make themselves available if there were discrepancies in the dynamic of the organization. Overall, the branch was truly a positive experience.

Analysis and Application

Management and their Leadership

During the interview process, there were key things I looked for when meeting with the branch manager and the assistant manager. There are certain qualities that can be used to reflect a leader. These traits aren't true for all leaders but there were some that I look for in any management-level employee I interact with. Leadership traits fall under the trait theories of leadership. This theory proposes that there are certain qualities that can be associated with leadership and result in successful leadership. These qualities can include intelligence, honesty, and sociability. I find it is important for a leader to be confident, not only in themselves but in what they are representing. I also find integrity to be important in a leader, especially in the financial industry. I found that these two qualities were prevalent during my initial interaction with my branch's manager and assistant manager.

My interview lasted about an hour and we discussed the position, role and responsibilities at length, which I appreciated. Management was receptive to questions and spoke highly of the NJ Bank corporation. In our interview, the branch manager even stated that this is an interview

I'm conducting for them as they are to me. This demonstrated their determination and integrity, they displayed that they cared about my getting all necessary information. Here, I would like to highlight the importance of "framing". Gail Fairhurst and Robert Sarr describe framing as a way of managing meaning over something. They argue that an effective leader has to have a clear view on their goals for the organization and the situation at hand. In regards to my interview, leadership spent a lot of time emphasizing the importance of a level-headed employee, someone who can handle the pressure of a heavily trafficked environment. Despite this, both managers never spoke about the way the team handles conflict within the branch, either with customers or each other. The branch manager was framing the narrative of the branch for me. His goal being long-term success for the branch which included reaching and surpassing SR goals, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction. Details I gathered from the conversation involved the efficiency wanted by the management team. There was a mutual understanding that the entire team collectively works together to provide a positive experience for one another and our customer.

I continued under this impression until I finished my training and the rose-colored glasses were taken off. While I maintain the premise that the organization was an overall positive experience, there were instances where I questioned if the management team was in an appropriate position to benefit the branch. While leadership wasn't terrible, it was definitely a reflection of McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. The theory postulates that there are two kinds of leaders with two distinct ways of considering human nature and the average employee. Consider the branch manager, he can be seen as a Theory Y manager, he believed that his employees required little leadership and we sought success for the bank. Compared to the assistant manager who, at times, would take the position of a Theory X manager. She would

often believe that we were resistant to change, success, and were unwilling to put in work and effort to accomplish our tasks. Despite their "open-door" policy, any communication regarding this concerning perception never led to any change. The conflicting dynamic led to tension between the management team, which was then brought onto the platform and teller lines.

Emotional Work and its Effect

A pattern began to take place where the branch manager would often pass his responsibilities to the assistant manager as a way to provide her with more responsibility and opportunity for success and recognition. The assistant manager would in turn, pass certain tasks to the teller manager and platform line. The teller manager, who already held responsibilities similar to the assistant manager, now had more work and responsibilities that were not in her job description. This created tension, and the teller manager would pass her work down to both the platform and teller line. Soon enough, we were doing the work of multiple people while being given the time and pay of one.

Our roles became intertwined and tasks and responsibilities were unclear. This led to certain employees experiencing stress and eventually burnout. The stress process can be separated into three parts, the stressors, burnout, and outcomes. The stressors in our organization involved the heavy workload and the role ambiguity. This took some employees to the next step, burnout. Burnout is the "wearing out" from professional pressure. Burnout can be separated into three dimensions; emotional exhaustion, lack of personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. Emotional exhaustion involved our team becoming easily frustrated. Lack of personal accomplishment was prevalent when everyone's attention was brought to our falling SR and KPI scores. My peers and I soon began feeling like no matter what we did, there was no hope for making both customers and management happy. Lastly, depersonalization only hit a few

of us. Interacting with customers is a part of our job description, making each interaction a transformative and educational experience was our main goal. When certain members of the team began feeling the sense of depersonalization, it was clear to see that they were being transactional in their customer interactions. Simply taking a customer's needs and not exploring their wants. This only furthered their decline in revenue goals and contributed to the burnout as they were constantly being told they needed to do more.

This pattern ultimately led to the resignation of the four above-mentioned employees. Those of us who remained, chose to lean on each other for support. Social support improved morale and it allowed us to protect ourselves from both small and large stressors. Emotional support was prominent in our team. We used our nights out as a way to joke and laugh about the day's struggles and bond over shared emotions. No one other than each other understood our professional struggles.

Conclusion

Conflict in the workplace is inevitable and unavoidable, how you decide to manage it is what will determine if the organization will run or continue to run in an efficient manner. Leadership and the type of manager can also play a large role in an organization's success. Leadership traits are important to take note of and being a good leader is imperative to the wellbeing of an organization's members and business. When management is the reason for conflict, it is beneficial to have a support system within your team. My coworkers provided me with support when I was struggling in my position as a full-time student and full-time employee. NJ Bank was a great place to work and I enjoyed my time with them thanks to the interpersonal relationships I was able to cultivate. Guidance, advice and support create safe and healthy work environments even in times of conflict and pressure.

References

Miller, K. (2015). *Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning/Wadsworth.