
DISCUSSION LEADERS GUIDE

(For Facilitators Only)

Transfer Troubles
The Coaching Couch
Misconduct Misfortunes
Performance Paradigms
Induction Ilusions
Trials and Tribulations of A Territory Manager

WHY THESE CASE STUDIES?

There has been an explosion of communication in the networked world today. Given the nature of opportunities for expression of one's potentials and talents, it has become imperative today, to deal with issues in a fair and transparent manner. The old styles where organizational decisions about employee's performance assessments were made behind closed doors are over. Openness and honesty in dealing with employees are values that are respected by all.

Unfortunately, dealing with human beings is far more complex than is often understood. Usually there are multiple issues linking in the events that happen in organizations. It is easy to get caught with the 'ideals' and 'shoulds' of the situation and forget that reality is rarely ideal.

Trying to capture the essence of reality in cognitive maps and models of Organisational Behavior is one approach to understanding the nature of the psychological pulls that make the events occur. There are therefore, a plethora of leadership theories, counseling models and steps to effective coaching skills that have been made available in books. These maps serve as a suitable starting point in gaining the knowledge perspective that is required to begin practicing interventions in human behavior to manage the course of events and relationships. But these are not enough. An over focus on the theory could perhaps lead to the clear and present danger of training people to say the right things, but not necessarily do the right things and not necessarily the right way.

While theory in the social sciences is derived from reality, it needs to be substantiated with application to real life situations. Such situations can be captured in the chronicling of events that happened and presenting these in the form of case studies for learners to analyze and dissect.

It is the purpose of these cases to capture the events that have happened and examine ways in which managerial interventions have or could have altered the course of events for better outcomes.

Of course, the case studies also need to be supported with practice sessions in the form of role plays and simulations that recreate the events that happened, so that necessary skills can also be learned

To analyze the case studies, it is important to facilitate an understanding of the behavioral issues and how they link up with larger cognitive maps and models of human behavior.

The cases present here are one such effort. They are partly based in reality (camouflaged to protect the identity of the persons concerned). Fiction has been used to fill in the details that could not be reconstructed.

OBJECTIVES

- To give the participants an opportunity to understand how multiple and complex issues are involved in making assessment decisions about subordinates
- To give an opportunity to explore ways and means by which it might have been possible for decision makers to coach, counsel and lead subordinates to create a win-win situation for all.
- To explore the nature of the boundary beyond which coaching, counseling and guidance may not help in turning around a problem subordinate.

FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION

Split the training group into smaller syndicates of 5-7 participants each. Give the participants the following time boundaries: These boundaries are only indicative and not rigid. Flexibility to adjust to training schedules can be brought in.

10 minutes for reading

60 minutes (approx) for discussion in syndicate groups

10 minutes preparation time for presentation

10 minutes for presentation by one or two members of the group

10 minutes for Question and Answers from audience

20 minutes for expert comments from panel

120 minutes total

Keep in mind the general principles of consensus in group discussions.

SUGGESTED READINGS

These can be readings in coaching, counseling, performance management and leadership from the course material provided to the participants.

SUGGESTED FRAMEWORKS FOR SOLUTIONS TO CASES

Transfer Troubles

This is a case of an exceptionally sharp young Sales Officer who had an attitude of superiority and could not overcome it. The mavericks find it hard to fit in teams and play along with others. They constantly have a need to stand out above the rest, and demand to be noticed and respected for their achievements. They find it hard to give respect to others for their wisdom and maturity.

For the main protagonist, Abhijit Kumar, it was probably the first knock in his life. He was overconfident of his abilities and put himself above the system and the policies of the organization. In the flush of achievement, it is obvious that he fell into the trap of I'm OK and you're not OK. Success has gone into his head and has made him somewhat highly strung and prone to reactive stances when confronted with a different opinion. This posture makes it impossible for him to receive counsel and good advice from seniors whose only legitimate aim is to bring him in line with company culture and practices. For any relationship to work both parties have to meet each other halfway and he was not willing to receive at all.

For the Territory Manager it has many insights into the dilemmas of being in middle management. On the one hand, they are the channel through which the Management connects with the vital sales officers, and on the other hand, they are really the ones in daily touch with the personal and professional lives of the Sales Officers. Also, there are some insights into how there are many lost opportunities for Raj Iyer to overcome his blocks and play a more proactive role in managing the troublesome employee. After all, some degree of immaturity from Sales Officers may be normal. The Territory Manager can play an active role in the maturation process of Sales Officers and lead them through the learning curve.

For Sudhir Roy, the All India Sales Manager, this was an opportunity to groom the Territory Manager in the art of counseling and managing immature bright sparks. He had certainly seized the opportunity to invest in the possibility of a turnaround with Kumar. However, in the conversations described, almost every initiative he made was met with resistance. He ought to have sensed that things were only escalating and he should have held back on the pressure. Counseling works when you "walk with" the counselee and not "talk to" the counselee. A good counselor needs to go beyond his gut feel and give responses that are empathetic to the situation rather than always feel the "need to help the other person".

For Jayant, the post mortem that he is undertaking is a good reflection on the past. If he can get past his anxiety of handling similar cases, he might be able to see where the processes failed to create a win-win and work towards better ways of dealing with the situation. Mediating in a dispute is always difficult. It is easier and probably more politically correct for him to take the side of the organization rather than to take up the cause of the Sales Officer. He needs to get into a posture that will create solutions that will work for all, rather than for one or the other party.

For OXY Limited, they got rid of a troublesome employee, but perhaps lost a potential high flyer. Managing mavericks is not easy because they do not go along with the team. It is better to have people conforming to systemic discipline rather than to tolerate the deviant dissident. Organisations are often caught between the need to perform and deliver on the one hand and the need to create space for individuals to express, relate and realize their true potential. Given the competitive compulsions, it is easier to focus on the performance and to lose sight of the nurturance of human potential. Creating policies and cultures that support a balance of both is the challenge for OXY Limited.

This case study is intended as learning material for the District Managers training programme. The participants need to take away the following learnings:

- Termination is the last option and usually indicates a failure to manage the situation on part of the management as well as the Sales Officer
- All attempts must be made to turnaround a bad situation, especially when the person has been a good performer in the past
- Win-win is possible and alternative paths for Kumar could have been explored
- Personality problems will always exist. Sometimes they seem unsurmountable. Attempts can be made in such cases to keep aside personal issues and agree on a common working agenda for both parties.
- When to stop investing in the turnaround and go for the final termination is not an easy decision.

The Coaching Couch

The Coaching Couch is a case about a Sales Officer who came dangerously close to termination. This is a classical example of a basically introverted and withdrawn person who did not really fit into the team of Sales Officers who are usually outgoing and extroverted people. This misfit resulted in the slow decline in his morale and self confidence and also reflected in his performance which declined over the years. This is where the real problem lies in this example.

Sales Officers in Pharmaceutical companies are by nature outgoing and extroverted. That is what the job calls for. It is these extroverted people who find themselves comfortable in the extensive outdoor work that is called for. All other Sales Officers would find it easy to mix with newcomers, initiate discussions with doctors and retailers, meet new people and generally do well in groups. Sukhdev, was by nature, introverted and quiet kind of a person. He was slow to make friends, take initiative in relationships, and to mix easily. To that extent, he was somewhat a misfit in the group.

Companies often hire people for their job knowledge and basic intelligence. When they do observe them on the job, they find the same person different from their expectations as far as personality traits are concerned. In short, it is IQ that gets you the job, but EQ that gets you promoted. This is a trend that many companies are trying to manage by including more

personality profiling in their recruitment practices. Nevertheless, no assessment is perfect, and it is quite likely that an introverted person finds his way into a job that calls for an extrovert.

It is quite possible that Sukhdev was not in good health and it was reflecting in his work. However, he needed the job and it was well known that the company wanted people in good health who would be able to handle the physical rigour demanded by the work. Also, his nature was basically inward looking and he would have found himself inhibited in sharing this problem with his work colleagues and superiors.

It is unlikely that one single session of counseling facilitated the turnaround, but it could have been the turning point. It was sheer perseverance and effort on the part of Sukhdev that really sustained the change that was initiated in the discussions. He tried hard to fit in and succeeded. He learnt the ropes of taking initiative, belonging in a team, living in the pecking order. Success of counseling primarily depends upon both parties meeting each other halfway. If the counselee is willing to own up the nature and source of his problems and makes the effort to consciously change his orientation and direction, then change is possible. However, human nature is such that defensive reactions often happen on the part of the counselee. It is the role of the counselor to create a context in which the counselee will own up and experiment with different behaviour. Such a context is one in which there is trust and empathy.

Trust comes with non-judgementalism and understanding of the context of the counselee. It also comes from creating counseling situations that are not threatening and manipulative. Empathy comes from the counselor understanding his own prejudices and mindsets with which he views the problems. The counselor thus has to be willing to put his prejudices and basic reactions aside and give more considered and resolved responses to the situation.

Skills that facilitate effective Counseling:

1. SELF MANAGEMENT SKILLS

- Sharing personal feeling with Counselee
- Facing and accepting disagreement and anger
- Genuineness and congruence (*reflecting consistency in behaviour thoughts and words*)
- Understanding your personal motivation (*self insight*)
- Seeking feedback on personal behaviour.
- Critiquing self constructively.
- Managing stress and tension.
- Setting priorities effectively

2. LEVELLING AND EMPATHY

- Giving respect to Counselee
- Carrying out discussions as equals rather than from a position of superiority

- Involving Counselee before arriving at decisions that affect him
- Treating Counselee fairly and equitably
- Putting the Counselee at ease

3. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Making clear statements
- Being brief and concise
- Responding to content or meaning
- Giving Feedback
- Understanding Body Language (*face, legs, hands, eye*)
- Drawing out the Counselee
- Listening actively
- Checking out assumptions of the Counselee, avoiding a debate and argumentativeness

4. CONFRONTING WITH CARE

- Expressing what is only implied
- Bringing out discrepancies, providing factual data
- Clarifying the problems of reframing issues
- Helping Counselee to draw conclusions
- Challenging ineffective solutions
- Summarizing
- Reflecting when an Counselee avoids a topic
- Sensing Emotional state of Counselee and responding appropriately

Misconduct Misfortunes

This is a case which extends beyond the boundaries of what would be considered Performance Management. Pradeep Guha is an excellent performer and all that OXY Limited would normally look for in a Sales Officer. The only thing against him was that he had been accused of misbehaving with the maidservant. That too, was unproven, and probably would remain unproven.

Management is an art, and the art lies in making decisions that are correct for the situation, and not necessarily only based on facts. In this case, it would have been difficult for anybody to establish what really happened between Pradeep and the maidservant, in a court of law. Ultimately, it would be one person's word against another. The more such issues are taken to their logical conclusion, the more scandal they raise.

It was probably Sohail's proactivity to nip the issue in the bud and not allow it to escalate further. There could be many options that he would have considered. Firstly, he could have ignored the issue, after all, it is a personal matter. This action would have had the effect of continuing to tacitly support Pradeep, and would have harmed the organisation's image in the long run. Secondly, he could have terminated the services of Pradeep, who was, after all, on

probation. This would have passed on the message to other Sales Officers that such conduct is not acceptable at OXY Limited. It would have also perhaps put a black mark on the career and character of Pradeep Guha, without any proof or evidence. The company would have lost a potential high performer and Pradeep would have had to live with the black mark for the rest of his life. Thirdly, they could have asked Pradeep to stay on and resolve the matter with the maidservant and clear his name as well as the name of the company in the society. This would probably have been the best option, but given the past track record of such issues, would also have been highly improbable to achieve.

Whether Pradeep should have cleared his name by bringing it out in the open, is his personal choice. If we go by past track record, in the past most sexual harassment cases have ended in a stalemate. There is usually a lot of public attention, things rarely get proven, the offender is rarely punished, and the incident is rarely proven. The only thing that usually remains is the stink of the scandal, leaving blemishes on people's reputations. So it is probably in the best interests that Pradeep did not raise the issue further. However, if he is innocent, he will have to live with the residue of what this unfair blaming will do to him, and if he is guilty, the incident has given him a chance to save whatever face was left and make a fresh start.

OXY Limited can never say for sure that Pradeep will never make this mistake again. They are taking a risk of history repeating itself. However, they protected their interests by extending the probation of Pradeep and by withholding his incentive payments. They also passed on a message that this kind of behaviour will not be tolerated in the organization, and that the organization still gives a chance to its employees to mend their ways and is willing to invest in a fresh start for Pradeep. All in all, the company probably acted in a fair and square manner without compromising their interests. The risk that Pradeep will create similar problems in the new location is a very real risk. This is where instinct and gut feel would enable Sohail to make the right decision. His perceptivity and accuracy in reading Pradeep's body language would and mannerisms would help him know if he was actually guilty or not. It would also help him gauge whether or not Pradeep would eventually turn around or not.

All in all, companies invest in solving people related problems, they also invest in trying to turn around situations to the advantage of all. What really matters in the long run is the search for a win-win solution for all. The case of Misconduct Misfortunes is one such case where such a win-win was able to be established for all.

Performance Paradigms

This is a classic case of neglect of a problem by the organization. Girish Rane was like a slow growing tumor that had been left ignored in the hope that it would go away. But over the years, the problem only escalated to the point that the new Territory Manager had no alternative but to take cognizance of the facts. The problem was only inherited by Ravi Apte and was not necessarily of his making.

Sometimes, organizations behave irrationally. The problem of Girish Rane was just below critical point. He was a sure example of a person who would invest the minimum possible in the

adherence to systemic expectations, perhaps with a view to giving himself the maximum liberties possible. His past record is testimony to the fact. The past Territory Manager was known to be a liberal person. This approach to managing people, while gets the TM a great deal of popularity with the Sales Officers, actually contributes to creating the problem in many cases.

A typical pattern of cases like Girish is that the minute Ravi would enforce what would be normal disciplinary expectations from the Sales Officer (eg. The Detailing Kit), he felt that he had a right to complain to the Head Office about the ‘tyranny’ that he was being subjected to. This puts the Territory Manager under a great deal more psychological pressure. Also, this kind of a behaviour is typically called passive aggressive behaviour where, through a systematic pattern of non-compliance, Girish is actually engaged in a subtle power struggle with his authority figure, Ravi Apte.

Ravi Apte responded to the occasion fairly proactively. He identified a long standing problem based on his own facts and experience of Girish, rather than go by past reputation. Early on in his managing of the territory, he was able to pick up the general feeling that something was wrong, and also looked to verify his assumptions with facts and reality. This is an essential learning for all Territory Managers. Also, his efforts to bring Jayant and Ranjan Basu on his side indicated good leadership skills.

Jayant, on the other hand, was clearly looking for the facts of the case before arriving at a decision. However, he could have played a more proactive role in this case, by giving Ravi some inputs on how to handle such a problem Sales Officer. It was almost as if the Marketing team had to take on the responsibility of managing Girish’s performance on their own. Normally, HRD people would get involved in the case and would have been active players, rather than the passive spectator that Jayant was.

Induction Illusions

Dinesh Patel is a character that displays a typical behaviour pattern of an underperformer, who does not really confront the reality of his own non-performance, but instead gets caught up with all kinds of blaming behaviour (bad luck), impression management (promises to improve), and quick apologies (not heartfelt) that were intended to manage the boss’s impressions of him more than anything else. All these defensive behaviours prevented learning from happening and this is the core of the problem. His illness and early marriage too, added to his basket of responsibilities and also precipitated this behaviour pattern.

As a boss, Karan ought to have picked up some early warning signs of things going wrong. These signals were clear when he found that Dinesh was a slow learner and was not really putting in the time needed to make up for his long absences. A second early signal came when Dinesh was found lagging behind in the number of doctor calls he was supposed to make.

At that point, timely action needed to have been taken by Prakash and Karan. The uppermost thought in their minds was a recommendation for termination rather than turnaround. Ideally, to

create an inclusive environment, termination ought to have been a last resort when all other options had been ruled out. There is, thus, the question of the real intentions of Prakash and Karan to invest time and effort in attempting coaching for a turnaround. Additionally, the monthly cycle meetings were a forum for presenting facts of poor performance. A more preferable course of action for Prakash and Karan would have been to join hands with Dinesh and actually participate in his learning process. What Dinesh needed was proper step-by-step guidance, detailed instructions and plenty of advice from his seniors who could help a person who found it difficult to help himself. The Territory Manager is the one who interacts with the PSO's and his empathy with the stresses of being inducted as a PSO is crucial in making induction of all PSO's smoother and less traumatic.

Had Karan been more empathic, perhaps the course of events could have been different. As things look now, there is an unwillingness on the part of Karan and Prakash to invest in repairing the case, there is also an adversarial stance taken by Dinesh Patel and if any win-win is to be established, it will consume a great deal of valuable time and effort and might detract from the ongoing tasks and carrying out of business of OXY Limited.

A great deal of introspection and soul-searching on the part of Management or HRD Departments will be needed if they are to intervene and bring the two parties together and attempt to repair the relationship. A decision would have to be taken based on values and culture of OXY Limited in this regard.

OXY Limited needs to review its induction process and include elements of handholding with the trainee PSO's and in-depth understanding of the stresses the new recruits go through. The Territory Managers need to be equipped with a positive and empathic attitude and the skills needed to take PSO's through the transitory induction phase, if a truly inclusive work environment is to be worked towards.

Trials and Tribulations of A Territory Manager

Coaching, counseling, performance management and leadership skills are essential traits of an effective Territory Manager. However, it is essential to recognize the fact that these skills are called into action in group situations. This case is different from the earlier ones inasmuch as it represents group dynamics as experienced by a Territory Manager (K.V. Rao) in reality. This case presents a slice in the life of the team dynamics that he faces on a day-to-day basis.

The analysis of this case can be undertaken from many perspectives and this fact will emerge in the discussions that different groups may have on this case study. Some groups will bring out the skills of the Territory Manager in managing cycle meetings, others will try to analyse each and every one of the characters represented in the story and his impact on the group dynamics. Some groups will recommend a course of action for the TM to take for each of the group members, while others will attempt to bring lessons in how OXY Limited ought to have created policies for managing these situations. All these approaches are correct and will result in learning for the participants and therefore, ought to be encouraged and engaged with.

The essential learning that this case is intended to deliver, is the recognition of the group dynamics that is emerging and early warning signs that there are interpersonal issues that need attention to which, if not managed properly, will be likely to escalate into something that might fracture the team irreparably.

All groups have a 'pecking order'. Normally, organizational hierarchies provide some legitimacy to the role of the Territory Manager as the person who is 'in charge' and 'calls the shots'. However, people do behave irrationally and it is often that they will tend to challenge the established order. This case brings out the subtle ways in which this is done.

It is obvious that Yousuf is the 'chosen' one who is seen as the most mature and responsible after Rao himself. However, Ravi was the person who did not accept his leadership and challenged Yousuf often. His modus operandi was to bypass Rao and forge links with Mangesh Raja, the Regional Manager. This trend, if extrapolated, would lead to the development of two 'camps' in the team – one that would support Yousuf's style of management and the other that would support Ravi's style. A great deal of effort would have to be expended by Rao in resolving issues and making decisions through consensus which would be elusive.

Rao needs to recognize these early warning signals and take action to assert his leadership. He needs to bring Mangesh Raja and Roopesh Kumar on his side and bring about uniformity in their thinking. Also, at the organizational level there needs to be brought about, a uniformity of company culture in styles of management and the role of the HRD department is crucial in this direction. The issues raised in this case study have far reaching implications if not managed in a timely and appropriate manner.

IN CONCLUSION

In my final words, I would like to say that case studies attempt to capture reality as it occurred. However, it might be wise to say that no case study can capture the full essence and universe of the events that happened, and the internal ambience of the characters that were represented there. Thus, there will always be a need to make assumptions about gaps that may be perceived by participants. It is perhaps appropriate to allow the participants to make these assumptions (provided they are logical) as and when necessary. This will free up a great deal of space for the group to conduct their discussions and permit explorations of different perspectives.

Also, formats of cases are as varied as can be imagined. The cases presented here were written with specific learning objectives in mind. These learning objectives led to the development of a more 'storylike' format where events were presented as authentically as possible with no prejudgements embedded in the stories. This was deliberate and called for. The questions at the end of the case were designed to elicit discussions from which insights could be generated. The process of group discussions leading to generation of insights is in itself a valuable learning experience where the learnings are imbedded deeper in the mind of the learner, as compared to cognitive learning of models and theories which happens only intellectually.

Not only does the format of case writing vary, the formats of case discussions also varies tremendously. Often, we see case discussion leaders forming groups of five or six and giving them the freedom to work through the case and present their learnings. This is more in line with the principles of 'self-generated' learning. Sometimes we see the case discussion leader himself leading the discussions in larger groups. This is more beneficial when the case discussion leader has an agenda for learning that he wishes to impart to the group. Sometimes, the cases are just read and learning left to the individual learner. Each of these approaches is appropriate to different situations and results in a different kind and level of learning. It is important to keep in mind the objectives and the process of learning that is wished for before deciding on the format of group discussions.

In conclusion, I would like to say, that case studies attempt to bring an element of reality in the classroom and this ought to be always welcome.

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