

Case I: Managing People—The Case of the Frustrated Faculty Member

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Abstract: Managing people is a continuing leadership challenge. The foundation discipline for managing people relates to human resource management and faculty development in academic settings. In human resource management, administrators are challenged to balance the needs of individuals and the expectations of the organization for the mutual benefit of both. A primary goal of management is to lead and develop people and manage the organization in alignment with the mission and vision of the organization. The purpose of this paper is, first, to present an overview of human resource management and faculty development fundamentals including motivating, mentoring, and performance counseling. Second, a hypothetical case is presented for readers to apply theory to situation. Finally, the case is analyzed by reviewing central issues and the management concepts that may apply to the scenario. These include managing resources, mentoring, motivation, and development. In this case-based analysis, Dr. Orsten is a junior faculty member employed in a developing school. With a shortage of faculty in her field, she succumbs to the pressures of teaching and administration at the expense of her own professional advancement through research. The tenure clock is ticking, however, and Dr. Orsten has serious doubts about her ability to redirect her priorities and earn tenure. Dr. Hightower, the Associate Dean, also faces a dilemma: there is a shortage of faculty in Dr. Orsten's specialty, and the system is poised to exercise the "up-or-out" option.

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Academic administrators and industrial leaders frequently consider managing people a most complex aspect of their position. As a result, managing people has earned a place in management theory as a separate discipline of business. This discipline, human relations (or resource) management, is defined as the process by which leaders bring together the needs of the organization with factors that motivate employees to create an environment that is mutually beneficial.¹ In the academic setting, this process parallels the issue of faculty development. The ultimate goal is to supplement leaders' and administrators' intuition with facts and theories that will enhance their ability to lead, nurture, and motivate individuals and manage the organization more effectively. Basic business theories for managing people incorporate general progressions from mentoring to motivation to performance counseling. The ultimate goals are to develop personnel and to advance the organization.

Faculty with varying goals, objectives, and needs, however, may not be manageable by the general theories of personnel management. The consequences of using such traditional theories could be

poor performance, conflict, lack of trust, lack of motivation, and eventual unhappiness for both the administrator/chair and the faculty member. Primary reasons for this difficulty lie within the complex nature of human interrelationships, the need to understand and respect cultural diversity, and the varying perceptions that people may have of the same object or issue. These relationships must be managed with meticulous communication and leadership skills by the administrative staff.² Thus, the resulting challenge for a chair/dean is to manage and lead a diverse group of people while respecting individual career development plans that must complement the mission and vision of the department, the school, and the university.

Purpose

This paper first presents an overview of some critical theories in human relations management. Second, a hypothetical case is presented for discussion and application of principles; and finally, the central issues of the case are presented along with a review of relevant management concepts.

Human Relations Fundamentals

Even though people cannot be compartmentalized and treated uniformly, academic administrators can learn a variety of techniques to manage people. For these techniques to be successfully employed, academic leaders must first develop a clear understanding of the management role and then apply the appropriate technique such as motivating,³⁻⁵ mentoring,^{1,3} and performance counseling.⁶

Motivating. Kotter summarizes some of the basic concepts of motivating people. These concepts include establishing vision, involving staff, supporting efforts, and rearing outcomes.⁴ He posits that motivation is an evolutionary process in which leaders and employees cooperate to achieve the basic human relations goal: mutual benefit and satisfaction of the organizational goals and the individual's needs.

To accomplish this, leaders must *define a realistic vision*, articulate its purpose, and ensure that employees understand and appreciate the vision that presents a realistic, credible, and attractive future.⁷ The administrative challenge and responsibility, therefore, is to define the "what" of the organization. Kotter further states that employee motivation is improved by encouraging *staff involvement* in determining "how" the institutional vision is to be achieved. A third motivational technique results from overt *employee support*. Staff efforts may be enhanced by "providing coaching, feedback, and role modeling, thereby helping people grow professionally and enhancing their self esteem."⁴ The final motivational technique Kotter recommends is *recognition*. Clear demonstrations of recognition and rewards assure the employees that their efforts are contributing to the mission and that they are appreciated for their individual and team accomplishments.⁴ Kotter emphasizes that motivation and inspiration energize people, not by pushing them in the right direction but by satisfying basic human needs.

Mentoring. In our opinion, the benefits of being mentored are enormous. The new faculty member adopts academic values, obtains practical advice, learns how to network, and ultimately grows both professionally and individually. Taylor identifies four key mentoring techniques: defining goals, peer involvement, professional development, and feedback. Familiarization with these four components of mentoring and application of these techniques should improve managerial effectiveness.⁸

First, collaboration is a key feature in defining goals and objectives. The mentor and mentee must work together to ensure that they communicate clearly. The goals must be precisely articulated by the mentor and fully understood by the mentee. The goals should then be revised regularly. Annual revisions are recommended.

Second, peers by rank, age, or common professional interest have the potential to augment the mentoring relationship. The mentor need not be in the same department nor should the mentoring relationship depend on a single individual; a "constellation of mentors" may be needed to meet the different needs of the mentee. When selecting mentors, one should concentrate on common interests and involvement as well as ascertaining whether the mentor is competent, accessible, and willing. The selection process should begin with informal conversations, especially with the more successful and experienced faculty. Generally the more accomplished faculty are most accommodating in interpreting and integrating personal goals into the institutional mission.

Third, the faculty member who may be division head, chair, or dean shares the responsibility for professional development. Once the goals are clearly defined, the chair and faculty should discuss and agree on resource allocation of duties, time, supplies, etc. Newer or probationary faculty should be reviewed regularly. The chair should invite comments from peer evaluators or external reviewers of teaching syllabi, research progress, and service activities.

Fourth, frequent feedback from the administration is essential. Quarterly progress reviews ensure timely constructive comments and opportunities for redirection. Regular attention to feedback and interactive assessments will avoid anyone being surprised during an annual evaluation.⁸ The relationship between the mentee and mentor must be evaluated, and there must be open, collegial, and constructive communication between the parties. If toxic mentoring occurs, such as mentor unavailability or mentee exploitation, then it is essential that a new mentor be selected in a timely manner.⁹

Performance Counseling. The mentor's counseling with the mentee reinforces the effects of motivational techniques. The primary elements of performance counseling begin with the definition of responsibilities for the mentee and continue with a series of relevant communication strategies, described by Higginson as:

- Make performance counseling a year-round (not yearly) activity

- Offer both formal and informal evaluation of job performance
- Make job performance expectations clear
- Make performance goals specific and manageable
- Focus evaluative comments on a person's performance, not on a person's personality
- Link evaluative comments to specific examples
- Incorporate self-evaluation and goal setting
- Offer specific suggestions for improvement
- Establish time frame for achieving goals
- Recognize and reward achievement.⁶

As with any issue, problem, or challenge, numerous precipitating factors affect the process and outcome. The purpose of this case analysis is to explore only the central issues of a scenario demonstrating the challenge of managing people. The case that follows illustrates several management responsibilities, including the concepts vital for managing people: mentoring, motivation, and personal development. The tangential influences will be left for the reader's imagination and discussion.

Case Review: The Case of the Frustrated Faculty Member

Having recently completed postgraduate training in periodontics and a Ph.D. in molecular biology, Norwegian-born Dr. Rebecca Orsten had been heavily recruited to the new University of New Mexico College of Dentistry in Santa Fe to start a molecular biology program for dental and graduate students as well as teach periodontics. The school was unique in the fact that it was going to be "departmentless." Due to its small enrollment of twenty-five students per year, the administration believed that hired faculty would participate in team-building and thereby freely collaborate to satisfy the missions of the dental school.

Dean Robert Weyland, a retired oral surgeon, and Associate Dean Sylvia Hightower, M.D., are new to the dental education arena. They recruited Dr. Orsten with promises of a fully equipped research lab and implied that when more faculty were hired, she could develop and chair a new graduate program in periodontics. Dr. Orsten was so excited about the potential at this new school that she chose not to interview anywhere else. She accepted the position on the spot, particularly since the salary was so good. She felt that the Dentist Scientist Award she had re-

ceived along with her training in periodontics would provide her the necessary tools to develop at New Mexico and earn her tenure within six years. Dr. Hightower also assured Dr. Orsten that because this was a new school, strongly supported by the New Mexico legislature, the Promotion and Tenure Committee, of which she would be the chair, would likely "rubber-stamp" her tenure and promotion to associate professor. To gain that status, Dr. Orsten would be required to demonstrate activity within her discipline, become Board-certified, and show evidence of scholarly activity. Dr. Hightower stated that guidelines for promotion and tenure were currently being developed and that if Dr. Orsten wanted to have an idea of what would likely be expected, she should download the policies used by the medical school at New Mexico.

Two years passed quickly, and Dr. Orsten found herself inundated with responsibilities in addition to her research and teaching tasks. Since there were some unexpected budget cuts by the state, new faculty hires were limited. Spending most of her weekends at the university and not getting home before 9:00 p.m. on weekdays, she felt that she was feverishly treading water: she had not yet submitted a grant, the laboratory where she worked was devoid of basic human and technical resources, and she was spending the majority of time after hours with administrative responsibilities. Dr. Orsten arranged meetings to discuss her situation with Dr. Hightower on numerous occasions, but they all were cancelled due to the associate dean's busy schedule.

Hired at the same time as Dr. Orsten, Dr. Seven Langley, a sixty-two-year-old periodontist retired from full-time practice, was the only other full-time periodontist and came to the school voluntarily to help out in the clinic. Dr. Langley was hired as a clinical track educator with a three-year renewable contract. He spent most of his time preparing lectures and seminars and developing a proposal to start a graduate program. He had minimal interest in scholarly activity or participating on school committees. Recently, he has mentioned the possibility of returning to Sun City after completing his contract.

One morning after an extended holiday period, when she had forfeited vacation to meet the academic demands of the school, Dr. Orsten felt that she desperately needed to speak with Dr. Hightower and was finally able to arrange a meeting. At the meeting, she told Dr. Hightower that she really loved the school and that the potential there was tremendous, but that

she was quite frustrated. She recognized that she was not developing as a faculty member: she had submitted no papers for publication, had written no grant proposals, and found less and less time to spend in her laboratory. Dr. Hightower empathized with Dr. Orsten and reassured her that she was a valued faculty member, loved by her students, and recognized for her clinical skills. To lift Dr. Orsten's spirits, Dr. Hightower told her she would reward her with a \$5,000 merit bonus for her dedication to the school and then cautioned her to "keep on plugging" because her three-year review was only one year away. Dr. Orsten had only recently been informed that, at New Mexico, the three-year review was designed to evaluate the progress of any faculty member who was on tenure-track. If the specially appointed three-year review committee felt that a faculty member had virtually no chance of achieving tenure within six years, the faculty member was entitled to remain at the school for another year after which time the faculty member's contract would not be renewed. Feeling insecure and confused, Dr. Orsten began to panic as she left Dr. Hightower's office.

Case Analysis

In this situation, Drs. Orsten and Hightower are both in precarious positions. Dr. Hightower may lose a dedicated faculty member who is unlikely to earn tenure. Dr. Orsten is frustrated that her personal development goals and the institution's priorities are in conflict. Her motivation was challenged; she could not identify a mentor to guide her to success; and performance counseling had been nonproductive. Her confusion was about to progress from frustration to depression.

Central Issue #1: Misplaced Position Priorities

From Dr. Orsten's perspective, the daily demands for instruction preempted her opportunity for research. From the administration's perspective, Dr. Orsten is seen as a faculty member who is ineffective in making progress on one of her primary assignments: research. Both parties are frustrated by the lack of progress. However, the establishment of priorities and allocation of resources underlie the issue from either perspective.

Relevant Management Concept: Trust. The effective leader must enable others to reach their

potential. In this case, promises were unfulfilled, and Dr. Hightower allowed the pressures of her day-to-day operations as an associate dean to push aside her concern for the personal growth of Dr. Orsten and the true value of her contributions to the university. The effective manager and leader must also demonstrate consistent and dependable integrity. One broken promise, especially if it served as a major recruiting attraction as in this scenario (promise of a fully equipped research lab), could be enough to taint a professional interpersonal relationship as well as any intended career goals.

Central Issue #2: Unavailable Collaborative Opportunities

One of the most frustrating and challenging elements of Dr. Orsten's academic situation is that she has basic skills and knowledge to begin a research career. However, she does not have a network of scholars with whom she may collaborate. Further compounding the problem is the administration's lack of scholarly development and guidance. The result is that Dr. Orsten perceived that she was expected to produce while receiving no support to do so. The importance of mentoring during the formative years of scholastic development therefore became a critical issue.

Relevant Management Concept: Mentoring. Mentoring techniques offer terrific potential for developing young or new faculty in the participatory/democratic management style of academics. The mentor's role is to involve, inspire, teach, and collaborate with junior faculty.¹⁰ Mentoring pairs should be selected based on personality (or likeability) and common professional interests. Multiple mentors may be encouraged in situations in which one mentor may guide research development while another may be more appropriate for building teaching skills. Caution should be exercised when selecting mentors in a small department environment. The chair, who is the ultimate judge of the mentee's performance, may introduce internal conflict by attempting to serve the dual roles of chair and mentor.

Central Issue #3: Uncertainty of Support

Dr. Orsten's role is unclear in this case. The conditions of her interview and employment agreements focused on research and teaching. However,

changing circumstances resulted in a redirection of her responsibilities to administration without a concomitant acknowledgment that the expectations for research and teaching should be modified in exchange for the dean's demands for more administrative responsibility. Dr. Orsten's comments indicated declining motivation as the demands of her employment were changing but the expectations for her personal development were not being modified.

Relevant Management Concept: Motivation and Development. Traditional motivational concepts apply in academics. Understanding one's role, the value of one's talent, and the importance of individual contributions to the outcome measures are all important in motivation.⁴ However, motivation and positive outcomes are predicated on the individual's decision to participate in each of the assigned or voluntary duties. The passive or intentional decision not to participate frequently stems from a perception that the input exceeds the benefit or output. When this is recognized, complaints generally follow, and questions of self-doubt arise. The faculty member's concern may be transformed into a feeling of self-sacrifice.

In some cases, because motivation appears to be diminishing, the astute manager may need to confer with the faculty member and ask the question "How can this school/university help you?" Both must be prepared to identify the positives as well as negatives while assessing the fairness of the outcome/reward system. Both must also be willing to explore redirection of priorities and outcomes. In today's academic environment, it is essential that the leader/manager communicate to his or her faculty a feeling of "belonging" as well as a genuine belief that the future of the school depends upon the skills and talents of its entire faculty.

Related Issues

Several other important issues have a bearing on the case. These include:

- poorly defined administrative structure
- lack of administrative preparation
- vague guidelines for promotion and tenure
- professional frustration that affects personal life
- unclear expectations

Readers' individual experiences and values will determine which aspect of Dr. Orsten's situation they choose to address. These considerations should factor into developing a plan of action. In this case, two plans of action—Dr. Orsten's and Dr. Hightower's—

need definition. Because this case is primarily presented from Dr. Orsten's perspective, the action plan is presented from her perspective.

Action Alternatives

Dr. Orsten is definitely at a crossroads in her career as well as her personal life, so the action alternatives include a number of options that should be considered. Each, of course, has advantages and limitations, and, as in any realistic situation, the degree of success may be uncertain. The consequences and contingencies of each action could be explored further in group discussions or individually. The primary actions may include:

- Prepare an action plan for
 - herself
 - the position
 - the school
- Demand clarification of a realistic position description.
- Present a proposal for a revised position description for negotiation and modification.
- Request additional faculty to share responsibilities.
- Request clarification and/or exemptions of the tenure policy.
- Seek an external mentor for collaboration.
- Develop a constellation of mentors.
- Ask the dean again to reconsider her problem and to present a solution.
- Move to another university.
- Leave academia.

Expected Outcomes

The principal guiding considerations for managing people should include resource allocation (especially time), mentoring techniques, and attention to motivation and development, as well as a commitment to equitable treatment. Astute leaders will recognize that career development and advancement of junior faculty are extremely important to the overall health of a dental school. Given the present faculty shortage, every talented individual requires nurturing.

Assessment of this case from the perspective of either Dr. Hightower or Dr. Orsten could stimulate readers to recognize the value of:

- establishing faculty career development progress

- developing executive management training
- creating an equitable professional environment
- instituting highly effective mentoring relationships

These values are achievable with attention to an equitable allocation of resources (and assignments), mentoring, and strengthening communication to motivate and stimulate all parties.

Finally, faculty collectively must evaluate how mentors and administrators manage young/novice faculty. Those who are unable to help young faculty advance and develop may themselves need additional training or mentoring in this process to ensure success of the individual and the organization. In some cases, ineffective mentors may need to be replaced.

Conclusion

The case of the frustrated faculty member illustrates a realistic academic scenario. The issues, actions, and their ramifications may have infinite combinations. Dental schools face significant difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified faculty members. The complexity of issues such as the ones presented in this case impact faculty performance, job satisfaction, promotion, and, ultimately, job retention. The ability of a leader to successfully clarify, direct, relate, and persuade through this complex milieu of issues is critical for maintaining an effective team. Administrators and faculty members alike may utilize this case to explore some of the problems faced by dental educators today.

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