Tom Bray Case Study

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Overview

The Tom Bray case study involves his, first-time, use of a management style known as Management by Wandering Around (MBWA). Assigned to the facilities group for Pegasus, Tom, and his team, have been assigned the responsibility for installing the furniture and equipment for AtlantiCorp's, recently renovated third floor account receivables department. Having received feedback from his boss concerning the need for work on people skills and the need to build team rapport, Tom felt the application of MBWA would help achieve both.

Tom's first encounter with the team seemed cordial, but by day's end, the team seemed distant and non-responsive. While the team members were performing their work, the conversation seemed to be lacking, especially between team members and Tom. Tom's boss had mentioned his need to improve people skills and built team rapport. Why didn't Tom's use of MBWA work? What is happening between the team and Tom?

MWBA

Management by Wandering Around was a major paradigm shift for mangers, alerting them to the importance of creating an open communication door (Kostner, 1994). MBWA is somewhat of a misnomer in that the pattern is not actually random wandering around, but rather an established pattern to ensure lines of communication are kept open in support of the working team (Larson & Gray, 2014, p. 349). Regular interaction between management and the team is essential for the establishment of an effective social network as well as keeping the project manager aware of what is going right, and what issues might be on the horizon. A proactive form of interaction, rather than reactive.

Tom's Problems

By the end of the case, Tom Bray's team seemed completely confused as to what was going on. One moment Tom is there, the next he's back in his office, then by days' end he's back on the floor. Tom Bray had an excellent idea to help resolve his people issues, as well as help, build team rapport, but he failed to do one important thing, and that's meet with his team to help explain what would be happening. Had Tom met with his team, developed a wandering plan, and then executed it, it might have gone a lot better.

Tom's next step needs to be a team meeting to explain the project and how he will be changing his management style in an attempt to improve upon his skills. He should also take the opportunity to meet the team and learn from them how to pronounce their names, instead of trying to figure it out on his own. Knowing names and greeting appropriately, is an important step in developing rapport and eventually social interaction. When the team sees Tom again, they will better understand why he's there.

Lessons Learned

- Tom Bray needs to establish contact with key players within his team. Passing through and saying "hi" is not enough. Open lines of communication transcend simple pleasantries.

- MBWA is more than a lesson learned through reading or class. Practical application and a defined wandering plan are essential in developing rapport. Regular interaction is key to MBWA success.

- Tom should have begun the project with an all-hands team meeting to help explain the project and what he would be doing that was different. By doing so, he could avoid confusion and anxiety amongst the team members.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Tom's need to improve people skills and team rapport involves more than reading about, or taking a class on MBWA. He needs to meet with his team so they may learn what he expects, and what they expect of him. The creation of an open dialog will help improve communication and ultimately rapport. Once the team understands he's there to help, they will become open to his presence, open to two-way communication, and the development of a supportive social network.

References

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