



## A CASE STUDY ON MANAGER BEHAVIOR AT WORKPLACE

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### **Abstract**

*What the faculty say (lecture), the students may forget. What the Faculty show (PPT) the students may or may not remember. But what the students do (discussing, analyzing, applying knowledge, reasoning and drawing conclusions) they will not only understand but also remember and reflect when they come across similar situations. It is because, the retention of learning is best when the students are involved. Cases Studies is one of the best ways to make the Sessions a Student Centered Learning.*

*Case studies can be used to help the students realize the complexities of real situations, as they present realistic, complex, and contextually rich situations and often involve a dilemma, conflict, or problem that requires students to practice applying knowledge and thinking skills to a real situation.*

*The subject case study is on Manager Behavior at Workplace and the reaction of his Staff (assistants) on the Manager's Behavior. I have sincerely attempted to present how we can portray potential questions for discussions, identify the problem, point out the causes of the problem and list possible learning points from the case.*

*I have also presented Faculty Notes covering issues viz. Grapevine Communication, Behavioral Approach, the Behaviour Modification Approach, Leadership and Leadership Styles. And the key objective is to demonstrate how one can make the best out of the Case Study in the sessions.*

**Keywords: Case Study, Problem, Behavior Approach, Learning Points, Faculty Notes.**

### **1. The Case**

George, the Office manager, went out to the corridor outside his office to light his cigarette. As he was enjoying the smoke, two of his assistants (staff), Mark and John, just passed by him. Neither Mark nor John noticed George standing and smoking there, George started to wave 'hello', soon when he realized that they were talking about him, he immediately brought his hand down and started concentrating on their conversation with rapt attention. Mark was telling John, "John, you know that the old man (refereeing George) was telling me this morning. He said that he can't run the Office without me and then I am his number one boy".

"Oh! George told this to you too?", responded John, "may be in your case he means it. I don't pay any attention to his compliments any more. I heard that he gives everyone the same pep talk. Even when I spoil a job and expect him to take me to task, he's just as sweet as sugar as ever and never fires nor point the lapse on my part. But however, behind me he writes a bad report and at the time of appraising my performance, an annual ritual, he doesn't tell where I stand. Do you know last time when the promotion to Office Supervisor's post came up, he placed the heap of performance appraisals before me and wondered how I could be helped with such poor ratings".

"To tell you the truth", said Mark, "I wish he had told me where I stand. It may be fine to have a boss who talks nice to you. But I am always afraid he tells me one thing and runs me down for someone else in the Office. You know how lousy Peter does his job in the Office. Last week, I saw George checking up some Job of Peter and he appeared to be visibly shocked. On seeing George's facial expression, Peter asked 'anything wrong Sir? , you know how George replied? 'Oh, nothing. I am glad you got the job done in time'. But see the irony. George comes to me in less than three minutes and tells me he can't trust Peter and perhaps I may have to take charge of the Peter job soon. Why is he not straightening Peter anyway?"

"Look Mark! I am not in the least bothered about Peter" said John; "What I worry about is what George tells other about me that he can't tell me to my face".

As Mark and John walked away, George threw out his unsmoked cigar, went back to his office desk and began to think.

### **2. Objective of the Study**

1. The primary objective of the Case study is to frame questions for discussions,
2. And discuss possible learning points from the Case.
3. The secondary objective is to summarize the Faculty Notes to be used in the Teaching / Training Session.



4. Also to identify the problem in the Case and Cause of the problem.
5. The impact (reaction and response) from the Staff, for such behavior.

### 3. Scope & Limitations of the Study

1. The scope of the of the study examines George's approach in dealing with his employees
2. The limitation of the study is that, the case is purely based on Grapevine / informal communication.
3. The study encompasses behavioral issues involving past history only.

### 4. Potential Questions for Discussions

1. What was wrong with George's approach in dealing with his employees? Was he all wrong?
2. Does George possess any Qualities of a Leader? If yes, Justify.
3. "Behavioral theories postulate that behaviors of the leaders are more important than their qualities". Justify this statement bringing out the distinction between traits and behaviors of George.
4. How would you react, if you were to be in George's situation?
5. Suggest the Leadership Style to be proposed with sound reasoning?

### 5. Identification of Problem

The first reading at the Case may reveal it to be a simple issue of overheard communication between George and his Assistants John and Mark, but if one pays rapt attention to the case from behavioral point of view of George towards his staff, one can sense that **"George's behavior and Leadership qualities, are not liked by his staff"** not only John and Mark doesn't like George but also other staff as well.

To substantiate the identification of problem i.e., *George's behavior and Leadership qualities, are not liked by his staff*" let me enumerate few of the sentences from the case, which will speak for its own, they are as follows:

1. I [John] don't pay any attention to his compliments any more. (John is sick of listening to similar type of comment passed by George on all the staff).
2. I [John] heard that he gives everyone the same pep talk. (He exaggerates everyone, that you are the best).
3. Behind me [John] he writes a bad report and states that, how I could I help with such poor ratings". (He praises by words and puts down on records).
4. Mark said, I am always afraid he tells me one thing and runs me down (is not open and clear).
5. Mark said, why is he not straightening Peter anyway?" (No initiative to correct are settings expectation).
6. John said; "What I worry about is what George tells other about me that he can't tell me to my face". (he is not straight forward, the words are contrary to George's action).

### 6. Cause of the Problem

The cause for the problem i.e., *George's behavior and Leadership qualities, are not liked by his staff*" are for the following possible reasons:

1. He does not mean what he says.
2. He exaggerates everyone, that you are the best for no valid reason
3. He abdicates leadership qualities
4. The behavior depicted in unfavorable situation is strange (quite opposite)
5. He praises by words and denies by action / on records
6. He doesn't take initiative to correct are set an expectation
7. Never is he annoyed or strong or rude on any one, though their performance is bad or poor
8. His words are contrary to his action
9. He does not trust one and talks ill behind their back.

### 7. Possible Learning Points

Learning points in this instant case can help one to improve their behavior and Leadership qualities through identifying what kind of Leadership and Behavior works and what doesn't with the Staff / Subordinates.

1. Though George does not depict Autocratic Leadership Style, yet he is not liked for his Free Rein Leadership style.
2. Though his behavior is soft and polite to everyone, yet they don't not like him, as his behavioral response is contrary to the performance of his staff
3. Though he praises everyone, yet they do not consider his praise, as he praises people even when the outcome of their job is poor/ worst



4. Though he does not yell on the staff, yet they worry / fear as he is quite opposite on papers on records i.e. makes bad or ill report against them.
5. Though he has not made a single remark on anyone face to face, yet people come to know what ill he has spoken in their absence through others.
6. When staff commits a mistake, they expect an intervention from the Manager / leader, at least an advice such as, to be cautious next time or don't repeat it.
7. A leader is respected for his fairness, integrity, honesty, and willingness to listen in an open-minded manner.
8. As a Leader one should live up to his words in order to build confidence in the hearts of his subordinates.
9. A Leader has to wear many hats; some of them are friend, mother, priest, doctor, therapist, coach and mentor etc.
10. A Leader has to adopt different leadership styles, keeping in mind the situation and other factors.
11. Being courteous by words only is not a mantra for a good leader / manager.

## **8. Faculty Notes**

### **8.1 Grapevine Communication**

Grapevine is an informal channel in an organization, to hear something through the grapevine is to learn of something informally and unofficially by means of gossip and rumor. It can also imply an overheard conversation or anonymous sources of information. It exists more at lower levels of organization.

When the employees sense uncertainty in behavior (Leadership Qualities) or when the managers show preferential treatment. Thus, when employees sense a need to exchange their views, they go for grapevine network as they cannot use the formal channel of communication in that case. Generally during breaks in cafeteria, the subordinates talk about their superior's attitude and behavior and exchange views with their peers. They discuss rumors. Thus, grapevine spreads like fire and it is not easy to trace the cause of such communication at times.

The present case is an overheard conversation by the Manager George which was a conversation between two of his Assistants Mark and John, where the behavior of George was the core topic.

### **8.2 Behavioral Approach**

The behavioural approach explains psychological phenomena such as disorders etc as being 'learned'. It's the study of behaviour and what mental/cognitive mechanisms cause and control behaviour and how that behaviour can be understood, manipulated, changed and controlled.

The behavioral approach is based on the concept of explaining behavior through observation, and the belief that our environment is what causes us to behave differently. Behaviorists assume that we can understand people by observing their behavior. Behavior can be observed in terms of responses to certain stimuli. Behavioural principles could be applied effectively to change unwanted and challenging behaviours.

The present case, the problem i.e, George's behavior and Leadership qualities, are not liked by his staff", could be changed by behaviour modification approach.

### **8.3 The Behaviour Modification Approach**

The Behaviour Modification Approach is based on the assumption that all behaviours are learned, both the useful ones (new skills) and the ones that are not so useful (challenging or difficult behaviours). It should become clear how often a particular behaviour occurs (frequency), what happened just before it occurs (antecedent events) and what happens straight after it occurs (consequences or reinforcing events).

In the instant case, George is in the habit of appreciating his staff for no valid reason, and if things go wrong by them, instead of yelling at them, he behaves normal, but, immediately, he speaks ill / bad about them with others at their back. Operant conditioning, coined by B.F. Skinner to encompass all learned behavior that humans and animals voluntarily use to "operate" in the world. The most simplistic description of this process is that people will perform voluntary actions to get something they want or avoid something they don't want.

Similar kind of behavior of George is likely to be repeated if such behavior is welcomed and accepted from his assistants on the contrary he may abstain or avoid such behavior, if the response is negative and disliked from their assistants.



Reinforcement answers the classic question of "What do I get out of it?" when applied to a behavior. Positive reinforcement is the addition of a pleasurable experience in reaction to something someone has done. For George, modifying his behavior apt to the situation may be as simple as praising him for a desirable behavior.

Negative Reinforcement is the process of changing behavior by taking away an unpleasant consequence if the behavior is performed. Adverse behavior is avoided by performing an action and, if George is open and clear one may not doubt him.

#### **8.4 Leadership**

It is a social influence in which one person can aid and support others in the accomplishment of a common task". In other words "organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal." The leader may or may not have any formal authority. Leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people, The three major styles of leadership are:

1. Authoritarian or autocratic
2. Participative or democratic
3. Delegative or Free Reign

The Leadership Style of George is the Non-authoritarian leadership style. Laissez faire (allow to pass or let go), where leaders try to give least possible guidance to subordinates, and try to achieve control through less obvious means. Which is the non interference in the affairs of others?

It is to be noted that, even when John and Peter spoiled the job, yet George not only failed to fire them but also dint interfere in correcting them.

This type of Leadership Style is ideal only when:

1. Employees are highly skilled, experienced, and creative.
2. Employees have pride in their work and the drive to do it successfully on their own.
3. Outside experts, such as staff specialists or consultants are being used.
4. Employees are trustworthy and experienced.

This style should not be used when:

1. The manager cannot provide regular feedback to let employees know how well they are doing.
2. The employees lose their sense of direction and focus.
3. It causes the employees to become less interested in their job and their dissatisfaction increases.
4. The manager doesn't understand his or her responsibilities and is hoping the employees can cover for him or her.

#### **8.5 Leadership Style**

While the proper leadership style depends on the situation, there are three other factors that also influence which leadership style to use.

1. The manager's personal background. What personality, knowledge, values, ethics, and experiences does the manager have? What does he or she think will work?
2. The employees being supervised. Employees are individuals with different personalities and backgrounds. The leadership style managers use will vary depending upon the individual employee and what he or she will respond best to.
3. The company. The traditions, values, philosophy, and concerns of the company will influence how a manager acts.

Good leader's use all three styles, with one of them normally dominant, bad leaders tend to stick with one style. A good leader uses all three styles, depending on what forces are involved between the followers, the leader, and the situation. Some examples include:

1. Using an authoritarian style on a new employee who is just learning the job. The leader is competent and a good coach. The employee is motivated to learn a new skill. The situation is a new environment for the employee.
2. Using a participative style with a team of workers who know their job. The leader knows the problem, but does not have all the information. The employees know their jobs and want to become part of the team.



3. Using a delegative style with a worker who knows more about the job than the Manager. You cannot do everything and the employees needs to take ownership of Manger job! In addition, this allows you to be at other places, doing other things.
4. Using all three: Telling your employees that a procedure is not working correctly and a new one must be established (authoritarian). Asking for their ideas and input on creating a new procedure (participative).
5. Delegating tasks in order to implement the new procedure (delegative).

The above explanation substantiates the point that, George has to fine tune himself and use all three Leadership styles in order to be an effective Manager and also for being liked by his assistants, keeping in view the following:

1. The Situation, the type of person with whom he is dealing.
2. How much time is available?
3. Who has the information — George, or Assistants, or both?
4. How well George know others Persons task.
5. Stress levels.
6. Type of task. Is it structured, unstructured, complicated, or simple? etc.

### **Conclusion & Recommendation**

According to Professor Paul Lawrence, case Study is “the vehicle by which a chunk of reality is brought into the classroom to be worked over by the class and the instructor. A good case keeps the class discussion grounded upon some of the stubborn facts that must be faced in real life situations.”

Students mind is not a vessel to be filled, rather a fire to be kindled. Case Studies indeed kindle the students / Sessions and they “bridge the gap between theory and practice and between the academy and the workplace” They also give students practice identifying the parameters of a problem, recognizing and articulating positions, evaluating courses of action, and arguing different points of view as they are useful for testing theoretical models by using them in real world situations.

As educators we must recognize the need to update our teaching methods to reflect the growing emphasis on the student-focused classroom by using Case Studies in the Sessions.

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