How much are fingers worth?
A case of safety, leadership, and change

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ABSTRACT

This case involves several issues which, depending on how they are addressed, can strengthen the company's future or threaten its long term viability. When things are seemingly going well, it is the best time to introduce changes for the future instead of waiting for the system to fail and then fix it by massive and revolutionary change. Ignorance and denial of problematic issues can give rise to growing inertia within the organization. That appears to be the way this company was functioning before Angela began challenging the status quo. Work attitudes and behaviors need to change from the production floor to the management level. Companies that are to survive and excel over the long term will have to reframe, reorganize and remake themselves into better competitors. This will require leaders who are focused on organizational transformation, empowerment of management and non-management employees, and improvement of key performance indicators. Together Don, Vice President of Manufacturing and top executive at the plant, and Angela, Director of Quality Assurance and leader of the organization-wide improvement initiative, will need to ensure that this company's employees are doing what they need to do to achieve immediate and long term success.

Key Words: Change, Conflict Management, Empowerment, Key Performance Indicators,
           Leadership, Organizational Culture, Organizational Transformation, Safety

Note: This is a field-researched case based upon an actual situation within a company. The
       names of the employees and the company are disguised.

THE CASE: INTRODUCTION

The case is about Angela, new manager of the quality department, who encounters and stops an unsafe practice (i.e., Mary, a production worker using her fingers to dislodge cheese from the cutters in a machine). Mary's supervisor, Ben, and the plant manager, Bernard, reprimanded Angela for interfering with a practice that was routinely used to ensure the meeting of production quotas. The manufacturing vice president and top executive at the plant, Don, indicated that in the future he would fire anyone who violated safety procedures or caused anyone else to violate them.

Case Objectives

The teaching objectives of this case are: (1) to assist students in strengthening their management skills and enhancing their capabilities to analyze problematic situations and determine alternative improvement options; (2) to help students understand that seemingly simple problems may actually be symptoms of one or more very complex problems; (3) to explain the impact of organizational culture on employee behavior and performance results; (4) to demonstrate the difficulties managers encounter during efforts to transform organizations; and (5) to address the need for empowerment and accountability for results in the management of organizations.

Courses and Levels

This case is appropriate for use in management courses at the undergraduate and graduate level. It could be used in Organizational Behavior, Managerial Skills, Principles of Management, Quality Management, and Organizational Transformation courses.

THE CASE: BACKGROUND

Angela was hired by Don, the vice president and top executive at a major food company plant, to manage its quality assurance department and lead an organization-wide improvement initiative. On her first day on the job, she learned that production workers were routinely involved in unsafe work practices (e.g., using fingers to unclog a machine). In addition, she learned that production supervisors and the plant manager were more focused on production quotas than employee safety.

INFORMATION ON KEY PLAYERS

Key players are depicted on Chart 1 and include Don, Vice President of Manufacturing and top executive at the plant; Bernard, Plant Manager; Angela, Director of Quality Assurance; Ted, Third Shift Team Leader; Ben, Third Shift Production Supervisor; and Mary, a union employee.

CASE SCENARIO

Angela had been at another company for 15 years when she took a manager position with a major food company. She was excited to be changing industries even though her job was essentially the same, i.e., managing a quality assurance department and leading an organization-wide improvement initiative. In her new job, her direct reports included hourly union employees as well as exempt "professional" employees. This was the first time that she was manager of employees on three shifts of plant operations. She was not quite sure how that would work.

This was Angela's first day on the job, but her time was spent in orientation sessions. A most impressive part of the day was the session on safety. She was pleased to learn that any employee could stop any other employee (management or non-management) who was involved in anything that was unsafe. This included such things as not wearing safety glasses or hairnets on the production floor, not complying with safety rules related to machine operation, and many other things. Angela decided that she would have to read ALL of the safety information several times, so she put it in her briefcase and took it home with her. As she left to go home, she glanced at the clock. It was 7 p.m. She had spent 12 hours on her first day at the plant.

Although she was tired when she got home, Angela read the safety information twice before she ate dinner and went to bed. She usually stayed up and watched the news. However, this night she went to bed at 10 p.m. She went to sleep immediately. A few hours later, the phone rang, and she answered it and glanced at the clock. It was 2 a.m. Ted was calling from the plant. Ted was one of the hourly team leaders on third shift. He said, "I hate to call you, but you said that we are in charge of safety on our shifts. I have a big problem here with an hourly worker and her supervisor." Angela replied, "What do you mean you have a problem?" "Well, the operator is sticking her hand up in a machine to unclog it. She has gloves on, so it's not unsanitary, but it's unsafe. She's sure to get her fingers cut off." Angela told Ted, "If she won't stop, just tell her supervisor." Ted said, "I did. The supervisor said he's going to get me fired if I don't leave her alone." Angela said, "Ted, please give me the supervisor's number or ask the supervisor to come to your phone and talk with me." Ted replied, "I'll go and get him. Hold on." When the supervisor (Ben) answered the phone, he said, "Yeah, what do you want?" Angela answered, "Ben, I want you to tell Mary to quit unclogging the machine with her hands, and I want you to do that now. If you don't do it, I'll be over there in one hour, and I'll tell her." Ben answered, "You are not my boss, and I won't do it. Who do you think you are?" Angela answered, "I'll see you in an hour. Let me talk with Ted." She asked Ted to give her Ben's manager's home number which he did. She called the manager and asked him to meet her at the plant in one hour. She called the Safety director and the vice president of manufacturing and asked them to meet with her as well.

At the plant, the 3 a.m. meeting was held at Mary's machine. Angela asked Mary to demonstrate how she had to unclog the machine with her hand. Then she asked the safety director whether this was a violation of safety procedures. He said it was. Then she asked the supervisor (Ben) why Mary had to unclog the machine with her hand. He said, "The machine clogs up a lot, and it slows us down. We can't make our production quota unless she unclogs the machine." Angela asked Ben, "How much is Mary's hand worth to her? How much will it cost us if the machine cuts off her fingers? Who cares about Mary's hand besides me?" At that point, Don, the vice president declared, "I do, and so does the company. People will NOT unclog a machine with their hands. Supervisors who allow or cause that to happen will be fired." Angela wondered why the safety director had not acted on this issue prior to this. She knew that

she would be unpopular on the plant floor with third shift supervisors. However, as she started to leave, Mary hugged her and said, "Finally we have somebody to stand up for us.
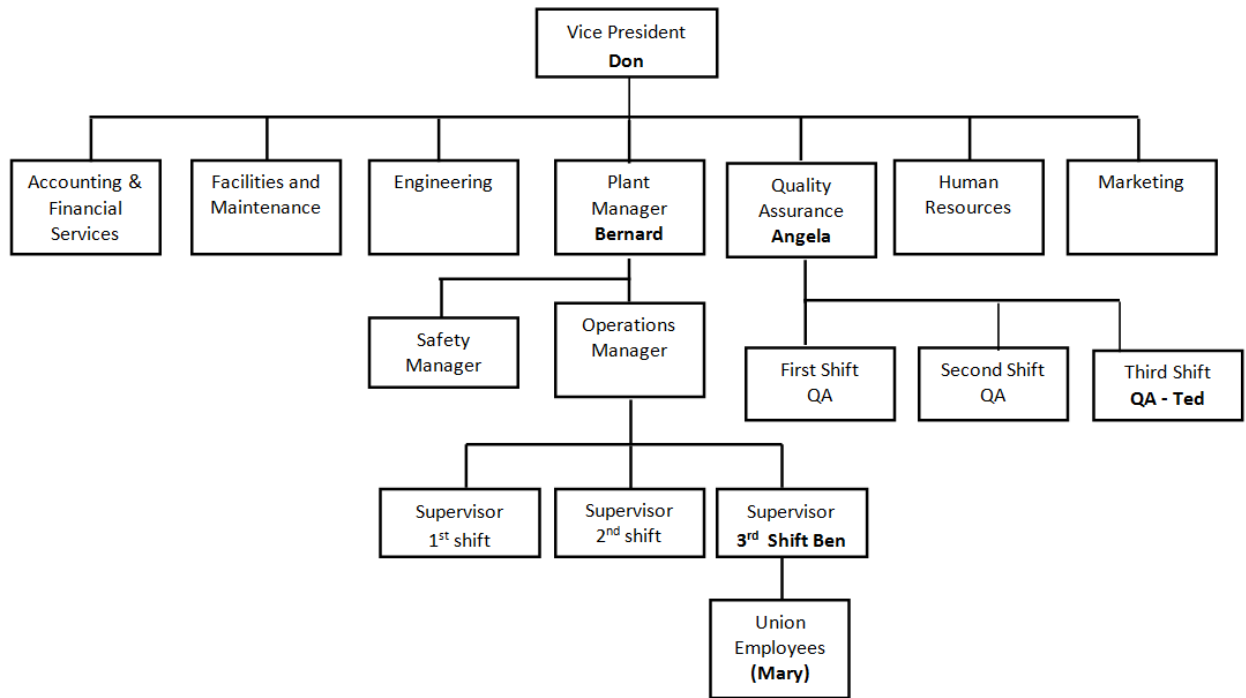
It was 4:30 a.m., so Angela went to her office and started her second day of work at the food plant. Now she knew what supervising 3 shifts could be like – probably lots of wakeup calls in the middle of the night.

At 7 a.m. Bernard, the plant manager, burst into Angela's office. He looked angry as he asked, "Why were you on my plant floor last night telling my supervisor and operator what to do?" Angela replied, "Because I had just been through a safety briefing that said all employees are responsible for safety. Inserting one's hand into a machine with cutters to unclog the machine is very dangerous. I really thought you might thank me for coming out here in the middle of the night to take care of an unsafe situation." He replied, "I'll thank you to stay off the plant floor." Angela thought that safety was probably not the only problem at the plant. Bernard seemed to be "old school" and focused on production quotas while Don, the vice president and Bernard's boss, seemed to care about a number of key performance indicators including safety. Don seemed to be driving the improvement initiative, but some of his employees (including the plant manager) did not seem to be assisting in the effort.

Substantiate your answers to the following questions by including scholarly journal citations with your answers:

1. List and discuss the major issues in this case. Describe how the issues should be addressed.
2. List and discuss what Don is doing right.
3. List and discuss what Don should do differently.
4. List and discuss what Bernard is doing right.
5. List and discuss what Bernard should do differently.
6. List and discuss what Angela is doing right.
7. List and discuss what Angela should do differently.
8. What additional information does this case need to enable you to better answer the questions?
9. What additional questions should be asked?

Chart 1: Organizational Chart

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                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │ Vice President  │
                          │      Don        │
                          └────────┬────────┘
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│ing &   │ │and       │ │eering│ │ Manager │ │Assurance│ │Resources│ │         │
│Financial│ │Maintenance│ │     │ │ Bernard │ │ Angela  │ │         │ │         │
│Services │ │          │ │      │ └────┬────┘ └────┬────┘ └─────────┘ └─────────┘
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                         │ Safety │ │Operations│ │First Shift│ │Second Shift│ │Third Shift│
                         │Manager │ │ Manager  │ │    QA    │ │    QA     │ │  QA - Ted │
                         └────────┘ └────┬─────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────┘
                             ┌───────────┼───────────┐
                       ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
                       │Supervisor│ │Supervisor│ │Supervisor│
                       │ 1st shift│ │ 2nd shift│ │3rd Shift Ben│
                       └──────────┘ └──────────┘ └────┬─────┘
                                                 ┌──────────┐
                                                 │  Union   │
                                                 │Employees │
                                                 │  (Mary)  │
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TEACHING NOTES/INSTRUCTORS MANUAL

Case Analysis and Suggested Answers to Questions

1. List and discuss the major issues in this case. Describe how the issues should be addressed.
    a. Key Performance Indicators - Safety, Quality, and Quantity – and Accountability for Results
    b. Empowerment of Management and Non-Management Personnel
    c. Change Management and Change Initiatives
    d. Improvement Initiatives
    e. Leadership
    f. Conflict Management
    g. Organizational Culture

a. Key Performance Indicators – Safety, Quality, and Quantity and Accountability for Results

As Pryor, Anderson, Toombs, and Humphreys (2007) point out in their article on Strategic Implementation, "strategy drives structure; structure drives behavior; and behavior drives results" (p.7). Therefore, management should include safety measurements along with production quotas as key performance indicators. Also, achieving the highest level of safety performance should be one of the primary goals of any organization. Organizational goals can significantly influence decisions which can either increase or decrease the probability for injury or accident occurrences. In this case, Mary was asked to unclog machine cutters with her hand to expedite production because as Ben, her supervisor stated, one of the key goals was to reach or exceed the required production level. It can be inferred from the way Bernard, the Plant Manager, confronted Angela that meeting production goals are his first priority as well. Thomas (2007) indicates that "Individual options for following procedures or taking shortcuts each day are in some measure driven by existing workplace culture considerations and expectations. Similarly, the safe or not safe choices and the physical actions that follow are culturally influenced, although not always acknowledged as such. They are either supported or ignored, depending solely upon the outcome" (p. 57). The negative impact of culture on safety can be overcome by planning, training, and management support. In this case, the plant manager's preference for production goals over safety could lead to serious repercussions in the future.

Job safety analyses could help safety practitioners follow a methodology that is suitable to their work environment and that will ensure a safe workplace. Manuele (2000) indicates that long-established job safety analysis methods should be transformed into a task analysis system that incorporates occupational ergonomics, i.e., "designing the work to fit the worker to achieve optimum productivity and cost efficiency and minimum risk of injury (with a focus on) productivity, cost efficiency and quality" (p. 18). Employee involvement and empowerment initiatives help improve safety as well as productivity, quality, and operational costs (Pryor, White, & Toombs, 2007; Manuele, 2000). An activity flowchart can be used to develop an efficient and safe way of accomplishing tasks by depicting safety risks and quality specifications and suggesting prevention methodologies and alternative actions to the existing process.

Safety must be strongly supported by top management. Otherwise, lower level managers (e.g., Angela and Ted) will be frustrated if higher levels of management fail to support

established safety and quality systems. Don, the vice president, seems to be care about the key performance indicators (KPI's), but some KPI's are not well supported throughout the organization. This could be a lack of accountability and empowerment that Don should have required of all managers and supervisors.

b. Empowerment of Management and Non-Management Personnel

To sustain empowerment as an integral part of an organizational culture "requires commitment of both management and non-management workers in improving business processes; participative leadership styles; lean organizational structures; self-directed work teams; continuous education of employees; and measurable improvements" (Nesan & Holt, 2002, p. 201).

Empowerment will fail if management commitment is unsustainable. Empowering employees is difficult when managers are unwilling or unable to delegate some of their decision making power. (Marshall, Talbott & Bukovinsky, 2006) emphasize that "It's one thing to say that employees will be empowered. It's quite another to make them feel that way and truly empower them. The success of employee empowerment programs rests on the ability of employees to make certain decisions independent of management input. This principle implies that management must be willing to allow employees the freedom to make decisions" (p. 37). Empowerment systems which include clear roles and responsibilities can increase the effectiveness of empowerment. Organizations where employees are truly empowered have transparent communication systems, and managers share information on a continuous basis. As a result, employees can see how their inputs, decisions, and actions are contributing to the organization. Ambroz (2004) indicates that "The feeling of control over the task is even more powerful when an employee is aware of his or her contribution to the quality that is valued in the company and on the market" (p. 96). Marshall, Talbott & Bukovinsky (2006) support this concept and stress that "Allowing employees to make decisions increases their job satisfaction and sense of responsibility and translates into improvements in the quality and timeliness with which duties are performed, freeing management for more significant matters" (p. 39). Nesan & Holt (2002) suggested that there are additional benefits. They state that "Authorizing employees to be responsible for their own work makes them simultaneously an inspector and processor. Consequently, this approach greatly reduces and/or eliminates unnecessary non-value added procedures and enables individuals to be involved in the improvement of their own business" (Nesan & Holt, 2002, p. 201).

In the case, production workers had no voice in ensuring their own safety. In fact, Mary epitomizes a prisoner of work – blindly doing what she is told to do by her supervisor. According to Pryor, Humphreys, and Taneja (2008), prisoners of work quit trying to improve relationships and processes. They don't offer ideas because they believe that the processes belong to their bosses (Pryor, 2008). To escape from being a prisoner of work, "empowerment and accountability are essential … [to transform workers into] … energized process owners" (Pryor, et al, 2008, p. 24).

Ben, the production supervisor, would not listen to Ted, the quality assurance team leader, on the third shift. Ben's priority was meeting production quotas rather than employee safety. If management had already empowered employees to make safety decisions, this would not have happened. Ben's way of dealing with his workers was dictatorial. This seemed to have

been strongly influenced by the plant manager, Bernard, who confronted Angela and told her to stay off the plant floor instead of thanking her for abiding by safety procedures.

If employees have a feeling of control, accountability for achievement, and the power to develop and maintain standards, a strong culture that emphasizes safety and quality can be developed. Miscikowski & Stein (2006) encourage organizations to promote "psychological safety by allowing operators to make decisions without fear of retribution by management" (p. 45). However, they caution that "the change in responsibility that comes with empowerment can be threatening. (As a result), in some organizations resistance to change exists because it can disturb a comfortable sense of security" (Miscikowski & Stein, 2006, p. 45). If workers are not hesitant to make decisions that were traditionally made by management, with training the status quo can be overcome. The result can be realignment of thinking of management and non-management personnel and improvement of the organizational culture. Miscikowski & Stein (2006) emphasize that "it is important to provide workers with appropriate tools, methods, data, and operational knowledge in order to ensure effective decision making" (p. 45).

c. Change Management & Change Initiatives

Managing change is very crucial for effective implementation of an empowerment initiative. According to Nesan & Holt (2002), "this includes fundamental changes in the organizational working culture, including company-wide involvement, continuous learning, and participative leadership styles" (p. 201).

Organizational leaders attempting to manage change initiatives should work "closely and persistently with others to create conversations that generated energy for action – expressed in the form of support, time, money, and resources" (DiVirgilio & Ludema, 2009, p. 67). In addition, continuous and recurrent communication is necessary (1) to build structural coupling between people so that they become habituated (2) to give people their identities, (3) to keep people informed about progress of the change initiatives, and (4) to work toward maintaining organizational changes over the long term (Fairclough, 1995).

According to Wieand, Birchfield & Johnson (2008, p. 1), managers are encouraged to embrace the following 5-steps model while initiating change in order to build a highly effective collaborative culture:

1. "Overcoming the (organizational leader's) personality". The emotional and intellectual component to leaders' identities can serve as filters which inhibit the leaders' abilities to engage in objective dialogue (e.g., Mary's supervisor threatened that Ted would be fired, and Bernard insisted that Angela stay off the shop floor.).
2. "Developing an authentic leadership style and applying it to decision-making". Authenticity is a necessary foundation for effective leadership because it accommodates the paradox of the simultaneous existence of extreme complexity and extreme simplicity.
3. "Collaboration (and using) communication to create unity without consensus". Organizational leaders need to create an atmosphere of trust, safety, and truth. They will then be able to make appropriate decisions and rally people behind the decisions.

4. "Helping leaders create an environment (or culture) that enhances openness, candor and dissent as essential characteristics of communication".
5. "Commitment . . . (of leaders) . . . at the top of a company". The executive team must invest in their own development in order to be able to create and operate in a high-performance culture" (Wieand, et al, p. 1).

In leading change initiatives, managers should understand how their people and the organizational culture can impede the chances for success. Leaders should be able to create energy for action and engage the people in changing organizations and cultures. (DiVirgilio & Ludema (2009) indicate that "Engaging in the right kinds of conversations allows organizational members to co-create new possibilities that increase their sense of autonomy, competence and belonging, which in turn elicits positive emotions such as interest, joy, hope and pride" (p. 68).

d. Leadership

Different perspectives on the role of leadership are required while managing change. The literature says charismatic leadership (Choi, 2006) and transformational leadership (Bass, 1990) are best suited for change. In fact, Bass (1990) states that "in many instances, transactional leadership is a prescription for mediocrity" (p. 20). Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, and Liu (2008) also support the need for transformational leadership and emphasize that "Leaders who exhibit transformational behaviors appeal to followers' sense of values and are able to get them to see a higher vision and to encourage them to exert themselves in the service of achieving that vision" (p. 347).

Bernard seems to be an "old school" authoritarian manager focused primarily on production quotas. As a result, there was conflict because of his inflexible leadership behavior, and resistance to change. The change should have been supported by Bernard and all managers instead of attempting to invalidate it.

Don is possibly a transformational leader, but he is constrained by the organizational culture that has existed for a long time and nobody has taken the initiative to change it. When a culture exists over a long period of time, it gets "established within an organization, and has a key role in what to think and how to act among employees, and thus characterizes the way of life and the way things are done in the work setting" (Danisman, 2010, p.204). Changing the culture is a crucial factor in organizational transformation because a negative culture can cause resistance to change.

Leaders should be able to adopt effective leadership styles and behaviors whenever they encounter scenarios which require change of the status quo. Herold, et al (2008) suggest that they "create a sense of urgency, provide advanced notice, provide support, build coalitions, and allow for inputs" (p. 346). Organizational transformation requires both mental and physical support. Herold, et al (2008) stress that "Change commitment represents a psychological alignment with, or attachment to, the change rather than just reflecting a favorable disposition toward it, such as being open to, or accepting of it" (p. 346).

Sensitivity to employee needs is necessary when implementing change. Also, organizational leaders should be able to engage their employees and help them visualize the future after the change has been implemented. Herold et al, (2008) feel that "Followers should be more invested in the longer term relationship and the future it portends than in the more immediate change" (p. 346). The Vice President, plant manager, and safety director should have

already included safety as one of the core values for the plant, and they should now be jointly supporting the changes needed in organizational culture as well as the behavior of management and non-management personnel. This would have built positive relationships among management and non-management people. DiVirgilio & Ludema (2009) remind us that "Positive emotions broaden the scope of attention, cognition and action and build physical, intellectual and social resources, which lead to increased energy for action" (p. 67). It may be that managers need training in management practices as well as organizational procedures.

To facilitate the successful implementation of organizational transformation initiatives, leaders should assemble a team of internal change agents. Arrata, Despierre, & Kumra (2007) indicate that the change agents are necessary to "implement new processes, train employees on new procedures, and act as role models to demonstrate new and better ways to work. (They go on to say that) "change agents might spend more than 50 percent of their time visiting areas undergoing change, auditing progress, or advising managers, supervisors on how to improve performance and adjusting to changes" (p. 39).

Line managers facilitate changes as well since they collaborate with change agents and assist in removing barriers to communication and implementation of changes. According to Arrata, et al (2007):

"Line managers need to be actively engaged from the beginning of the change process, and they should participate in problem-solving sessions with change agents, senior managers, and other employees. Such sessions encourage openness and the sharing of ideas, allow difficult issues to be raised early on in the change process, and build personal connections between line staff and change agents" (p. 39).

In other words, in order for required transformation in terms of safety, empowerment, and other key ingredients to take place, Bernard, the plant manager, Ben, a third shift supervisor, and other key line managers should have been actively supporting the efforts.

e. Conflict Management

Conflict between management and non-management employees may result from opposing interests as well as mixed-motive situations. Conflict certainly occurs in situations when interests overlap and goals are not aligned. However a manager and worker may both wish to provide high quality service to customers, but they may have opposing ideas because they disagree about what the customer wants. Because both competitive and cooperative goals may stimulate conflict, conflict should be distinguished from divergent views (Tjosvold & Chia, 1989). Conflicts over common interests occur among employees at various levels across an organization. Employees may not be directly involved, but they may be impacted by the conflict because of their respective roles in the organization (Masters & Albright, 2001).

From the incident, it should have been clear to Don, the vice president that tension existed between Angela, Bernard, Ben and Ted. As the top leader, Don should have taken the initiative to find ways to prevent dysfunctional conflict and require constructive engagement. In addition, as a transformational leader, Don should have required a communication plan and strategy. According to DiVirgilio & Ludema (2009), leaders should make sure that "they stay linked and communicate with the right people" (p. 76).

The conflict management process encompasses many activities, including: communication, problem solving, dealing with emotions and understanding positions. In the

case, we observe existing inconsistencies and disagreements among management personnel. Some of them resist working together and accepting help from each other. As a result, the work environment is unhealthy, and supervisors are not skilled in decision making. Pillai (2006) reminds us that "the existence of disagreement is unavoidable . . . ." (p. PM.S04.3). In fact, functional conflict is desirable. However, the outcome of dysfunctional conflict can be very detrimental to an organization. Therefore, functional conflict is a process to be managed, and dysfunctional conflict should be eliminated.

The extent to which teams have conflict or cohesion has a significant effect on the ability of the team members to interact and communicate effectively over time. Conflict often occurs early between team members or between different groups working together when there are differences in their values and perspectives. Tekleab, Quigley, and Tesluk (2009) emphasize that "Once teams have successfully overcome this conflict, trust develops between team members, leading to higher levels of team cohesion and greater team effectiveness" (p. 171). To facilitate team development and high performance team status, individual team members should clarify roles, operating guidelines, and team goals.

For different groups to exist and work together harmoniously, they must overcome conflicts and achieve a more cohesive, mature stage of team development and a proper climate for teams to be successful. According to Flanagan & Runde (2009) the essential elements for building the right climate are: (1) Trust and safety, (2) Collaboration, and (3) Emotional intelligence which are discussed below:

1. Trust and safety – In order to feel comfortable enough to honestly share thoughts and feelings, team members must trust the people with whom they interact. Trust develops when team members are open and willing to exchange ideas.

2. Collaboration – When team members collaborate by sharing information freely, making decisions together, and being rewarded collectively, trust is reinforced and team cohesiveness increases. Behavioral integration occurs through the collaborative processes. Magjuka & Lee (2008) noted that "groups that lean toward a higher level of collaboration style of conflict management perceived higher quality in decision making, and it was also found to be associated with team satisfaction" (p. 77).

3. Emotional intelligence – Team members should be aware of their Emotional Intelligence (EI) since EI provides a stable foundation for managing and resolving conflict. Conflict by its very nature often ignites emotions. Negative emotions and complicated conflict can easily spread among team members through a process called emotional contagion. If negative emotions are not addressed effectively, destructive behaviors soon follow. (Flanagan & Runde, 2009)

In the case, the workers on the plant floor seemed to feel threatened and to be suppressing their thoughts and feelings. However, once Angela intervened in the unsafe conditions, Mary hugged and thanked her. Jehn (1997) stated that "relationship conflict reduces team effectiveness and interferes with task-related effort, since the attention of group members is focused on reducing threats, increasing power, and attempts to build cohesion rather than working on the task" (as cited in Anderson, 2009, p. 83). So, it is important to bring conflict out in the open and work on it together. Management and non-management team members should utilize productive communication (Pryor, et al, 2007) to reduce the conflict and engage the

people involved constructively. In addition, to communicate productively, one must understand and be able to practice 'perspective taking' which demonstrates a willingness in consider the views, feelings and positions of others. In order to successfully manage conflict, one needs the ability to: (1) discern the root causes of the conflict, (2) openly confront the issues, and (4) negotiate an appropriate solution. Otherwise, the conflict process can damage mutual respect, trust, alignment and commitment.

Edmondson & Smith (2006) caution that before attempting to manage conflict that involves others, managers should first be able to manage themselves. They explain that "Managing self refers to the ability to examine and transform the thoughts and feelings that hijack one's ability to reason calmly when conflicts heat up. Executives who wish to be adept at handling these situations can learn how to manage the thoughts and feelings that surface when discussing hot topics. This does not mean counting to ten or suppressing their emotional reactions. Rather it means *reflecting on their reactions* and *reframing the situation,* thereby becoming less emotionally triggered and more able to ask questions and consider alternative interpretations" (Edmondson & Smith, 2006, p. 12).

In the case, the plant manager Bernard was concerned only with stifling conflict and the suggestions of others in order to accomplish his priority which was meeting the production quotas. As a defender of the status quo, Bernard seemed to consider suggestions (even about employee safety) as obstacles rather than opportunities for improvement.

Kohlreiser (2007) offers six essential skills for managing conflict that include the use of energy from one's body, emotion, intellect, and spirit:

1. Create and maintain a bond, even with adversaries. We do not have to like someone to form a bond. We only need a common goal and a relationship based on mutual respect and cooperation. Leaders must learn to separate the person from the problem and genuinely try to assist the other party, thereby avoiding or minimizing negative responses, attacks, and intense emotions.
2. Establish a dialogue and negotiate.   Conversation should be relevant and focused on positive outcomes that support a common goal. Dialogue and negotiation can create healthy, productive two way transactions.
3. Raise complicated issues in positive ways (i.e., without hostility). Choosing the right time and circumstances are part of an effective conflict management strategy. Behfar, Peterson, Mannix and Trochim (2008) emphasize that we should deal with conflict by establishing a process for letting everyone have a chance to fully explain their views without negative emotion (p. 170).
4. Understand what causes conflict. To be able to create dialogue aimed at resolving the conflict, we need to understand the root causes of the disagreement (e.g., differences over goals, interests, values, or perceptions or other issues such as power, status, rivalry, insecurity, resistance to change and confusion about roles).
5. Use the law of reciprocity which can be the foundation of cooperation and collaboration. Mutual exchange and internal adaptation allow individuals to become attuned and emphatic to each other's feelings, views, and needs and to manage what they verbally and non-verbally express. This social awareness allows you to make the right concessions at the right time.
6. Build a positive relationship and nurture the relationship in the pursuit of mutual goals. We need to balance reason and emotion, because emotions such

as fear, anger, frustration and even love may disrupt otherwise thoughtful, objective actions. We need to understand each other's points of view, whether or not we agree. The more effectively we communicate our differences and our areas of agreement, the better we will understand each other's concerns and improve our chances of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement. (Kohlreiser, 2007).

Organizational leaders need to understand relationship conflict as well as task conflict because both can have a negative impact on team cohesiveness and effectiveness. Tekleab, et al (2009) caution that "relationship conflict initiates defensive behaviors that restrict open discussion of ideas" (p. 176). Anderson (2009) cites Rahim (2002) and Yang & Mossholder (2004) as he emphasizes that "understanding the antecedents of both types of conflict are important in order to help groups manage conflict and prevent the degeneration of functional task conflict into dysfunctional relationship conflict" (p.83). If groups share healthy work relationships, the probability increases that task conflicts will be minimized or managed more effectively.

High performance teams are essential building blocks of many successful organizations. Therefore, it is important that the occurrence of dysfunctional conflict be minimized and that team members have functional conflicts over things that can create lasting value, lead to sustainable improvement, or address complex challenges that have no easy answers (Joni, & Beyer, 2009). While managing conflict, organizational leaders should focus on the future and the organization's vision and goals, thereby fostering a productive debate. Joni & Boyer (2009) suggest that "when people deliver results and fight the right fights to the best of their abilities, they should gain something real and valuable, even when they end up on the losing side. To get people to step up and take risks, you have to reward risk taking itself, not just successful outcomes" (p. 57).

Conflict may stimulate avoidance, procrastination or hesitation. Employees are capable of engaging in non-productive behavior and often refuse to cooperate because of conflicts (Masters & Albright, 2001). If conflict persists, it is up to senior managers to require appropriate behavior (Susskind, 2004). The steps that should be taken to manage conflicts are: (1) Team must be aligned and they should be in agreement with the business goals, their roles and responsibilities and mutual expectation, (2) being accountable and (3) self assessment before confronting others (Guttman, 2009). When team members and organizational leaders address causes of conflict, they must work toward resolving relationship conflict, process conflict and task conflict.

2. List and discuss what Don is doing right.

Don does care about the key performance indicators, and he supported the right person (Angela) and the right issue (safety). Don is driving the safety and quality improvement initiative. He requires accountability and tells his managers and supervisors that they will be fired if they violate safety procedures or cause others to do so.

3. List and discuss what Don should do differently.

Prior to this incident, Don has done little to make his reporting structure strong or to ensure that safety procedures are followed. He should first require safety training for all

management and non-management personnel. That training should include safety requirements and consequences for violations of safety procedures. Also, people must learn how to be leaders who make decisions efficiently and effectively. Duckat (1979) indicates that "It is important for supervisory personnel to have the ability to make decisions sensibly, calmly, and with reasonable speed" (p.3). Leaders should consider the effects of their decisions from a variety of perspectives. For example, Reece (2005) indicates that decision makers should ask themselves: "1. Is the problem clearly defined from an ethical point of view? 2. What is the intent and potential consequences of the decision? 3. Who might be harmed?" 4. Could the decision-maker explain the action and circumstances to all those whom she respects . . . how will she feel about herself later? and Is there someone with whom she might talk over the problem?" (p. 98).

It appears that the work environment and organizational culture in the case need improvement. In addition, there is a need for role clarity and management accountability. Human Resources people should assist with job descriptions and role clarifications. Since Don is the top executive at the plant, it is his job to lead and require organizational transformation. He should take this opportunity to engage his leadership team in establishing and implementing a strategic plan that involves management and non-management employees in improving safety, quality, and other key performance indicators. Change agents will be needed to assist in improvement efforts as well as to host coaching sessions to enhance work relationship and assist in conflict management. As a leader he should able to initiate, mediate, and continue what is suitable for the company and his people.

Ference (2001) reminds us that coaching is more than saying let's do our best. It is defining what the best is. Real staff development is an ongoing process. The coach empowers employees. Rather than exerting control over workers, this manager sets employees up to manage themselves (Buhler, 1998). The role of managers is more effective if they incorporate the skills of coaching, and this is more effective when managers are mentors. Managers functioning as mentors and coaches help organizations to have strong management teams at all levels in addition to enhanced performance and less stressful environment. To be effective as a mentor, a manager must be very skilled at acquiring and using power, building and using relationships, and teaching and coaching others. For a coaching process to be effective, the mentor must create a climate that is free and open to exchange of ideas and that is perceived by both the mentor and employee as a growth environment. Some characteristics of such an environment are: (1) mentors should never use words or actions that imply threat; (2) mentor and employee should have a positive relationship. The employee must trust the mentor's integrity and capability as a leader and the mentor should respect the employee's integrity and capacity to do the work; (3) coaching should be free from interruptions and the time given to it should be justifiable and (4) during coaching the employee should recognize the mentor as coach and not as evaluator and the mentor should be supportive and not judgmental (Orth, Wilkinson & Benfari, 1987).

Rather than threatening the supervisor with being fired, Don, the vice president can require employees go through a rigorous safety training program after which they sign agreements which indicates that they completed the program and will comply with the safety procedures. The safety procedures should also contain what the employees can do/cannot do at work place and also discuss consequences for lack of compliance.

Communication plays a key in the success of workplace initiatives because individuals spend nearly 70% of their work hours communicating (i.e., writing, reading, speaking and listening). Communication is needed for: (1) exchanging information, (2) exchanging options,

(3) reaching agreements, (4) executing decisions and (5) giving and taking feedback (Duff, 2010). The degree of communication should be relatively high when task interdependence is high. This helps the teams to stay integrated (Somech, Desivilya & Lidogoster, 2009). Communication factors are a primary source of disagreement among people. Barriers to communication can result from misunderstanding of information, differences in interpretation and perception, cultural differences among the team, as well as poor listening. Different communication styles, if not interpreted correctly, might also prove to be problematic. Misinterpretation can trigger false opinions of the sender's or receiver's intent (Sikes, Gulbro & Shonesy, 2010). Senior leaders should be involved with the frontline supervisors (Hyde, 2008).

4. List and discuss what Bernard is doing right.

Bernard obviously cares about production. However, he should not put production quotas over safety and other such key performance indicators. Bernard's narrow focus on production numbers

5. List and discuss what Bernard should do differently.

Bernard's leadership style is authoritative and dictatorial. He seems to be interested only in the production quota at the expense of the workers' safety. Leaders should be role models. In addition, they should provide opportunities for continuous learning and development. Dearstyne, (2010) emphasizes that "The best manager/supervisors use a coaching style; they work with their staff members to establish performance plans; guide, discuss, encourage, impart wisdom, and generally help them to achieve as part of the team; correct them, head off inappropriate behavior, deliver constructive criticism, and encourage better approaches when they are needed" (p.36). This organization should require leadership assessments for all managers and supervisors. If Bernard is able to understand his own strengths and weaknesses, he will be better able to listen to input from others to foster a productive work environment. As the plant manager, Bernard must be a transformational leader and function as a positive role model. He must endorse good behaviors and address problematic behaviors in a constructive way, Employees need encouragement. Dearstyne (2010) notes that "Employees want attention, guidance, feedback, praise, even correction. They want to know how well they are doing, how they could do better, and where they are exceeding expectations" (p.38). Bernard should make his employees the top priority in order for them to excel in terms of safety, quality, and productivity. He should use coaching instead of threats and micromanagement. Organizational leaders must remember that the most efficient and effective employees are the ones who feel that their work really matters and that their personal values align well with organizational values and priorities. Since Bernard reports to Don, it is Don who should require changes in Bernard's management style.

Bernard needs to improve the techniques or processes to reach the production quota without compromising the safety of the employees. As both Bernard and Angela are thinking about the organization's well being, the conflict between them should be resolved with openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties. It should be associated with problem solving which may lead to creative solutions without compromising the safety of the employees and the production quota of the organization.

6. List and discuss what Angela is doing right.

Angela seems to understand her job, safety procedures, and her responsibilities. When she was informed at 2 a.m. of the unsafe situation on the plant floor during the third shift, she took action. In safety training, she had learned that everyone in the company has the right and obligation to stop and prevent unsafe practices. Therefore, instead of calling Bernard, the plant manager, she instructed the supervisor to do what was right. When her words fell on deaf ears, she called a 3 a.m. meeting with the safety director, the vice president of the manufacturing, and Mary's supervisor at Mary's work station where the safety violation occurred and was continuing to occur. She was really concerned about the hourly worker and took the initiative of taking this problem to the higher level even when she knew that she would be unpopular with Mary's supervisor (and perhaps Bernard, the plant manager) for bringing the issue to everyone's attention. Angela was trying to fix the issue instantly which seemed to her as a life threatening issue and making everybody realize or aware of the importance of the safety rules and the safety of the employees.

7. List and discuss what Angela should do differently.

Knott (2009) says that "By using the right words, you can create a mental rehearsal of what you want a person to do. This rehearsal familiarizes the brain with the action and so increases the likelihood of the desired action actually taking place" (p.31), so Angela could have approached Ben, Mary's supervisor in gentler terms. Also she could have informed the plant manager when the supervisor refused to do what was asked of him. However, from the case, it is obvious that the plant manager would not have stopped the unsafe situation. Angela's actions seem to be supported by Duckat's (1979) admonition that "Effective and reasonably prompt decision-making is important in winning the respect of one's superiors and subordinates. Although some problems clearly require consultation with others, many are within the domain of the administrator who is judged by the way he handles them" (p.3).

8. What additional information does the case need to enable you better answer the questions?

We need more information on Bernard, including his strengths, work experience, academic credentials, and expertise. In addition, the information on Don, the vice president is somewhat insufficient to deduce his overall character and leadership style. More information on the company as to how it operates (e.g., what expectations there are for employees and how employees are appraised and rewarded) would also be beneficial.

9. What additional questions should be asked?

One additional question is: 'If you were the vice-president of the manufacturing what would you have done in this case?'

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