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Nicole Nadal

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Organizational Change in All God's Children International Adoption Agency:

Improving the Decision-Making Process

Senior Capstone

Nicole Nadal

CST-433

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Introduction:

Dear Mr. Ron and Mrs. Jan Beazely, (Co founders of All God's Children International Adoption Agency) it has been a pleasure being able to work closely within your organization over the past three months. I have been able to observe many interpersonal and organizational situations in my time spent at the agency. Working directly with John Blanchard, director of human resources has been a great privilege. During my time spent at AGCIIA I have found a problem in your organizational structure involving the decision-making process. This proposal is intended to explain to you how I found this problem, and how I propose that you go about solving it.

Being able to make proper decisions on an international level, as well as between employees on a day-to-day level is crucial for the success of your company. The problem that I am proposing that you solve in the organizational structure of All God's Children International Adoption Agency comes from close observations of past three months of volunteering. The benefits you will see, if you chose to adopt some of my suggestions are: a better quality in your decision-making processes, more creativity, better employee satisfaction, and more efficient time management.

Some interpersonal barriers I have found contributing to poor decision-making in the organization are that of groupthink, and some hostility. When conforming behaviors occur they

take away from proper creative and critical thinking. In terms of hostility, there were times when I personally felt like I was a victim. I personally felt this from one of your employees. It makes people uncomfortable, and will therefore not fully participate and express themselves. We do not want employees to feel like they need to hide behind barriers. This would take away from our ultimate proposal of trying to create more of a consensus approach when decisions are being made.

Background:

I came into your organization three months ago. I wanted to work here because of my strong desire of working in an organization that promotes the well being of children, especially at an international level. During my time spent volunteering for you, I have observed many organizational and interpersonal matters. After a lot of observation, and careful assessment I am recommending that you change and expand on some of the ways in which you conduct your decision-making processes at AGCIIA. My goal for your organization is to develop a deeper understanding and insight into the decision making process, and understand the particular communication competencies involved in making your particular organizational structure most beneficial when decisions need to be made within the organization. Throughout this process I encourage you to be open-minded, as well as sensitive to the particular influences that All God's Children is currently using when making its decisions. The goal of this proposal is to equip you with better skills you can take when going through the decision making practice.

The decision making process is an important theory to understand. I am here to show you some of the competencies that I have observed from these decision-making cases. There are always going to be different organizational situations, and it is about making sure that you

are knowledgeable about when it is best to go about a particular way or method. I see a lot of time wasted at AGCIIA, mainly due to the problem that people are not trained very efficiently on how to make proper decisions.

I have been able to observe the two of you, Mr. Blanchard and the other employees working together over the past three months, and the changes that I am suggesting in the decision-making process will contribute to innovation and creativity.

Risks are going to be a variable needing assessment when going through your process. Understanding all risks and different sides of the decision being made will ultimately lead you to making better decisions. When we have unknown results that is when we experience more risk (Zalabak, 2006). "A good decision-making process will not guarantee success, but a poor process will almost certainly contribute to failure (Zalabak, 2006). I have observed both individual and group decision-making, and see problems occurring in both. Both individual and group decision making capabilities influence personal and organizational effectiveness.

I will now go into detail on what important influences and methods for decision making are pertaining to what I have discovered amongst your organization at AGCIIA. Organizational culture has an impact on your processes and satisfaction. "Most cultures agree that central to the notion of organizational culture are the decision making processes in which organizational members engage (Zalabak, 2006)." Organizing can be seen as a conscious limitation of alternatives and therefore decision making. When we limit alternatives they become shared realities of the organization or its culture (Zalabak, 2006).

What I saw was that because AGCIIA has been around for over two decades things are very set, and organized. I am really recommending that you gain a fresh and new approach to

the way that decisions are conducted in the organization. The more people from the adoption agency can become involved, the more you will see creativity, and new ideas becoming evolved. It also gives more people in the organization a feeling of worth and responsibility, in knowing that some of the larger issues are still pertaining to them. Many times the people at the bottom or in different development offices have very little say in what decisions are taking place. For example, when I was observing the culture on the first floor I saw a lot of energy with the younger workers, who were planning some of the mission programs, and international adoptions. They seemed to have more of a connection with the families and the people directly working with the customers. The culture is very important to the methods of decision making.

I am looking to see more of a broader participation in the way some of the decisions are conducted. I see there is this strong hand in wanting things to be done the way they have always been. Being open to adopting change when it comes to how decisions are made in the organization is crucial for future success.

There were times when not having full access to technology created a problem for me, and I can assume it has created problems for other members. I fixed this temporarily by asking to be set up with a computer. I spent a good few weeks working on a spreadsheet for your organization, making it much easier for decisions to be conducted pertaining to specific costs within the different adoption programs. My access to technology, and just a simple excel spreadsheet took what was piles and piles of paper, and compressed them into a couple spreadsheets. This has already made many of the decisions for John Blanchard much more efficient, and fast, especially when he has to deal with the countries and adoption agencies overseas. It helps aid in our professionalism. This is very important in terms of the quality of

your decisions, in this case relating to Mr. Blanchard in human resources.

Proposed Approach and Work Plan:

Decisions are typically made by a dualistic process, which means by one person, or very few at top management levels (DeEtta, 1997). I have particularly seen this with you Mr. Beazely, and with Mr. Blanchard. This is okay under many situations, but I am suggesting that you remember there is not always a “right” way, especially when you are so used to the organizational structure you have used over the past two decades. I am ultimately proposing that you begin to move out of dualism and develop a more consensus approach which will allow for a more diverse and creative experience (DeEtta, 1997). I encourage you to incorporate more non-traditional ways. All organizations are constantly changing, especially in the 21st century. There are increasing demands for a diverse workforce, and to adopt new technologies. Don’t be afraid to embrace technology; you are working all over the world, and trying to reach as many people as you can, since you are a nonprofit. Many of your younger workers are great resources for this, and are up-to-date on social networking sites like Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter, that could help you be more up-to-date, and reach a larger audience. Technical skills become important with all of the work you are conducting abroad.

It is easy to get “stuck” when making decisions, and I have noticed this in my three months spent at the organization, I’m encouraging a more broad-based participation. (DeEtta, 1997). The nature of the decision is an influence that you need to always observe, and look to see how complex it is. Some things that will help you to determine this are to see if you have

the proper resources needed, and how much the decision is going to impact the effectiveness of AGCIIAA. When a decision that is more complex is at hand don't forget to go into all of your resources, and increase the level the participation that is involved (Suutari, 2001).

Two specific approaches I feel will best benefit the decisions that are made within your organization are the leader mandate approach and the consensus approach. I know your company has been around for quite some time now, and it is easy to become comfortable with old ways, but it is very crucial to understand the importance of having a diversity of positions available when decision making (Suutari, 2001). I would like to see you adopt the "emergent" mode. The direction will come from the two of you, at the top, but the units in the organization will still have flexibility to take a wide range of action when decisions are made. Control is exercised by establishing objectives and by the allocation of resources. The nature of your leadership will be closely related to the leader mandate approach that I will later discuss.

In this emergent mode that I recommend, you must be firm but balanced, recognizing and arbitrating between the various constituencies within the company but ultimately making the decisions (Suutari, 2001). When this can be understood then the quality of decisions can be made at their best. Understanding both of these factors will help you to engage in better individual and group decision making.

When meetings are being conducted it is important that you begin to engage in all of the participation present. This will help with the ultimate quality of the decisions. The Delphi technique will help you to balance the influence of strong personalities during the consensus process. I recommend that either of you take on this authority. You would be directing the group through written activities. It can help in the organization when identities want to be kept

more private, as well as in this situation, working with people all over the world will help to create a balance of all the influences involved. You will be elevating power among everyone working towards the decision, but in the fullest right, still using the leadership qualities that you should be. You are not conducting a full consensus here, but are still able still able to get multiple ideas on feedback and possible decision making ideas (Zalabak, 2006).

I want to see more job satisfaction amongst the workers. Through more consensuses, and allowing more of the staff to participate in decisions, it will promote more use of individual skills and interests. When there are clear management structures your staff will feel more supported not only professionally, but also personally knowing that their input is valued. Through making clear statements and objectives, the service will be better managed effectively and efficiently during the decision-making processes (Mosling, 2006).

When you begin the decision-making process first describe why the decision is actually being called, and identify the most desired outcome that you are hoping to achieve. If there is a problem at stake then first define that problem. This is going to determine where you go to for solutions and alternatives during your decision-making process. What I am recommending for AGCIIA is to not limit yourselves to obvious alternatives, like what has worked in the past, but to open to new and better alternatives; in most cases try to consider at least five. This will help you get away from seeing “both sides of the situation.” (Ethics Resource Center, 2001-2009).

The action you take is the first real step in doing something about your situation. Only 50% of organizational decisions are ever implemented. Reasons usually stem from not being commitment to the decisions and having a lack of resources (Zalabak, 2006). This is why I am stressing the importance in having multiple and divergent points of view for effective

organizational decision making. When decisions start to be made, keep a record of them.

Define what works in terms of your process, and what you are noticing is changing in terms of these new proposals for your decision making tactics. (Ethics Resource Center. (2001-2009)

During my time spent in human resources I was able to observe that you have a high number of absent and sick days among your employees. I suggest you address this program through a tactical decision, on how health status and motivation affect your employees (2005, Kok). It was interesting seeing how people higher up in the company, like the two of you, and Mr. Blanchard only had one or two days of absences and people on the lower level of the company had days absent as high as 9 per year. Creating more consensus decisions among employees will increase their ability to attend work, and take more actions to improve their health status. A lot of absentees come from not just health problems but mental working conditions (2005, Kok).

Research has shown us that people experience more satisfaction with their decisions when they use a process that fits with their value systems. When individuals lack knowledge in trying to assess a decision their value is more important to them than the fit (Kelly, 2009). Understanding that some decisions should be made separate from feasibility decisions is important. Some decisions should only pertain to some individuals, like yourself where there is a certain knowledge and expertise needed in order to make the proper decision. Separating economic decisions from feasibility decisions is a necessity for achieving goals, especially in a timely manner (Brimingham & D'Ambrosio, 1994).

To better influence your decision-making processes at AGCIAA I also propose that you develop a few strategies. I am proposing that you spend more time creating systematic and

reasoned decision-makers in the company. This will ultimately lead to a more productive use of consensus. These types of decision-makers approach decisions by identifying issues, gathering facts, looking at all options, and discussing them, then ultimately leading to a logical course of action. A time constraint is our biggest obstacle in achieving this, which usually causes decisions to be made with little analysis, mostly using an existing knowledge base (Suutari, 2001).

To actually come to a conclusion carries the risk of discovering that one's conclusion is wrong, and this creates an incentive to delay. It is not easy to deliver the best possible answers to complex and very important questions, and do so quickly (Suutari, 2001). I am not suggesting you make detailed changes on the basis of the limited and partial views at stake, but however note the importance that it may be mistaken to assume that there is a necessarily always a trade-off between the quality of decision-making and its speed (McKeigue & Taylor, 2007).

Because I am proposing a change in the overall strategy used to conduct the decisions in AGCIIA my biggest recommendation is to use the consensus approach more often, while still using leader mandate when appropriate, like in terms of financial decisions (McKeigue & Taylor, 2007). Because of the setup of this particular organization it is very important to note that everyone in the organization sees things from many different perspectives. Because it is an adoption agency, it has so many different areas that are being worked on and catered to. From people working with different countries, to the working with newly adopted parents, they are seeing things that the "second floor" doesn't see as much of, since they are dealing with more of the managerial duties, as well as human resources. Inviting more people to be involved in some of the organizational decision making processes can be very beneficial for gaining more creatively, and fresh perspectives on not only your organization, but the market that you are

competing in as well (Zalabak, 2006).

There some situations where I observed organizational silence, which is common, but usually comes because a lot of people in top positions feel that employees have a lot of self-interest, which is not particularly true in most cases. "When silence occurs it usually wards off change and new developments, and a low commitment and trust starts to form (Zalabak, 2006)." Be open to negative feedback; these are reasons why I am stressing the consensus decision making process. Do not disregard potential groups or individuals within the organization.

I talked to you a little about the importance of knowing when to use the leader mandate approach, and when a consensus would be more beneficial. Leader mandate can help alleviate ambiguity. As a leader, come to the meetings with a great description of the decision at hand. Instead of jumping to quick decisions, look at the entire complexity of it (Zalabak, 2006). The reason that I feel leader mandate and consensus work nicely together is because you can still take the role of defining and addressing confusion about the decisions, as well as making sure there is an agenda, and who is responsible for what. This will also help to alleviate interpersonal conflict during the decision-making processes.

Conclusion:

Being able to make proper decisions on an international level, as well as between employees on a day-to-day level is crucial for the success of your company. If you choose to adopt my suggestions in your decision making process, the benefits you will see are an overall better quality in your decision-making processes, more creativity, better employee satisfaction, and more efficient time management. I have listed and described some situations where I felt

that some decisions were poorly made, and I strongly believe that you will experience many benefits in your organization if you choose to act on my proposal. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any clarifications, or if you have any questions.

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