

Workplace Environment Assessment

A workplace climate assessment was requested by Area Sales Director, Shavon Keys due to a complaint received from an employee indicating he felt threatened and intimidated by Don Nichols, District Sales Manager, Northern IL District. The assessment was conducted by Acting Manager, Field Sales Support, Penny Fleury from September 8, 2015 through September 11, 2015. Additional interviews were conducted during the week of September 14, 2015. employees (current and former) were interviewed to include the following: 8 current employees, the District Sales Manager, the Area Sales Manager, 2 prior employees – 1 non-postal, the Area Sales Analysis Specialist, the OIS, 2 former Acting District Sales Managers and 1 former A/Area Director of Sales. All employees interviewed engaged in meaningful dialogue and provided quality feedback.

Background

The employees believe they have not been treated fairly since 2009. They feel neither Don Nichols nor their previous manager, Zonnie Bunch fostered a good working environment. In their view, both managers caused division and created an unpleasant working environment. The concerns of the employees in the unit can be grouped into 3 categories; inappropriate employee conduct, inappropriate management behavior and lack of leadership and support.

Employee Conduct:

- Employees talk about each other, yelling over the cubicles swearing and making inappropriate comments in the workplace. Although the manager indicated he did not witness any of these incidents, multiple employees reported the following type incidents occur.
 - Employees swearing on the workroom floor; words used include Mother Fucker, Nigger, Fuck, Bull Shit, etc. Employees work in cubicles and the language is heard in entire work area.
 - Employees argue over various issues, such as territory and/or personal issues.
 - A couple employees reported they have witnessed one employee using profanity when arguing with the Manager.
- Majority of employees indicate that several employees talk about each other's business and a lot of gossiping takes place in the unit.
- Virtually all employees reported that there is animosity between employees; there is always a negative undertone in the environment.
- One employee reported that a co-worker came up to him with his tie held up behind his neck and something in his hand pretending he was a suicide bomber.
- Several indicated that the behavior among the employees is juvenile.

- Employees are allowed to demonstrate disruptive behavior in staff meetings; such as ongoing arguments between internal and external employees regarding salaries.
- The majority of employees indicate that there are 3 difficult employees working among them.
- Employees believe there is one employee who is very concerned with everyone's whereabouts. This employee allegedly drives through the parking lot to determine who is at work. It was reported this employee also tells employees what to wear to work; telling them what type of clothing is considered professional even though the manager has never indicated there is a problem with anyone's attire. A few indicate that this employee creates dissension amongst the team.
- A couple employees report there is jealousy amongst co-workers when recognition is given; employees are not supportive of team members receiving awards. In fact, several reported that people did not talk to award recipients for some time after the awards were given.

Manager's Behavior

- It was reported that the Manager will talk to employees about other employees and say negative things about the other employees. Several believe he does the same thing to them. The manager has called one employee "crazy" to another employee. One employee reports that he was told by the manager, that if he didn't gossip he would not fit in.
- Employees feel the Manager bends over backwards to help an employee and not others. Most employees are fed up with the Manager coddling this employee.
- Several report that most communications are via email and some indicate they are condescending and insulting.
- Most report that the Manager is learning job, doesn't know sales, seems disinterested, and doesn't effectively communicate.
- Several report that the Manager pontificates about his accomplishments, his career, who he knows, what he can do, but does not address issues within office or follow-up with things.
- Several employees report that the manager is not dealing with ongoing conflict.

Leadership and Support:

- Employees report the manager does not lead the team.
- Several employees reported that when Don went on sales calls with them, he generally was disrespectful to them and the customers by playing on his phone during the entire meeting and not participating in the meeting. One employee indicated he set up a tour of a facility and Don walked several feet behind him and the customer, playing on his phone and not listening to the customer at all. The employee reported that the customer asked him "why is that guy here".

- A couple employees indicated that Don was sitting outside the businesses, in the parking lot; never entering the building to make the scheduled customer meeting.
- One employee indicated there was a customer meeting 10 minutes from the office and Don did not attend the meeting. He commented there was no reason Don should not have made the meeting.
- Employees report there is confusion regarding territory assignments. Some employees are told to stay within their territory while others are instructed to go anywhere they want, creating dissention between team members.
- P&Rs are scheduled weekly but sometimes not held.
- Staff Meetings are held once a month or 6 weeks. Some employees indicate manager pontificates about himself in the meetings; others indicate they generally have an agenda that they follow.
- General feeling among most employees is the manager does not know Sales and is unable to support them in any sales activities. They believe the manager doesn't even look for opportunities to learn Sales. Don told an employee that he would set up a meeting between the Districts and sales due to ongoing service problems and the meeting never occurred.
- Some said they go to Don for Plant issues and they are generally handled.
- Most employees seek assistance from anyone in the office that will help them. Many indicated that Beverly is extremely knowledgeable.
- Several indicated there is no process in place for coaching and employees just work with other employees that will help them. A few employees had concerns with the use of a one person that is coaching others because they believe that she is not accurately reporting her sales and they are concerned that the new employees are learning poor practices.
- It was reported that many employees come in the a.m. and do not come back for the remainder of the day; it is unclear if anyone is verifying what they are doing during the day.
- Manager indicates he has open door policy, yet employees report he keeps his door closed, his whereabouts unknown, it appears he goes in and out of office, he does not provide his manager with contact information, and does not respond to her calls timely.
- Only 2 employees interviewed did not feel any division.

Discussions and Conclusions:

The assessment revealed most employees like the manager as an individual, but they do not respect him as a manager. They don't believe he is knowledgeable of the Sales function and they feel he is not engaged as it relates to Sales activities and processes. He does not control the behavior of his employees. He allows staff meetings to become disruptive and has allowed internal and external employees to continually argue during meetings about salaries. There is not an environment of teamwork, in fact, the opposite exists. Employees often engage in

inappropriate behavior, yelling over cubicles arguing using profanity. Employees are allowed to be disrespectful toward one another and when these incidents are reported nothing is done about it. No discipline has been issued for any behavior or performance issues. Employees do not trust Don because he has failed to keep his word in the past. The manager has not done anything to create a team environment yet believes that his positive outlook and management style will over time create a better environment.

Employees are beginning to bypass the manager and report all of their concerns to Shavon because of his inaction. The environment is getting worse wherein employees are becoming more verbal about their dissatisfaction. Some team members feel they have no value and even believe other districts are beginning to view them as the troubled or problem district.

There is another major concern some employees question the validity of sales being reported.

Recommendations:

- Manager receives on site one-on-one coaching from another District Sales Manager on SMP process and the concepts related to territory assignments.
- Manager conducts stand-up talk in conjunction with EAP regarding proper conduct, respect and professional behavior in the workplace.
- EAP coaching for manager on handling conflict and dealing with difficult employees.
- LMS course for manager on email etiquette, communication, and leadership.
- Manager takes the necessary appropriate and corrective action when improper conduct is reported.
- Explanation given to employees about how salaries are established and instructions given to employees to cease discussions about salaries.
- Workplace harassment training taken by all employees, LMS course#.
- Ensure all employees are aware of what is expected regarding their reporting schedules.
- More strategic staff meetings to assist the team in developing strategies/activities to achieve objectives.
- Manager become more engaged in the sales process; participate in customer meetings, review and validate sales.
- Manager conduct P&R meetings with each employee every other week to review sales and to ensure employees are engaging in activities that will increase revenue, manager to provide notes from meeting to ASD.
- Continued coaching of manager by ASD and necessary corrective action if manager behavior/performance does not improve.

This report was prepared by Penny Fleury on September 18, 2015.