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Champion Food Company, LLC: Management Decision Analysis

Introduction

This paper will explore fifteen management points, or issues, which have occurred at Champion Food Company, LLC. The name of the company has been changed for the purpose of this paper, but the points highlighted within this paper are factual and based on personal experience over a number of years with Champion. Champion Food Company has been in business for over 100 years, has production facilities both in the United States and in foreign countries, and markets its products world-wide. Yearly revenue is over \$6 billion and there are about 30,000 employees. Major production facilities in the United States are scattered almost evenly across the country; north to south and east to west. Champion Food Company is a Fortune 500 company and a leader in the canned food and beverage industry.

1 - Employee Recruitment

Champion Food is a facility which has a somewhat seasonal business on an individual plant basis. For one particular plant, a great majority of its product are consumed by the customer during the colder months of the year. Because of product lead time, the pace of manufacture begins to increase in mid-August, reaches a stability point between October and February, and then begins to decline in early March. Production is at a fever pitch as output increases to project customer orders and supply their warehouses for the upcoming product season. During this peak production time, the plant will manufacture product two shifts a day and the third shift will be a clean-up operation where equipment is sanitized and products lines are reconfigured for the next day's production. Depending on orders and order expectation, the plant could be running seven days a week for several months at a time. This puts a tremendous amount of stress on employees and caused disruption in their family lives. Although extra workers are hired during this time, economics do not allow for hiring enough employees to have enough workers to allow employees to only have to work a five-day workweek. So, for employees who have worked at the plant for many years, this is a situation which they have gotten use to and mentally and socially prepare for. This situation is acceptable to the hourly employees because it requires them to work a lot of overtime which increases their take-home pay.

On one occasion, a monthly salaried chemist position in the Quality Assurance Department was filled during the early summer months. The Human Resource Department was responsible for advertising for the position and securing applicants for the Quality Assurance Department to interview. The HR Department handled paperwork, pre-employment screening, performance-simulation tests, and orientation.

The newly hired employee seemed to be performing well in his on-the-job training, was quickly grasping the fundamentals of the job and his attitude and performance were impressive to both the Quality Assurance and Human Resource departments. As plant production increased, so did the workload for the Quality Assurance Department which began working seven days a week just like the rest of the plant. The newly hired chemist quickly got tired of the seven day a week schedule disrupting his family life and quit his job in January. This put the Quality Assurance laboratory in a bind until production slowed down in March. In retrospect, this new employee was ill-prepared for what his actual job would entail during the increased production season. This was also a waste of time and training to have a new employee only last six months.

There are many human resource management steps which the Quality Assurance and Human Resource departments could have improved upon to help ensure that an employee remains in the job. The first of these is to give employment applicants realistic job previews (RJPs). An RJP is a presentation presented by an organization of both favorable and unfavorable job-related information to job applicants during the interview process. The purpose of the RJP is to maximize positive outcomes, such as job performance, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction and to minimize negative outcomes, such as turnover, and employee dissatisfaction. These RJPs are comparatively inexpensive to create and implement, and the payoff is great in terms of lower selection and turnover costs (Phillips, 1998). If new employees enter a job knowing all the facts; this is a win-win situation for both employee and employer. Another added benefit of RJPs is that they convey an indirectly message of openness and honesty to the new employee to the extent that Champion Food is likely to deal with them in an open and honest manner. This would have a net result in increasing the attractiveness of the Champion to he individual and increasing the attractiveness of the company to the public (Dugoni & Ilgen,

1981).

RJP may be one of the most important elements of keeping quality new employees on the job, but RJP alone are not enough to ensure new-hires are properly integrated into the company and the plant, it also requires proper interviewing, job orientation, work unit orientation, and both on-the-job and off-the-job training. On-the-job training can include job rotation within the laboratory and understudy assignments within the department. Off-the-job training could include formalized technical training and simulation of laboratory situations. This will give the new employee an excellent opportunity to improve their ability to perform their job (Robbins, De Cenzo, & Coulter, 2013).

2 - Discrimination

At Champion Food, a laboratory manager in the Quality Assurance Department is in charge of the quality assurance and microbiology laboratories. These laboratories are responsible for quality testing, microbiological analysis, evaluation of incoming ingredients, and also finished product evaluation. Laboratories are staffed with weekly and monthly salaried employees who performed a variety of tasks including ingredient analysis, in-process product analysis, finished product analysis, and microbiological testing of equipment, ingredients and finished product. The staff is comprised of weekly salaried employees who sample incoming ingredients, test these ingredients and also sample finished products. The monthly salaried employees are college degreed individuals with either a bachelor's or master's degree in chemistry, food science, or microbiology and their duties overlap somewhat with task performed by the weekly salaried employees. This is a favorable environment to work in because there is such a low power distance between the laboratory manager and each of the employees. The laboratory manager's office was in one corner of the quality control laboratory separated only by half-walls and no door on the office. Everyone works well as a team and the employees are trained to be the eyes, nose, and hands of the laboratory manager when it comes to ingredient and product analysis; employees know what the manager wants and expects and they perform very well toward this goal. The manager is proud of the team and the working relationship which has been built with the team members. This teamwork was the culmination of many years of working together and understanding how each other analyzed and handled work situations.

One of the duties of the laboratory manager is to hire individuals to work in the laboratory. A position was open for a microbiologist and the laboratory manager was scheduled to interview an individual with a master's degree in microbiology. When the laboratory manager interviews a job applicant, the manager would meet with the applicant in the Human Resource Department and then take the applicant to the cafeteria for coffee, chat with them, get to know them, take them on a tour of the plant and the laboratories, and then, if the laboratory manager was satisfied that the applicant was qualified for the position, the laboratory manager would take the applicant to meet with the Manager of Quality Assurance. On one occasion, the laboratory manager had taken an applicant to the cafeteria and the Quality Assurance Manager was at another table. The QA Manager motioned for the lab manager to come over and talk to him. The lab manager left the applicant, walked over to his boss, the QA Manager, and without even looking up the QA Manager said "Get rid of him, he's too fat." The lab manager said "Excuse me?", and the QA Manager said "You heard me get rid of him." The lab manager knew better than to challenge his boss in an open cafeteria setting, so he returned to the applicant, gave him a tour of our facility, thanked him for coming in, and told him the company would be in touch with

him.

The actions of the Manager of Quality Assurance were wrong on many levels, including selective perception bias and outright discrimination. This bypassed the job selection process and was a breach of company policy. The Quality Assurance Manager was in severity need of discrimination and sensitivity training and he showed selective incivility by stereotyping this applicant as unworthy of employment (Cortina, 2008) even though the company had nondiscrimination policies. Although this applicant was qualified for the position in the microbiology lab, the Quality Assurance Manager treated the candidate like a person with a disability. It should be noted that have a person with a disability can often be win-win-win situation; a win for the individual, a win for society, and a win for the business (Lengnick-Hall, Gaunt, & Kulkarni, 2008).

Champion Food Company should immediately re-train upper management in anti-discrimination training; whether it's based on age, gender, race, affiliation or a person's size, it is still discrimination in the eyes of the law and of society. The QA manager represents the company and in doing so must demonstrate that he is abiding by the rules and ethics set forth by the company. In addition, in the future, the company should introduce a formalized system of interviewing and hiring candidates for company positions which must include written reasons why employment was not offered to an applicant. This system should include dates and times of interviews, who the interviewer was, what areas of the plant were visited, which specific work areas were viewed, and interview comments. Data from this system should be open and visible to plant management and reporting should be created to produce information which would highlight any deviation from non-discrimination practices. This system should be controlled and monitored by the Human Resource Department.

This could help ensure Champion was following all federal and state guidelines for non-discriminatory practices.

3 - Employee Training

Employee training is an essential component of any organization, and this holds true for Champion Food Company. Before training actually begins, new employees are screened and evaluated based on a number of different parameters including mental and physical ability. It is important to initially place an employee on a job for which, in the best estimation of the company, they are best suited and most qualified. This could be somewhat of a guessing game because there was no formal program established which would measure a new employee's skills and abilities then match them to a specific job area. As happens in a lot of companies, new employees were placed on the hardest, dirtiest, and most menial jobs initially to see if they could "cut it" and remain for more than a week. This was the first weeding-out process and if the new employee survived that, they were quickly shifted to another area to start at the bottom rung of the ladder. As product production was increased or decreased, daily production run schedules often would have to be changed. These changes often caused employees, especially new ones, to be shifted to different production lines to fill-in where manpower was lacking.

On one occasion a line running canned macaroni and cheese was started on second shift. This was an unplanned startup and there were not enough employees who regularly worked in that area to staff the entire operation, so a newer employee was borrowed from another product line to operate the macaroni noodle dispenser. This newer employee had never worked on a macaroni noodle dispenser and the supervisor gave quick instructions to just make sure the

macaroni does not clog-up in the dispenser. All was fine until later in the shift; the newer employee attempted to clear a noodle jam with her hand and her finger was amputated by the dispenser, the finger went into the can of product, and the lid was applied. By the time the line was stopped, the can containing the finger was on the product line somewhere between the dispenser and the cooker. While the employee was taken to the hospital, all of the cans of product on the line had to be opened in order to find the finger.

This was a tragic situation which, in this case, could have been prevented by management. Management should have known that the employee was deficient in the knowledge, ability and skills to perform the job properly and safely. Some training programs exist, but most are on-the-job training where the employee learns by doing. To prevent future injuries, management should establish rigid, formalized training programs. Proper training increases employee motivation, performance, behavior, and reduces turnover (Gagné, 2009) and injuries. One specific program which should be established is a program to train and certify an employee to operate specific machines. An employee, before being able to operate a specific machine, would be required to be trained by a qualified employee and to be tested to ensure they were able to properly and safely operate the machine and training records should be kept on file. One specific training avenue is peer coaching; this can be a powerful tool to educate and promote employee growth (Parker, Hall, & Kram, 2008). On the back of the employee ID badge could be a listing of the specific machines the employee was trained and qualified to work on. Then, when a supervisor needed an employee to work on a machine, the supervisor could look at the employee's ID badge to see if the employee was qualified. In order to maximize employee flexibility and enhance to value of the employee, a program could be established to allow employees, on their own time, not their scheduled work hours, to train on and be certified to operate equipment throughout the facility and not in just their own work area. Employees which put forth the additional effort to receive extra training would be seen as a more valuable employee and management could better utilize these trained employees as needed.

This would give Champion a greater pool of employees trained to work on multiple machines in a variety of different plant areas. Greater flexibility and a better trained workforce will result in lower overall production costs for Champion.

4 - Managing the Situation

Since Champion Food Company is a large corporation, the production facilities use a lot of ingredients from all over the United States and foreign countries. One of their four major production facilities uses more than a million pounds of potatoes, close to a million pounds of carrots, and over a half a million pounds of green beans in one week's production. Both fresh and frozen vegetables are used in the preparation of the products and these incoming ingredients are sampled, tested, and approved by the Quality Assurance laboratory before they can be used in product manufacturing. Vegetable ingredients which have received usage approval are stored in on-sight warehouse coolers or freezers until ordered for use in the production area.

One particular ingredient, frozen cut green beans, is used as a staple in many of the products produced at the Champion Food's facility. These frozen cut green beans are manufactured at several Champion owned or contracted facilities in either the United States or Mexico and are packaged in either 40 pound boxes or in large 1,200 pound bulk containers. To be used in production, the green beans are transported from the freezer to a production area sorting operation where they are deposited on a machine, the container is opened, and the green

beans are dumped into a tank of tepid water to begin the defrosting process and to break up any clumps of beans. After this, the green beans are drained and sent to a sorting belt where two employees visually examine the beans and remove any defects.

As the green bean sorting operation was being run on second shift, at a time when almost all of upper management was gone, the operation was stopped when a human fingertip was found in the green beans. Yes, another problem with a severed finger, but this time the problem occurred, based in investigation, at the green bean producing facility in Mexico.

As is normal, word of this incident spread quickly throughout the plant and everyone was aware of the situation. This incident presents management, in particular Quality Assurance management, with a unique challenge affecting the reputation of the company. Management action in handling this situation will impact the reputation of Champion Food Company through perceived external prestige which is vital to fostering organizational identification (Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001). One part of the challenge is how to handle the present situation with respect to removal of the finger and the sanitation issues involved. This is what is forefront in the minds of management. This situation must be dealt with quickly to prevent production shutdown for lack of green beans, and, at the same time, this must be done in a sanitary manner. While this management decision is priority number one, there is another challenge which management must face. This second challenge is dealing with the plant-wide public relations issue of finding a finger in an ingredient.

In this situation, management must make decisions and make them quickly. There is no time to methodically go through the eight steps of a decision-making process. Management must use heuristics to shorten the decision-making process.

To deal with the first part of this situation, management must quickly and forcefully deal with the sanitation issue and show the entire plant that the concern for quality is priority number one. The line must be immediately stopped and any containers of green beans already taken to the production area for use must be brought back to the sorting area. All green beans associated with the contaminated container must be immediately and publically destroyed and the equipment sanitized. If any of the contaminated green beans were used in production, the contaminated finished product must be isolated, withheld and destroyed along with sanitizing the production equipment.

The second issue which must be dealt with is the public relations phase of this incident. Since most employees working in the plant were aware of the finger incident, when they finished work they would inevitably tell their spouse or friends about the incident and Champion has no way to stop this publicity. What Champion management has to do, by virtue of their strong and swift actions correcting the problem, is convey a strong message that the company is serious about product quality and will tolerate nothing less because the Champion company public reputation is based on quality. Corporate responsibility goes far beyond maximizing shareholder wealth, it also includes better corporate responsibility (Waddock, 2008). The company must be upfront and truthful about the incident if asked by the public because Champion is proud of its reputation for quality. By not trying to hide or cover up this incident, Champion shows it is ethical where quality and customer safety is concerned.

5 - Senior Management Ethics

One of the Champion Food Company production facilities in the United States employs about 900 employees and runs a three-shift operation. The plant, situated in a semi-rural southern

community, is one of the largest employers in the area and has a good reputation within the community. There is a good working relationship between management and hourly workers. The management structure consists of a Vice President of plant operations which leads a senior management team of about 12 upper-level managers such as Plant Manager, Human Resource Manager, Supply Chain Manager, Quality Assurance Manager, Engineering Manager, and so on. Beneath these upper-level managers are department managers followed by area managers, area supervisors, and then lead production hourly employees. This is not unlike the typical management structure for many organizations.

The Human Resource Manager has been employed by Champion for about three years, coming from different industry unrelated to the food industry. During his plant tenure, he has taken on the reputation of a very high power distance manager and enjoys making sure that everyone dealing with him knows that he is the boss. Although he has a very high power distance, he is approachable, is willing to talk to the employees, salaried or hourly, but by reputation is just not trusted by employees. The employees feel that conversations with the Human Resource Manager are not held in confidence, but relayed to other senior managers. Outside of work, the Human Resource Manager is the pastor of a small church in town and also involved with city government.

Just as many corporate organizations do, Champion Food's corporate office has a budget which allows plant facilities to share in their success and give money away to worthy community projects. An executive committee within the plant facility, made up exclusively of selected senior management employees, including the Human Resource Manager, meets quarterly to review requests for funding coming from the community such as United Way, Girl and Boy Scouts, Habitat for Humanity and other worthwhile organizations. Many local churches also request funds for their charitable activities.

After the Human Resource Manager had spent his first year establishing his power base and becoming a confidant of the Vice President of plant operations, his church was always on the list of organizations requesting funding. In summary, the church pastored by the Human Resource Manager was consistently not only among the organizations being funded, but most times received a disproportionately large amount of funding. This went on as long as the Human Resource Manager worked at the plant.

This is a simple situation of favoritism in funding which was of public plant record known by most of the employees and the Human Resource Manager displayed an arrogant attitude of – so what. It's an ethics problem involving conduct which is not right and consistent with fairness.

This management problem should have been dealt with head-on before the charitable giving program at the plant was seen as a joke by the employees. As the Iron Law of Responsibility states, "in the long run, those who do not use power in a manner which society considers responsible will tend to lose it" (Davis, 1973) and this power should have been taken away from the Human Resource Manager. Several steps should have been taken to correct this situation. First, the committee doling out the funds should not have been made up exclusively of upper management, but should have been an equal representation of the plant employee population. Secondly, Champion Food Company must re-examine its social responsibility and what good it wants to do for the community by establishing specific guidelines; specified giving amounts and how often an organization can be funded. Lastly, business ethical failure is usually because of unethical individuals, the "bad apples", which affect the morals of the ones around them creating "bad barrels" (Heugens, Kaptein, & van Oosterhout, 2008) and Champion Food must weed out the bad apples to preserve the company reputation. Within the plant should be a

public posting of organizations receiving funding and the amounts given. Honesty and visibility will show employees that there is no management bias in the administration of this important program.

6 - Employee Empowerment

Champion Food Company prides itself on many business aspects including product quality and customer service based on strategic management process with an emphasis on planning, organizing, and implementation. Champion has a competitive advantage, capturing about 65% of the United States market and a differentiation strategy with unique products. Unlike many industries, Champion Food can not just manufacture a product, package it, and ship it to customers in one continuous ribbon of product, because post-processing testing, taking up to 5 days, is a factor slowing the process. Champion is a thermal processing operation, meaning that after the product is produced, in either cans or glass containers, it has to go through a cooking process where the finished product is heated to a specific temperature for a specific amount of time to destroy any pathogenic bacteria present in the container. After the product has been heat processed and cooled, it goes on to be labeled, put into cases, and then palletized. After being put into cases and before being palletized, a certain amount of the finished product is collected as samples. These samples act as a representative statistical subset of the entire production run and are set aside to be inspected for quality.

One phase of the quality inspection process requires the product to be placed in an incubator, a heated room, for five days to ensure that there is no growth of bacteria to indicate contamination of the finished product. After the incubation period, employees inspect the product for spoilage or defects. Based on this inspection, the product is either withheld from shipment or released to be shipped to customers.

The key here is the five day waiting period, because all of the incoming ingredient planning, manufacture, and shipping to the customer must be closely coordinated around this five day period. Bottom line is; the trucks which are to be loaded and shipped to the customer have been scheduled weeks in advance to arrive, be loaded, and be shipped on the day the finished product is to be inspected.

This is the current plant procedure for finished product release for shipment: After the product has been inspected, a report of findings is issued to the Quality Assurance Department Laboratory; the lab microbiologist reviews the inspection results, and then, if results are within specifications, sends back a notice that the product can be shipped to customers. This process must be done for each individual product needing to be shipped and this can be up to fifteen products per day as the inspection of that particular product is completed. Here is where problems occur. Since the microbiologist has other tasks to perform such as testing, sanitation surveys, and ingredient evaluation, there is often a delay in getting finished product released for shipment. This is further compounded by meetings and lunch breaks. A delay in this system often delays a truck from being loaded and shipped to the customer on time.

This situation calls for an organizational change in the structure of the job. A change agent should be appointed to manage the change. This change agent should be a non-management employee with system knowledge of the process.

There is a workable solution to this problem involving employee empowerment. It should be noted that employee empowerment-related practices must be viewed as an integral part of a larger process which must include skill enhancement (Caza, 2011). Since the majority of the

problems found in the product inspection involve contained damage and label problems, the Quality Assurance Department personnel should train (skill enhancement) and empower selected personnel in the inspection area to be able to evaluate inspection results and then release finished product for shipment if results fall within company standards. This would speed up the release process and ensure product was shipped as scheduled. Any product inspection which did not meet company standards would then have the results forwarded to the laboratory for evaluation as per the normal process.

If this felt empowerment process change were initiated, not only would the empowerment be a positive motivational benefit for the empowered workers, but the reduction in time waiting to ship the finished product would also raise Champion's competitive advantage in the food industry. Organizations are wise to recognize that an investment in training for their human capital is beneficial in improving and taking a concrete step to improve their competitive advantage (Jorritsma & Wilderom, 2012). Employee felt empowerment in this situation would be very cost effective for Champion.

7 - Employee Engagement

Working in the Information Technology Department at Champion Food Company, included the responsibilities to design and program computer systems for use in specific areas of the plant. These systems vary in complexity and purpose from department to department but the end goal was to create a system which would function well for the plant employees, perform as envisioned, and provide useful function, control, and data for management. One system which IT was asked to create was a barcode finished product order picking system for the Shipping Department. One of the IT Department computer programmers was functionally assigned to work for the Warehouse Manager which was in charge of the Shipping Department. The purpose for creating a barcode finished product order picking system was three-fold; to have customer orders transmitted to portable computers of order picking forklift trucks, to allow forklift drivers to electronically scan-in product picked information for an order rather than hand-write, and to transfer this information to the already existing central order system. Basically this was designed to speedup operations and eliminate mistakes when hand-writing information.

After a lengthy design and computer programming phase, the IT programmer began a testing program in the warehouse with one of the forklift drivers. After working out initial programming bugs, the system functioned, but not efficiently. With input from forklift drivers, the programmer was able to create an effective and efficient order picking system.

This process took too much time and effort to complete. The following suggestions are intended to improve this process.

In hindsight, and looking toward the future, there were errors with this process which need to be improved. First of all, a project of this scope should not have been conceived and planned in a vacuum where only the Warehouse Manager and the IT programmer were planning the project. The initial planning should include all stakeholders which the project will affect; in the case of this project, that includes warehouse supervision, order picking forklift drivers, order loaders, and shipping office clerks which finalize the orders and an IT programmer. The above stakeholders should be brought together as a Project Team. A Project Team is a time-limited effort which produces a one-time output, non-repetitive in scope, and brings together knowledge, expertise, and judgment from different individuals. A Project Team can work to bring about an incremental improvement of an existing plant operation or to create a radically new system

(Hollenbeck, Beersma, & Schouten, 2012). Currently, forklift drivers pick products for customer orders, hand-write the product information on paper, turn the paper into the shipping office, then this information is entered into the computer by a shipping clerk. Hand-writing causes errors, takes time and effort to correct, and delays truck shipments. This team would be tasked, under the guidance of the Warehouse Manager, to create an electronic system to eliminate hand-written order entries and eliminate having to manually enter this information into a computer screen. To be successful, the team must have specific goals, a common purpose, and believe that they can succeed. In order to make this team successful, Champion Food must emphasize teamwork and novel thinking and avoid excessive emphasis on outcomes (Wang, Guidice, Tansky, & Wang, 2010).

Team members should be empowered to use their individual expertise to explore unique process innovations to create an effective and efficient system which can be easily used by forklift drivers, conforms to their logical workflow, and create a seamless data entry process. Blue-sky thinking should be encouraged, but only within the practicality and financial scope of the project. After the scope of the project is mapped out, team members should be given specific assignments, with due dates, to prevent social loafing from creeping into the team structure and disrupting the project process. System design should weigh heavily on input from the order picking forklift drivers because their expertise can forestall efficiency problems down the system creation path.

Employee engagement lessons learned from this project will be beneficial to future Champion Food plant projects.

8- Downsizing

Like most large industrial firms, Champion has had to use downsizing to adjust its workforce at the plant level to endure the ups and downs of the economic cycle. Over the past twenty years there have been four major downsizing events in one plant facility for salaried employees and cyclic downsizing for hourly employees. There is a huge difference in how these events unfold for salaried and hourly employees. Downsizing in the hourly workforce is always associated with sales volume. More of Champion's products are sold during the winter months; sales drop during the late spring and summer, then production begins increasing in late summer in preparation for the winter months. This cycle is known to hourly employees and is expected as a part of the business. Champion announced in advance what production schedules look like for the coming months and based on these schedules they predict and announce what downsizing will be done and at what timeframe. This is a workable system because the hourly workers are forewarned, know what to expect, and can plan for this event.

Downsizing of the salaried workforce is a totally different scenario and comes in two forms; planned downsizing and surprise downsizing. Surprise downsizing is when one or several employees are suddenly gone, and co-workers have no explanation for their departure except the standard line of "they chose to seek other opportunities". Planned downsizing at Champion begins is a secretive rumbling among salaried employees that something is going to happen. This may drag on for months before the actual downsizing event takes place. During this period plant efficiency, effectiveness, and moral among salaried employees is affected because of pre-layoff-survivor sickness. Most salaried employees are literally frozen in their tracks waiting for the hammer to drop. This secrecy and uncertainty is a problem which affects the Champion's reputation in their community and must be dealt with properly.

Downsizing says a lot about the character of a business, its reliability and its trustworthiness. While perfectly legal, downsizing can signal that a firm is untrustworthy and cannot be counted on to meet its employment commitments in the upcoming years (Love & Kraatz, 2009). Because reputation is important for an organization, especially its reputation in its own community, Champion must do a better job communicating with its employees concerning downsizing. Trying to keep downsizing rumors a secret has failed because word leaks out. Instead, Champion must be upfront about upcoming events, even if they will adversely affect individuals; because workers would rather have facts than be in a state of suspension dealing with rumors. Employees must be presented with the facts: the exact economic reasons for the downsizing; the level, severity and timing of the downsizing; and whether it's temporary or permanent. Employees being downsized must be treated with respect; respect for their service and respect for their situation. Counseling should be available for individuals and their families to help deal with their situation. The company should provide downsized employees with information of where to seek assistance with job search, financial problems, emotional issues, and endeavor to create a support group to assist individuals through the aftermath of downsizing. For the surviving employees, the company must be sensitive to individual outcomes such as low moral, motivation, loyalty, trust and justice perceptions, and work performance and must not negatively overreact (Datta, Guthrie, Basuil, & Pandey, 2010). Champion should establish employee survivor programs for current employees to properly guide them through the downsizing. This program should be designed to emotionally support the employee but also prevent a decrease in plant operations such as efficiency and productivity. During downsizing, one area which also suffers is employee safety. Employees which are thinking about the downsizing events are not thinking about their own or their co-worker's safety. The company must strongly emphasize the importance of safety, and double its efforts toward getting the minds of the employees back onto safety.

In order to show compassion on the part of Champion, the company could investigate options to downsizing such as transfers, reduced workweeks, early retirements or job sharing (Robbins et al., 2013).

The bottom line is: Champion must show valid and economic reasons for downsizing, must show compassion and help transition the downsized employees, and must show additional concern for the wellbeing of the surviving employees.

9 - Safety

The Champion plant facility is large and complex, with over twenty acres under roof. Beginning at the back of the plant are ingredient receiving and storage areas with coolers, freezers, and dry storage. Next is the production area, where the ingredients are processed, consisting of preparation and storage areas, product inspection and sorting areas, finished product filling and process areas, and labeling areas. Within the production area is a maze of overhead conveyer systems transferring ingredients and finished product to locations in the production area. Interspersed with in the production area are various department office areas including production, quality assurance, engineering and maintenance. The next area houses accounting, supply chain, medical, and human resources. The plant is a huge complex of product and machinery operation three shifts.

Because of this busy plant environment, employee safety is a tremendous concern for plant management. Safety programs exist from the corporate level down to the plant department

level. Safety meetings are held monthly at a minimum and sometimes weekly in some departments. Plant management tries to keep safety on the minds of the employees at all times. For the entire company, safety records are one of the parameters used to judge the performance of a plant or an individual department.

One evening, a production supervisor was outside on the roof of one of the production buildings and fell three stories landing on a concrete walkway. The supervisor lay unconscious for a lengthy period of time with a concussion, broken bones and internal injuries before he was discovered and taken to the hospital. This employee spent a year in the hospital recovering and never could explain going up to or falling off of the roof.

Although this was an isolated incident, plant safety procedures must be examined and improved to ensure this never happened again. The problem with plant safety is made more complicated because it is also social problem in industry where an extraorganizational model of safety behavior has already been applied, the Williams-Steiger Act (OSHA). The cost to industry of imposing this act has been immense (Fitch, 1976).

This safety incident should help initiate the establishment of safety policies unthought-of in this plant. The accident occurred in an area of the plant not in the supervisor's work area. Current procedures said that an hourly employee leaving their work area must notify their supervisor prior to leaving, but the supervisor was not required to notify anyone if they left their work area. A policy change must be made to require a supervisor to also notify a lead-person stating where the supervisor is going and how long the absence will be. If a supervisor has not returned to the work area after a reasonable absence, then at least there will be a starting place to look for them. Another policy change must be the restriction or limitation of employees to dangerous plant areas. This must go much further than just signage, but must entail locking of these critical areas with individual access-card operated locks. The use of access cards would eliminate the need for keys and their misuse. This access-card system should operate based on a system of controlled events. First, the employee needing access to an area must receive approval from two sources; their own department and the central safety department. Secondly, a system of safety training must be instituted to instruct and pre-qualify employee access to critical safety areas. This would eliminate employees from entering dangerous areas they were unfamiliar with. Also, entry into extra-critical areas would require an employee to be accompanied by a designated safety monitor.

One aspect of safety which is often overlooked is production pressure. Production pressure is a significant contributor to industrial accidents and this production pressure is multifaceted and not immediately obvious to management. Production pressure promotes management to focus on production, and this distorts the perception of safety risks and leads to a further focus on production. This vicious cycle frequently contributes to accidents. A causal loop model would be a powerful tool in understanding this dynamic. Causal loop modeling is a technique to construct models of real world issues and situations and to highlight root causes of events (Goh, Love, Brown, & Spickett, 2012). A multi-department safety committee should be created to develop a causal loop model to identify safety issues.

10 - Unethical Behavior

Ethics is defined as "inquiry into the nature and grounds of morality where the term morality is taken to mean judgments, standards, and rules of conduct". Ethics includes a range of actions from right and wrong, good and evil, and what should and should not be done. In

business, ethics involves not only the ethics of business organizations, but also the individuals or groups within the business organization. Business ethics can comprise principles, standards, rules, or policies giving guidelines for morally sound behavior. Ethical behavior dictates obedience to these moral norms and unethical behavior implies the breach of these moral norms (Kaptein, 2008).

Many business organizations, from time to time, exhibit unethical behavior to some degree of another. This can vary from simply over or understating the facts to gross negligence and criminal behavior. It's easy to see the results of large, public business ethics tribulations like Bernie Ebbers at WorldCom or Kenneth Lay at Enron, but more often unethical behavior goes publically undetected and seen only by a small handful of individuals. This is the case for most organizations.

Although Champion Food spends large sums of money on ethics training, ethics violations still exist, and they exist at all levels of the organization. Production pressure from upper management introduces cognitive dissonance and sometimes causes production supervisors and hourly employees to cheat in order to obtain required production yields. If uncontrolled or overlooked, this unethical behavior can be detrimental to the business. Unethical behavior in the form of cheating is expected and kept under control by the vigilance of the Quality Assurance Department.

Unethical behavior is not limited to the production areas or at the hourly or supervisory levels. At Champion, one incidence of unethical behavior occurred at the plant staff level with the Human Resource Department manager. An older copier machine had been replaced with a newer one, and the HR manager took the older copier, without permission, out of the plant to be used at his church. He also happened to be the pastor of his church. A weekly salaried employee in the Purchasing Department brought this situation to light but no action was taken towards the HR manager.

Champion Food should immediately use an approach such as an Organizational Corruption Control Circumflex to create future policies and mechanisms for controlling and discouraging these unethical actions. An Organizational Corruption Control Circumflex contains eight elements to prevent or control corruption. These are; bureaucratic controls, punishment, incentive alignments, legal/regulatory sanctioning, social sanctioning, vigilance controls, self-controls, and concertive controls (Lange, 2008).

In the short run, this incident requires an immediate review of Champion plant policies regarding, first of all, used plant equipment. All plant equipment must be tagged with an asset number and documented within an electronic inventory system. Equipment may be deemed unusable by the department in which it resides, but can only be officially declared as scrap material by a central authority located in the Purchasing Department. Scrap equipment should then be moved to a secure holding area under the control of responsible supervision. Once a piece of equipment is designated as scrap, it must be tagged as such and be designated for either destruction, for sale to employees, or for charitable donation. Before movement out of the secure area, signed paperwork from the Purchasing Department must accompany the scrap equipment. The plant security force should be notified beforehand of the movement of any equipment out of the plant and then must ensure that any equipment leaving the facility is accompanied by the proper paperwork.

As these measures are implemented, security of scrap plant equipment can be brought under better control. This will show employees that if scrap equipment exists, the company has created a fair and impartial method of donation to charity or sale to employees. The next step for Champion will be in dealing with the unethical actions of the staff member.

11 - Employee Discipline

Working in the Quality Assurance Department is often a thankless job. It is a constant struggle sometimes to ensure the quality of the finished product because different departments within the plant have different goals. This is truly a functional structure where the individual department goals overreach the plant goals. The production department works under the demands of producing a product; starting the product lines on time, minimizing the manpower required to produce the product, and maximizing the ingredient usage, called yield. The maintenance department works under the pressure to keep the equipment running 100% of the time, to get the equipment back to running as fast as possible in case of a breakdown, and to change the equipment in production from one product to the next as quickly as possible. The shipping department constantly needs the approval as quickly as possible to ship finished product to the customer.

Atop of all this pressure to produce, to maintain, and to ship is the Quality Assurance Department. This department must ensure that the preparation of the ingredients and the production of the products are within company, governmental, and quality specifications. Quality Assurance must make certain the cleanliness and the operation of the plant equipment meets quality standards. The Quality Assurance Department must also ensure that the finished product being shipped to customers has been tested, approved and released for shipment. Whenever there are production delays because of ingredient or production problems, machinery cleanliness issues or shipping delays; the finger of blame is often pointed toward the Quality Assurance Department, not because of anything detrimental that the QA department did, but merely because the QA department found the problem and stopped or slowed down the operation until the problem was solved by the department at fault.

Many times the Quality Assurance Department was seen as the bad guys just because they took steps to find and correct problems. On one occasion, a quality assurance inspector was frustrated with this cat and mouse game with production and decided to cause problems for the Production Department. The inspector tore a piece of cardboard into small pieces and scattered these pieces into a container of starch to be used in product production. It was only the intention of the inspector to slowdown and stop the production process while causing problems for the Production Department but not to contaminate the end product. The problem of the contaminated starch was brought to light by the inspector which contaminated the starch and production was halted until new starch was received from the warehouse. This action by the inspector was a trigger event. Trigger events are caused when employees experience frustration or anger and develop negative attitudes toward the perceived cause of their frustration. If the causes of the trigger event are left unchecked, this could lead to employee aggression or violence (Dogulas, Kiewitz, Martinko, Harvey, Younghee, & Jae Uk, 2008)

Upon investigation by Quality Assurance supervisors in a closed meeting, the inspector admitted to his managers that he had placed the cardboard in the starch container. To keep the Quality Assurance Department from criticism, and because the Production Department had no idea how the starch got contaminated, the Quality Assurance supervisors merely counseled the inspector, told him never to do anything like this again, and sent him back down to work.

This event was handled entirely wrong by the Quality Assurance Department. After investigating and learning the facts, the Quality Assurance Department should have immediately informed the Production Department of their findings and requested a meeting with the Human Resource Department to further investigate this incident. The Quality Assurance Department must realize that they are not the experts on human capital, which is the job of the Human

Resource Department. The HR role is a center of expertise, operating like a specialized consulting firm within the organization, with the knowledge and responsibility to select the proper practice or intervention for a particular situation (Ulrich, Younger, & Brockbank, 2008). For this critical incident, the Quality Assurance Department should not have made the decision to discipline or, in this case, not discipline the employee on their own but instead with the guidance of the Human Resource Department.

Specific guidelines for employee discipline must be standardized and applied equally throughout all areas of the plant by the Human Resource Department and supervision in all areas must abide by these guidelines. The Quality Assurance supervisors should be reprimanded for their actions and be required to participate in proper disciplinary training.

12 - Organizational Change

In business, especially manufacturing, change is necessary to keep ahead of the competition. Even though Champion Food has captured over 65% of their particular product market in the United States, consumers still have to eat and they can still choose products other than what Champion manufactures. There are many different areas in which organizational change can take place including technology, structure, and people. Technology changes involve work process, and work methods; structure changes include job redesign and authority relationships; and people changes include attitudes, perceptions, and behavior (Robbins et al., 2013).

Within one area of the warehouse operation, computer technology changes and job redesign changes were necessary. A computer system needed to be installed in an area where employees had not used computers in their jobs before. These changes could not occur in a vacuum; they had to be accompanied by changes in the workflow of the employees.

The necessary changes were conceived and planned by management, new equipment including computers and hand-held scanners were ordered, and plans were drawn-up by the engineering and maintenance departments. Employees working in the warehouse area were aware that business changes were coming because they could see people from other plant departments and contractors consulting and making plans within their work area.

After planning and procedure changes were well under way, warehouse supervision announced to the employees that a new computer system would be installed and the employees would be trained on how to use the new system after the system was installed. Other than that announcement, warehouse employees knew no other details other than seeing maintenance employees installing cables and equipment. The changeover to the new system was not smooth because warehouse employees were fearful of the new system because they did not understand it and they were afraid it would eliminate some of their jobs. They were resistant to embrace the new system.

Many things could have been done differently to calm employee fears and ensure a rapid and successful transition to the new computer system, especially since the warehouse employees had never used a computer system before. First of all, Champion should embrace the fact that ambiguity among employees arises because of a lack of understanding about the intended value of innovation and reservations arise for employees because of a fear that the innovation will have negative consequences for the employees and the organization (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008). Champion planned for change to the technology phase but did not properly plan for the people side of the change.

Initially, meetings should have been held with warehouse employees by the warehouse manager, the change agent in this situation, to initially tell about plans to install a computer system. The manager should explain the need for the new system, and should focus on its benefit to the employees using it and also the overall benefits to the company. The manager should explain how Champion Food is constantly in competition with other food companies and how important technology improvements are for keeping ahead of the competition. Keeping ahead of the competition ensures that employees will have jobs. The manager should select a small committee of warehouse employees to work with management on the project; this would allow employees to understand the exact scope of the project and to have some input in its design and implementation. The employees on the committee would be able to report back to the rest of the employees thus eliminating fear and uncertainty about their future. With the assistance of the Human Resource Department, warehouse could consider psychological strength training for employees. Research suggests that building psychological resources through employee training may enhance employee well-being and bring about improved organizational outcomes that benefit management. Helping employees reinforce or sustain their feelings of worth, hope, confidence, and resilience. This may help conquer the organizational obstacles they face on the job (Weyhrauch & Culbertson, 2010).

Additionally, a computer with a simulation of the new computer system should be set up in the warehouse work area to allow employees the opportunity to imitate work they will be doing in the future. This will alleviate the employee stress and fear associated with business change.

13 - Employee Motivation

There is a work area in the warehouse department in one of Champion Food's plants that is called the reconditioning area. The area is tucked away in a corner, albeit a very large corner, of the warehouse – off the beaten path. This area has several functions; one of the main functions is to inspect finished product prior to shipping. This involves lifting cases off of a pallet of finished product onto inspection tables, taking the cans or jars of product out of the case, looking at each container for damage, labeling problems, or product spoilage, then putting the containers back into the case, re-gluing the case, and then stacking the case back onto the pallet. This is a classical work specialization which is physically demanding and mentally boring. As product is produced in the plant, there are occasional problems with the product which require portions of the product to be withheld from shipment. This withheld product is segregated from the shippable product and sent to the reconditioning area to be inspected, to have the un-shippable product removed, and the remaining good product sent back to the warehouse for shipment. Again this involves the tedious and labor intensive job of looking at every case of suspect product.

Any damage which occurs in any of the production areas is also sent to the reconditioning area for re-work. The reconditioning area has been likened to the low spot in the plant where all of the problems, created by other departments, drains down to for re-work. The reconditioning area employees performed their jobs, and performed them well but the general attitude was one of boredom and low self-actualization. Champion management must make management changes to curtail this work situation.

The first element which should be addressed is employee motivation. Management should immediately address the three key elements of motivation; energy, direction, and

persistence (Robbins et al., 2013). Since the employees working in the reconditioning area feel isolated, one method to motivate them is through working with other plant departments as a “joint production” endeavor. Joint production is a productive activity which involves heterogeneous but corresponding resources which come together to work on a problem or situation. Motivation through joint production is a cornerstone of organizational performance because of its fundamentally collaborative nature (Lindenberg & Foss, 2011). This joint production is necessary to put some pressure back on plant departments, which produce the problems that reconditioning employees have to deal with, to realize that production is not just about producing something, but about producing it correctly. This would help satisfy the reconditioning employee’s social need of a sense of belonging within the organization.

Another area to improve is the self-esteem of the reconditioning employee. Research has shown workers in what sociologists call “dirty work occupations” create positive identities that foster occupational self-esteem to overcome their actual situation (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2011). Rather than have the employees create a compensating self-esteem, Champion management should explore innovative methods to expose and highlight the important work performed by these employees. Inter-department meetings should be arranged to allow monthly meetings between reconditioning employees and other plant areas such as production, shipping, and maintenance. These meetings should detail problems created by other departments which reconditioning had to re-work. To prevent the continuation of the same problems in the future, the onus for the problems must be placed back into the laps of the offenders. Without this type of system problems will never be corrected. One incentive for problem correction is to have the offending departments be financially responsible for the cost of the reconditioning employees efforts to inspect the product and correct the problems. This way the offending departments would feel the pain of their mistakes.

The reconditioning employee’s social needs of acceptance and belongingness must also be met to improve their motivation. An information campaign should be initiated to inform other areas of the plant of the importance and crucial functions performed by the reconditioning department.

These steps would bring the reconditioning department out of the shadows and highlight the truly important function they perform for the plant. This would bolster self-esteem for this department.

14 -Leadership

Within the Champion Food plant structure, departments are divided into functional divisions such as production, maintenance, engineering, quality assurance, and supply chain. Each of these departments is headed by a staff-level manager responsible for the function of the department. As with most other organizations, these department head positions are stepping stone positions to higher corporate positions, and many times these managers have their eyes fixed on the prize of their next promotion rather than leading their department. Every action they perform and decision they make is meant to impress someone up the line and dealing with the true issues within their own department is secondary.

For many years the Quality Assurance department had been blessed with department heads which were truly leaders. They possessed most of the positive traits of leadership and set themselves apart from mere bosses. After experiencing and working under true leadership, it is hard for an employee to work under a department head which is simply a boss.

When a new boss transferred into the Quality Assurance Department, there was sadness that the previous boss was leaving and uneasiness about what the new boss would be like. During the initial “honeymoon” period for the new boss, the Quality Assurance employees began to get a sense that the new boss was quite different from the old boss and he had a very different management style. The new boss was quite and withdrawn as opposed the extravert style of the previous leadership. Since the new boss had experience in other areas of company business and less experience in quality assurance, he exhibited a false sense of knowledge and self-confidence that was quite apparent to his employees. Many times, when discussing a problem or quality situation with the new boss, the employee would come away from the conversation more confused about what to do than at the beginning of the meeting. The new boss seemed as if he had more of a desire to advance his career than to lead the Quality Assurance Department and this was causing department employees to feel their boss cared more about himself than them. This created tension and bewilderment within the department and needed to be corrected.

One solution to this situation must first begin with the thought process at the corporate level in that all management positions cannot be entrusted to an individual just because they have a “management” background. Positions, like Quality Assurance Manager take a unique combination of both excellence and experience in management, but also a person highly qualified with job-related knowledge in quality assurance.

A technique to improve the situation is creating a leadership relationship. Leadership is not merely granted because of a manager’s position in an organization’s hierarchy, but is based on leader-follower relationships identified as leadership relationship. The leadership relationship is composed of mutual and reciprocal correlation between leaders and followers which reinforces the overall organizational goals (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). This would help create a mutual influence process between the manager and the employees to where the employees feel the manager is truly concerned about them and that they were truly respecting the manager.

With the attitude and performance of the Quality Assurance at a low cycle, the manager must realize this situation and take personal steps to improve and correct the situation. The manager can improve the performance of the department by better understanding the traits employees look for in a manager and trying to improve these traits on his own or receive guidance from the Human Resource Department. There are several specific leader behaviors which should be improved. The first are task-oriented behaviors; better planning and clarifying objectives with employees. Another is relations-oriented behaviors; better support, development, recognition and empowerment of employees. Lastly, encouraging innovation and facilitating collective learning will improve change-oriented behavior (Yukl, 2012).

By working to improve himself in some of the important traits associated with leadership such as drive, honesty, integrity, desire to lead well, and job knowledge (Robbins et al., 2013), the manager could make great strides in converting himself from a manager into a leader.

15 - Strategic Planning

The future is not guaranteed for any company. Even though Champion Food has been in business for over one hundred years, a Fortune 500 company, and a multinational corporation, this is no guarantee for future existence. Planning for the future is not helpful to the organization if the plans lock them into a path which is out of sync with the social conditions and changing buying habits of the public. Although a divisional corporate structure with many separate divisions and business units, the main cash cow of Champion is the production of soup, for both

eating and cooking. This business unit is the longest running, most experienced, and probably the hardest to change. Strategic planning for this business unit projects five to ten years into the future.

This Champion Food division has been classically based on the warmth and goodness of home; families gathered around the dinner table, sharing conversation, family values and their product. Their advertising traditionally has also been centered on this home environment with feel-good ads associating their products with the innocence of a family tucked warm and cozily away from the rest of the world. While this is a wonderful mental picture, the world has changed dramatically, consumer tastes are changing just as rapidly, and Champion has failed to keep up with this pace. Sales of soup have been relatively flat for the past five years despite increased advertising. The future for the company is not the baby-boomer generation which has carried it for so many years, but it's the Gen Y consumers which are becoming the consumers of the future. Gen Y consumers are not sitting around the dinner table eating and discussing how their day went, they are on the move and most likely consuming most of their meals away from their home. In order to capture the business of Gen Y consumers, Champion must drastically change its planning and strategy for the future if they expect to be in business for another 100 years.

Extensive effort must be put into strategic planning especially in the area of stability, renewal, and competitive strategies. Stability strategy will target the existing customer market with products and services which keep the customer base, renewal strategy will include retrenchment and turnaround to bring back former customers and competitive strategy to attract new customers and a competitive advantage to set Champion's products apart from the competition (Robbins et al., 2013).

One of the first aspects of the product which should be changed is the packaging. The can, as a container for food, has been around since Napoleon Bonaparte used it to feed his troops in the 1700s. Younger generations view cans as an inconvenience, and something which will persist in their landfills for hundreds of years. Champion must investigate the use of environmentally friendly packaging materials which appeal to a younger sense of values. Another consideration is using product design as communication. Design is a holistic property of the product, the first focal point of contact with the consumer, and it gives initial information to the consumer about the product. The design can create schemas which allow the customer to develop emotions toward the product and hopefully produce a positive affect for the product (Eisenman, 2013). Champion should collaborate with members of Gen Y on design teams to come up with new concepts which will be both appealing and practical. Gen Y individuals are comfortable working as team members; they work well with others, seek challenges, view colleagues as resources, are goal oriented, and want to make an important impact on results (Robbins et al., 2013). Packaging is the first thing which consumers notice and it must be appealing and compelling.

In addition to packaging changes, the product mix needs to be updated to appeal to more modern, forward thinking consumers. Today's consumers are mobile and on the go and they need a food product which complements their lifestyle. Products which require no preparation time are appealing to a fast-paced society. As evidenced by flat sales, Champion should consider shifting from its internal, firm-centric innovation, to a more collaborative network-centric innovation. Many other companies have increasingly shifted from innovation initiatives that are centered on internal resources to those that are centered on external networks. Network-centric innovation is achieved through a hub firm orchestrating activities in a twofold context—an innovation context and an inter-firm network context (Nambisan & Sawhney, 2011). This is

much the same team concept as cross-functional teams within an organization.

Innovation and out-of-the-box thinking is the key to future growth for Champion and strategic planning using Gen Y resources is an important part of that planning.

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