

Dr. S. Bharathi Vasu published a case study titled “**Navigating Leadership Challenges in a Non-Profit Agency: A Case Study on Enhancing Staff Confidence and Addressing High Turnover**”. This case study is used for first year MBA students for Management Concept and Organizational Behavior course.

Case Study 1

Ramya holds the role of Associate Director in a non-profit agency dedicated to assisting children and families. Leading the department responsible for assessing the agency's skill-building programs for families, she directly reports to the agency leadership. This year, the agency has exercised caution in recruitment due to intensified competition for federal grant funding. Unfortunately, they have also experienced a significant staff turnover, with two directors, three key research personnel, and one finance department staff member leaving.

Despite these challenges, Ramya manages a demanding schedule that involves frequent travel. Her responsibilities extend to overseeing two recently appointed managers, each of whom supervises five staff members. These managers play crucial roles in maintaining the agency's operations and mission.

Manager 1: Kavya possesses a distinct research-oriented background and serves as a manager for a team that offers research support to a department focused on delivering behavioral health services to youth. Demonstrating strong organizational skills, she provides excellent support to her staff and maintains a high level of efficiency. However, she tends to approach issues with a rigid, black-and-white perspective. Despite this trait, upper-level leadership highly regards Kavya's recent research findings concerning the therapeutic division's services, acknowledging her expertise in the field.

Kavya's exceptional drive and motivation are evident in her work, and she holds her staff to the same standards, fostering a culture of dedication within her team.

Manager 2: Leena boasts a robust background in social science research and evaluation, making her a valuable asset as a manager overseeing various projects within the agency. Renowned for her exceptional problem-solving skills, she has gained a reputation as a reliable and supportive leader for her staff. Leena's organizational prowess and extensive experience in evaluating family services further enhance her effectiveness in her role.

While her capability is unquestionable, Leena sometimes faces the challenge of taking on more responsibilities than she can comfortably manage. Her dedication and competence can lead to a tendency to overextend herself. Nonetheless, her positive impact on the agency and her team remain evident, making her an instrumental figure in achieving the organization's goals.

The managers are noticing that the staff members are becoming overwhelmed with work due to the increased responsibilities resulting from the high staff turnover. The staff members have expressed their dissatisfaction with Ramya's communication style, which tends to focus on the negative aspects, leaving them feeling demoralized. Another challenge is that Ramya has not shared the budgets with her managers, leading to difficulties in appropriately allocating work to the staff.

When asked about the budget, Ramya explained that she has not received sufficient information from the finance department to complete it. However, the finance department claims that they have already provided all the available information to her. As a result, the managers feel unable to effectively advocate for their staff or engage in problem-solving without access to crucial information, such as the departmental budget.

This situation is causing distress among the staff and frustration among the managers, who are trying to balance the workload while addressing their team members' needs and concerns. Finding a resolution will be essential to improving the overall working environment and ensuring the agency's operations run smoothly.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can Ramya most effectively use both management and leadership skills in her role as associate director? What combination of the two do you think would work best in this setting?

Indeed, a director can encompass both leadership and managerial roles. In Ramya's case, considering the capabilities of the two managers who directly oversee the department staff, it would be beneficial for her to shift her focus primarily to being a leader. By delegating

managerial responsibilities to the capable managers, Ramya can empower and build their confidence, enabling them to take charge of problem-solving for their respective teams.

With managerial tasks off her plate, Ramya can concentrate on fostering a greater sense of staff commitment to the agency's mission and vision. As a leader, she can inspire and motivate the staff, ensuring that everyone is aligned with the organization's goals and objectives.

By adopting this strategy, the agency can create a more efficient and collaborative working environment. The managers will feel more engaged and trusted, and the staff members will benefit from having direct support and guidance from their immediate supervisors. Additionally, Ramya can use her leadership skills to create a positive and inspiring work culture, ultimately contributing to the agency's success and impact on its beneficiaries.

2. What steps could be taken to build staff confidence?

Building staff confidence is crucial to addressing the uncertainty caused by high turnover and Ramya's negative conversation style. Here are some key strategies to achieve this:

- **Giving Managers Autonomy and Information:** Empowering the managers with more decision-making authority and providing them with the necessary information to manage their staff effectively will enhance their leadership skills and boost their confidence in guiding their teams.
- **Regular Communication:** Communicating regularly with the staff about changes, updates, and organizational goals will keep them informed and engaged, reducing uncertainty and increasing their confidence in the agency's direction.
- **Professional Development:** Encouraging staff to pursue professional development and providing them with time and resources to do so demonstrates the organization's investment in their growth, fostering a sense of confidence and value.
- **Team Building Activities:** Engaging in team building exercises and interactions can improve staff cohesion, collaboration, and morale, leading to increased confidence in their abilities as a team.
- **Incentives for Excellence:** Recognizing and incentivizing excellent performance will motivate staff members and enhance their confidence in their abilities and contributions.
- **Addressing Conversation Style:** Addressing Ramya's negative conversation style directly and explaining its impact on staff perceptions can lead to improved communication and a more positive work environment.

- **Staff Involvement in Hiring Process:** Involving staff in the hiring process, where possible, can give them a sense of ownership and confidence in the team's composition.
- **Open Feedback Sessions:** Conducting direct and non-retributive feedback sessions with staff to discuss the issues they believe contribute to high turnover will demonstrate that their opinions are valued and create an environment of open communication.

By implementing these strategies, the agency can create a more supportive and confident work environment, alleviating staff uncertainty and contributing to increased retention and overall success.

3. What advice would you give Ramya on improving her leadership skills and to the managers on improving their management skills?

Assessments to understand personality, leadership, and management styles can be immensely helpful for both Ramya and the managers. By undertaking such assessments, the managers can identify their individual strengths and areas for improvement, enabling them to better support their employees and collaborate effectively in running the department.

Considering the Style approach, Manager 1's task-oriented approach and Manager 2's relationship-oriented style can be synergistically structured to complement each other. This alignment can lead to a more balanced and comprehensive management approach, benefitting the staff and the department's overall performance.

Additionally, it would be beneficial for Ramya to reassess the roles and responsibilities of each position within the department and align them with the organization's mission. Communicating this alignment to the staff will enhance clarity regarding the department's purpose and direction, ultimately improving morale and employee motivation.

By taking these steps, the agency can create a more harmonious and productive work environment, where employees feel supported, engaged, and confident in their roles. This, in turn, can contribute to a reduction in turnover and better overall organizational performance.