**Session Title:**

Court Appointed Special Advocates: Flexible work arrangements and employee work attitudes

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**Abstract (100-word maximum):**

Court Appointed Special Advocates (C.A.S.A.) of San Bernardino County is a small, regional non-profit that recruits, screens and trains community members to serve as volunteer court appointed special advocates for children and youth currently living in foster care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization had to move from face-to-face to online overnight, with limited resources; and now must decide whether to keep the new flexible work arrangements once the pandemic passes. This case is based on our community-based research project on employee work attitudes and provides a unique opportunity to leverage the conference theme ‘Tradition Meets Technology: Finding Ways Forward’.

**Three Keywords:**

Case study, flexible work arrangements, employee work attitudes

**Method: What you did in developing this case study (1 paragraph minimum)**

Given the current Covid-19 pandemic, we wanted to examine the impact of the crisis on a small, regional non-profit organization, how they adapted to their new reality, and consider whether to stabilizes those changes once the pandemic passes. In particular we examined the impact of adopting flexible work arrangements strategies on employee work attitudes.

In normal times, based on the literature, the initial conceptual model is that technology and perceived managerial support, moderates the relationship between work attitudes, work-life balance, and job performance when implementing flexible work arrangements (Boell et al., 2016; Townsend et al., 2016; Ko et al., 2013; Julien et al., 2011). Therefore, we wanted to see if those relationships still held when an organization was essentially ‘forced’ to implement telework and alternative work arrangements with limited lead time; focusing on a small, regional non-profit, that may not have the resources or expertise that larger for-profit firms may access to manage the transition.

The study used qualitative research methodology, including document analysis (review of website, employee handbook, performance evaluation system, and organizational chart), narrative inquiry (with a focus on current challenges and benefits of flexible work arrangements practices from the managerial perspective), and semi-structured interviews (with a focus on work attitudes, perceived managerial support, and work life balance from the employee’s perspective). Participation in the study semi-structured interviews and narrative inquiry were all voluntary and participants were provided with an informed consent form. The final sample included the executive director and program manager for the narrative inquiry, and all 10 employees consented to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The population was predominantly female, with only the executive director and one employee (and advocate supervisor) identifying as male.

The key research question is the impact of flexible work arrangements, technology, and managerial support on employee attitudes, work-life balance, and performance. The teaching case (see appendix A and B) leverages the management and organizational behavior concepts of job attitudes, work motivation, leadership, organizational structure, organizational culture, and external environments.

**Findings: What you learned in developing this case study (1 paragraph minimum)**

The key findings from the research supported the literature, with flexible work arrangements positively impacting job satisfaction in the case study, and managerial support and technology contributing to the positive relationship. In addition, the overall trust of the employees in their leadership and the strong identification with the organization’s mission also impacted the findings. Overall, there were high levels of satisfaction with the job itself and job involvement, strong organizational commitment and alignment with the mission, and perceived positive managerial support that may be best characterized as a ‘team manager’ style, with high levels of concern for both people and process. However, there was still some concern regarding work-life balance, as many employees had little separation between work and personal life that may need to be addressed moving forward, if flexible work arrangements are institutionalized in the organization.

With flexible work arrangements, some other minor issues were concerns with working hours (and a need to establish core hours), communication (especially how to better leverage formal communication, meetings, and one-on-ones), establishing office use protocols, and further exploration of the impact of flexible work arrangements on performance management, in particular the efficiency, effectiveness, and resiliency of the organization.

The key findings concluded from the research also highlights the importance of hiring the right people, who share the values, vision, and mission of the organization during the talent acquisition process. Employee alignment with organizational culture positively impacts job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and tenure.

Overall, we felt the organization was an exemplar of managing crisis, and therefore provides an excellent appreciative inquiry case for students in organizational behavior and management to consider, drawing on many of the key management theories such as attitudes, motivation, leadership, culture, and change. The organization demonstrated that with managerial support, the necessary technology, and cultural alignment between organization mission and employee values, there can be high levels of positive work attitudes, even when under sudden and transformative changes, such as adoption of flexible work arrangements during a pandemic.

**Classroom Execution: How you utilized this in the classroom, what expectations you have in terms of discussion and learning outcomes (1 paragraph minimum)**

The student learning outcomes, adapting Bloom’s Taxonomy, for a class in organizational behavior, would be:

1. Knowledge and Comprehension: Students can discuss and understand various theories, including attitudes, motivation, leadership, culture, and change.
2. Application: Students can apply theories toward the case to help solve whether to move online, what other changes may be needed, and what changes should be institutionalized post pandemic.
3. Analysis: Students can compare theories, in particular the difference between micro-organizational behaviors and macro-organizational theories that apply to the case.
4. Evaluation: Students can make a value judgement of the utility of theories being applied to the case.
5. Synthesis: Students can integrate individual, group, and organizational level units of analysis into a comprehensive solution for the case.

Specific theories to consider would be employee attitudes (job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment), motivation (Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory), leadership (Blake and Mouton Leadership Grid and Fiedler’s Contingency Model), environment (complexity and change), culture (competing values framework), structure (specialization, command and control, span of control, centralization, and formalization), and change (Kotter’s Change Model).

**Session Discussion and Objectives: What objectives do you have in presenting, discussing, and/or performing this case study in an MOBTS session? (1 paragraph minimum)**

For the Session Discussion, the intent is to walk through the case study, the methodology, the findings, and student feedback (as the intent is to pilot the case before the conference); as well as provide insights for participants on the process, and feedback to the presenters on next steps for the project.

For the participants, the hope is that our project inspires others to consider integrating teaching, service, and scholarship for similar projects, and to walk through some of the challenges (such as sourcing clients, developing relevant projects, adding value to community partners, and navigating IRB) and opportunities (an opportunity to expand scholarship, teaching and learning) of case-based research and development.

For the presenters, the development of the community-based research project and subsequent teaching case is part of a multi-year project to empower faculty-student teams to provide pro-bono consulting services to regional government and non-profit organizations with the hope of adding value to our community organizations, enhancing our student competencies through high-impact practices, and developing faculty scholarship and teaching cases. Therefore, we are hoping for feedback on our case, next steps in our research, advice on how best to refine the current case for publication and dissemination, and insights into a sustainable model. This is the first pilot in our project, that we hope will lead to a framework for our faculty, students, and community partners.

**In which learning environment do you utilize this study (physical and/or virtual)? (1-2 sentences)**

The case study can be used in either a physical or virtual context. Currently, given the situation at our university, the intent is to pilot it virtually this spring, but then move to either face-to-face or hybrid in the fall. Currently, the case could serve as a culminating project for an introduction to Organizational Behavior course, bringing together individual, group, and organizational level analysis into one practical, real-world, case.

**Will you be conducting this case study with your attendees in this session? (1-2 sentences)**

Yes, the plan is to demo the case study, including a question-and-answer period, and then obtain feedback from participants on potential changes to the case and next steps in our research.

**References (as required)**

Boell, S. K; Cecez‐Kecmanovic, D; Campbell, J. (2016). Telework paradoxes and practices: the importance of the nature of work. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 2016, 31(2), 114-131.

Julien, M.; Somerville, K.; & Culp, N. (2011). Going beyond the work arrangement: The crucial role of supervisor support. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 35(2), 167-204,

Ko, J.; Hur, SU; & Smith-Walter, A. (2013). Family-friendly work practices and job satisfaction and organizational performance: Moderating effects of managerial support and performance-oriented management. *Public Personnel Management*, 42(4), 545-565.

Townsend, K.; McDonald, P.; Cathcart, A. (2016). Managing flexible work arrangements in small not-for-profit firms. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 28(14), 2085-2107.

**Appendix A - Case Study Structure**

Opening hook:

You are the director for a small, regional non-profit, with limited funding. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you must decide whether to move your organization to fully online, hybrid, or try to keep employees in the office during the crisis. In addition, you will then need to decide whether to institutionalize any changes you implement once the crisis has passed. You will need to consider employee attitudes and motivations, your leadership style, the organizational culture and structure, and the external environment in your decisions and then prepare to present your plan to the Board of Directors.

Background on organization:

Court Appointed Special Advocate (C.A.S.A.) of San Bernardino County is a small (12 employees, including the director and two program managers), regional, non-profit organization in southern California that recruits, screens and trains community members to serve as volunteer court appointed special advocates for children and youth currently living in foster care. You have a main administrative office in Colton, CA, and two satellite offices, one in Apple Valley and the other in Upland (covering a 20,105 square-mile region). In terms of structure, there are five advocate supervisors (which provide direct support for the volunteers) who report to the program manager; two community outreach coordinators (who recruits, screen, and trains new volunteers) who reports to the community outreach manager; both managers and two other administrative staff report to the director. You report to a Board of Directors, which has oversight of the organization and who will be reviewing your recommendations. With the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, the organization had to decide whether to go fully online, consider a hybrid approach, or try to maintain face-to-face operations. In addition, once the crisis passes, will the current strategies be maintained or changed?

Evolution of problem (internal and external factors):

The external factors are the pandemic (with escalating community spread) working with foster youth (who may have limited technology, are already having to use online options for schools and services and may be less engaged in an additional online support system), the volunteers (like the youth, who may be less interested, and lack expertise, in engaging online) and the court system (which has limited technology access, requiring some work to be conducted in the office). Normally, there are a small number of external elements to consider (in terms of working with the court system, foster youth in the system, and perspective volunteers), and the environment was relatively stable, however the pandemic has been characterized by a high degree of uncertainty with complex and unstable elements to consider.

Internal factors are technology (employees have access to I-Pads but need to use their own phones and internet access if working from home, the organization provides a $50 per month telework/technology stipend) and managerial support (which is supportive of telework and alternative work schedules, but you may need to adjust how best to plan, organize, direct, and control the activities of employees if a change is advocated). Overall, employees are interested in and committed to assigned tasks (with high job involvement), accept the organization’s goals, are willing to exert considerable effort for the organization, and desire to maintain their membership (with strong organizational commitment). However, as with most small organizations, there are limited opportunities for advancement within the organization, and as with most non-profits, the amount of pay received is less than for-profit jobs. Your current management style is categorized as ‘sound’, as you support team action in a way that invites involvement and commitment, exploring all facts and alternative views to reach a shared understanding of the best solution. But there is a question if that style is best for the current crisis. Currently, the internal dimensions of the organization are people-oriented and friendly, with a less rigid, flexible, participatory, and generalized task structure. As with management, the question is if this culture and structure is best aligned to navigate the crisis. Finally, you have to present any recommendations, and receive buy-in from your Board of Directors.

End with decision point:

Do you go fully online, hybrid, or stay face-to-face? What type of managerial support and leadership style is most appropriate? How to impact job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and employee motivation? How to mediate work/life balance issues? And is the culture and structure best aligned to meet the current environmental demands?

Topics to cover include attitudes (job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment), motivation (Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory), leadership (Blake and Mouton Leadership Grid and Fiedler’s Contingency Model), environment (complexity and change), culture (competing values framework), structure (specialization, command and control, span of control, centralization, and formalization), and change (Kotter’s Change Model).

**Appendix B - Teaching Note Structure**

Summary of case

You are the director for a small, regional non-profit, with limited funding. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you must decide whether to move your organization to fully online, hybrid, or try to keep employees in the office during a pandemic. And you must present your recommendation to the Board of Directors.

Learning objectives and target courses:

The case incorporates Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives to establish the following five (5) learning objectives:

1. Knowledge and Comprehension: Describe and discuss organizational behavior terms, theories, and concepts, exhibiting memory and demonstrate understanding.
2. Application: Apply (make use of) organizational theories to real world experiences (or cases) to solve problems.
3. Analysis: Compare and contrast organizational behavior theories, identifying motives or causes of behavior.
4. Evaluation: Evaluate and validate organizational behavior theories, making value judgements of the utility of theory applied to practice.
5. Synthesis: Integrate individual, group, and organizational level units of analysis, compiling information together.

The case is designed to be used in an undergraduate, introductory organizational behavior course.

Additional readings

*Organizational Behavior* by OpenStax (FREE). Publish Date: Jun 05, 2019.

https://openstax.org/details/books/organizational-behavior?Book%20details

Print: ISBN-10: 1-947172-71-9 / ISBN-13: 978-1-947172-71-5

Digital: ISBN-10: 1-947172-72-7 / ISBN-13: 978-1-947172-72-2

* Chapter 3 Perception and Job Attitudes
* Chapter 6 Perception and Managerial Decision Making
* Chapter 7 Work Motivation for Performance
* Chapter 8 Performance Appraisal and Rewards
* Chapter 11 Communication
* Chapter 12 Leadership
* Chapter 15 External and Internal Organizational Environments and Culture
* Chapter 16 Organizational Structure and Change

Research methods

To review the case, web research on the client and industry, considering learning objectives, and completing the readings is required.

Assignment questions and answers:

Using course theories, assess the employee attitudes (job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment) and motivation (Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory), your leadership style (Blake and Mouton Leadership Grid and Fiedler’s Contingency Model), the environment (complexity and change), the culture (competing values framework), and the structure (specialization, command and control, span of control, centralization, and formalization), and what, if any, changes are required (Kotter’s Change Model).

In addition, you need to make a recommendation for moving to fully online, hybrid, or face-to-face, using the prior course theories to justify the decision. Use Kotter’s Change Model for any recommended changes. Then address what changes, if any, need to be institutionalized past the pandemic. Work attitudes, employee motivation, leadership style, organizational culture, organizational structure, and external environment should all be addressed in your final presentation.

Epilogue:

The decision, that was made by the organization, was to move to fully online and they are currently leaning toward continuing elements of flexible work arrangements post-pandemic.

The overall work attitudes are positive, but students should address the sub-components of job satisfaction, in particular pay and promotional opportunities, which are generally more limited for small, non-profit organizations.

The leadership style is relationship oriented (team-manager), which seems effective, but does not quite align with Fielder’s Contingency Theory, given good relations, low structure, and strong power (which aligns more with task oriented), so students should acknowledge and address the potential disconnect.

The environment is stable but complex, the culture is clan, and the structure is organic, which at least from an internal climate perspective, seems to be effective, with high levels of trust and alignment between attitudes and strategies. However, students should consider the fit with the new environment, and what, if any changes to culture or structure would better align with the environment.

At this time the Board of Directors is supportive of the Director and willing to accept any recommendations that are justified.