
Business Psychology: Problem Solving

In the following situation of one of the most successful airline companies a certain turn of events resulted in a loss of £15 million in sales, delays and re-bookings, rescheduling and compensation payments. Due to a busy summer, check in staff at the airline was ensured greater autonomy to deal with customers with certain guidelines and the staff was assured that the company would back them in any decision they made. However the events did not occur as planned due to minor conflicts that took place. The finance director's brother who missed his flight wanted compensation for the services he had paid for, however was refused by the airline staff as per the agreement resulting in a dispute. When a person's needs are not met, as per human behavior customers need someone to blame and thus behave irrationally. It is more or less a universal pattern and since the check in staff was the only people in charge they were blamed.

However in this case, since the customer was a family member of the finance director, his reaction to the whole situation was different. Instead of supporting his staff in the decision they made, he instead questioned their decision of refusing compensation to the family and threatened them with disciplinary action. Due to the finance director's superior position in the company he abused his power to his family's best interests. We all have dozens of roles to play in every situation; in his case the finance director of a renowned airline and a brother at the same time. In the following case, the finance director was in a dilemma whether to treat the customer as his brother or act in the company's best interests. His emotions however got in the way and the finance director acted out on the check in staff resulting in a dispute. This whole situation created a situation of ambiguity, emotional dissonance and conflict amongst the airline staff. The finance director used his position of authority and power in the company to his discretion. With a lot of employees working under the finance director he definitely has a high economic power and status which he has used in the given situation. The company finance director was most probably at fault because as per the agreement he clearly stated that 'check in staff was able to refuse to serve customers who were late, rude, aggressive or threatening' and in the given case the family was late and has thus missed their flight. This is a case of role dissonance as there is a clear inconsistency between his beliefs (agreement of greater autonomy with employees) and his actions (threatening disciplinary action against his employees). Role dissonance results in conflicting attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

Furthermore, in the case of the employees, a healthy relationship can be noticed as the staff is supporting each other as a team. This shows collective cohesion and mutuality of interest amongst the employees. When the check in staff refused to serve the late customer, the shift leader at check in supported her staff all the way in their decision instead of behaving

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opportunistically. The employees experienced a psychological contract breach when the finance director failed to fulfill his obligations, in this case not supporting their decision to turn away a customer. The shift leader on the other hand acted in the staffs best interests instead of supporting her senior the finance director and maintained her trust. A psychological contract breach is likely to have a negative impact on employees and affect job satisfaction, organizational commitment and lead to workplace deviance.

The airline staff and the finance director were not the only parties involved in the dispute. When the check in staff walked out on the finance director when he became aggressive the situation was to be resolved by the employee relations officer. However, since the employee relations director was on corporate leave the matter became more complicated leading to a strike. Since there was no mediator to resolve the problem the conflict worsened which may have led to the strike.

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