

DETAILED PLAN OF ACTION FOR MICHAEL WELLAND

Name

Course

Date

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Waterview is a snack bar located on the waterfront property of a premier, full-season resort. It is found in the Muskoka Region, enjoying some of the best landscapes in Ontario.

The area was a popular tourist destination, attracting millions of visitors annually.

Competition was fierce among businesses due to the high demand. A long-time employee of the Waterview, Michael Welland, who was recently promoted to the position of snack bar supervisor, regularly finds himself in heightened arguments with his manager, Rebecca Boddington. Some of the issues coming up now and then, which cause the arguments, include Boddington assigning Michael tasks that do not fit his job description, allegedly taking him off the duty schedule without informing him, paying him less than was promised when he was promoted and not taking the time to address these issues when they are brought up, instead dismissing Michael. These events have led Michael to harbor a strong belief that his manager holds a personal grudge against him. Michael was in a dilemma on whether he would really complete the remaining four weeks of his contract at the Waterview. He needed the money for the coming school year but at the same time, his working conditions were deplorable.

Some of these issues can be attributed to the organization process at the Waterview. This process is clearly flawed as demonstrated by the fact that after Michael Welland was promoted to snack bar supervisor, he found himself assigned as a part-time server. In addition, on receiving his first paycheck, he found out that he was being paid the minimum wage and not that of a supervisor. There was also an instance where he was taken off the duty schedule without his knowledge. These clearly show that the organization process has to be formalized and actually followed to solve these workplace issues.

Lack of a well-defined communication process between management and employees is also evident at the Waterview. This is demonstrated by the way Michael regularly storms into Rebecca's office shouting, even when she was in the middle of a meeting. In addition, Rebecca never addresses the issues raised and always dismisses Michael. This also demonstrates unprofessional behavior in the workplace, where employees may be pushed into becoming unproductive.

The Waterview management should make an effort to put in place a clear and formal communication process. Any issue affecting the employees, for example, change in schedules or wages, should be communicated with them. Tasks should also be well defined according to a detailed contract between employees and the company. Regular appraisal should also be conducted to identify the areas that need rectification or to address emerging needs. End-year performance reviews should also be conducted to measure performance and evaluate eligibility for promotions.

To improve employee conduct, a set of rules should be established and enforced to ensure high standards of professionalism are maintained at all times. In addition, a system of collecting feedback from the customers should be implemented to ensure every employee is doing their job as required.

## **Introduction**

There are numerous problems leading to the frequent disagreements between Michael Welland and Rebecca Boddington, who are employees of the Waterview Resort and Snack Bar. Rebecca is Michael's boss and Michael is of the opinion that his boss is making life miserable for him because of a personal grudge. Michael is at a dilemma of whether to finish the remaining four weeks of his contract. He cannot be paid unless he finishes his contract but the issues between him and his boss seem to be never ending. These issues need to be resolved before it becomes too late for the Waterview, which is undergoing tough times in terms of business due to customers leaving. It is likely that their solving of their issues would be beneficial for the business at this critical time.

## **Analysis**

One of the problems between Rebecca and Michael is the clear lack of a well-defined communication strategy between employees and management. This is demonstrated numerous times in the way the two argue frequently and are never able to come to a common conclusion. Michael frequently storms into his superior's office to complain and there seems to be no formal chain of command, or if it is indeed present, it seems not to be followed. Communication on formal matters is almost non-existent. For example, when Michael accepted the offer of promotion to supervisor, he was not made aware of the tasks that he would have to undertake and he was clearly surprised to find himself cutting grass and cleaning toilets. Along the same line, he was not informed beforehand that he would be paid at the minimum wage, which angered him. Later on, we find that he was taken from the work schedule without his knowledge. These are serious breaches to any communication best practices.

Another problem creeping up now and again is the insubordination of staff. This shows a lack of respect for authority on the part of the employees. Michael portrays this numerous times when addressing his boss, and from her responses, this seems to be a regular occurrence. It is also mentioned that Michael notices a decline in the work ethic of his own staff. He believes this was because of public criticism from Rebecca. This seems to indicate that it is a common occurrence even in other areas of the organization. Unless this is solved, the situation cannot be resolved.

There also seems to be a concern of management not listening to the complaints of their employees and turning a cold shoulder towards legitimate work-related issues. Instead of dealing with the problem at hand, they choose to ignore it. For example, Rebecca claims to be busy when Michael asks that the computer be repaired. In another instance when Michael asks why his increase has not been reflected in his latest paycheck, Rebecca claims not to have time to discuss the details. These occurrences clearly show a lack of concern for the employees and could be contributing to the high turnover at the Waterview.

There is also a major issue involving the high competition for customers and the high standards expected to attract and maintain customers. In the case of the Waterview, many visitors noticed a deterioration of the service and opted instead for other resorts. Even the long-time customers had noticed a decline in quality and service and had chosen alternative vacation spots. The internal problems involving the employees and their bosses would surely ruin the reputation of the institution further. The employees and management do not seem to be worried about this since even the customers are taking notice of the regular arguments among staff.

Other problems that are portrayed at the Waterview include the relative inexperience of staff, with an average age of 19 years. Most of them are also taking the job because it

seems to be fun and do not take it seriously. Some, including Michael are keeping it because of the pay. Their first priority is therefore not the job, and this is not a good sign. There is also very high employee turnover, indicating deeper problems in the workplace. Some staff members also seem to be overworked and this may contribute to low productivity. An example is Rebecca Boddington who regularly works long hours in a six- or seven-day workweek, therefore leaving little or no time for rest. Michael also mentions that the work cycle is monotonous. There are also high expectations but management is not providing the support needed to achieve these expectations.

In the conflict involving Michael and his boss, Rebecca, the major recurring theme is communication breakdown between them. It is noted that there was a time when they were friendly towards each other but that does not seem to be the case now. This breakdown in communication may be caused by a variety of factors, including lack of respect and professionalism between the two of them. In the first recorded conflict, they both are seen to be using disrespectful language towards one another. There is also an element of mixing work-related and personal issues, therefore affecting the whole business. For example, the lack of action regarding the computer repair may negatively affect the whole business but they are letting their personal issues cloud their judgment.

There is also no clear method of conflict resolution. This is made worse by the fact that Rebecca is the only available person whom Michael may approach when he has a work-related issue. The presence of an alternative party would have averted this. Michael may also need to change his approach when seeking intervention from Rebecca. His approach is not only unprofessional but it also undermines her authority publicly. Past issues that have arisen between them have undergone a similar process, which seems not to be effective. If this is not handled, it may lead to all employees believing this is the way to go, therefore creating chaos and an undesirable workplace environment.

The frequently recurring conflicts can also be attributed to poor workplace relations. The management does not seem to be putting the business interests first. Constantly arguing in front of the customers is a bad sign, yet it still continues between Rebecca and Michael. Also, management does not seem to care about the concerns that the employees are raising. In the case of Michael and Rebecca, it is evident that Rebecca never considers his issues as being serious and always dismisses him whenever he raises an issue with her. They do not consider employee needs and do not motivate them to do better. Since most of the staff members are young and inexperienced, they need guidance and motivation to be able to contribute more in the workplace. Management staff members do not consider this and they instead just dismiss their issues. This can be a large contributor to the high employee turnover experienced at the Waterview.

The fact that the Waterview is undergoing a rough patch in terms of business may be contributing to low morale, for both management and the regular staff. The management is under considerable pressure to deliver sales targets. Michael has been informed that they have to meet certain targets for his bonus to be approved. This may be causing him and other staff to release their pressures on each other, which is contributing to a poor workplace environment. Regular staff meetings may resolve this where employees are motivated to do their best. Regular breaks should also be introduced in the monotonous work routines to allow for rest and rejuvenation.

Insubordination of staff is also a major problem affecting the Waterview. There needs to be well defined rules and guidelines to control the employees' behavior in the workplace. The instances of Michael storming into Rebecca's office multiple times show clear lack of respect for her authority as his boss. This has also spread to the employees under Michael who he believes are slipping into a trend of deteriorating work ethic. Rules of conduct should be established to promote good behavior in the workplace. As a further incentive, there

should be a reward system to motivate employees with good behavior. An example of this is recognizing the best employee each month in front of his colleagues. This motivates employees and creates a reason for them to behave properly in the workplace. In equal measure, there should be a punishment system in place to discourage employees from engaging in poor behavior or for having a poor work ethic.

Unequal treatment of employees is also a big problem affecting the Waterview. An example is the constant 'misfortunes' occurring to Michael Welland. A series of injustices have been done to him and he had nothing to do about it. To deal with this, a feedback system for employees should be designed. This is where employees get a chance to air the views affecting them in the workplace, with the assurance that they will be solved. This would contribute to employees being more comfortable and productive in the workplace, knowing that their issues will be solved eventually. This also reduces the chance of indecent behavior in the pursuit of resolution of these problems. The converse effect of this is that management will know the issues that they have to deal with and they can be held accountable if they ignore these issues.

### **Action Plan**

A recommended plan of action for Michael Welland to resolve his conflict with his boss, Rebecca, would involve him initiating a conflict resolution model, using the collaborating style. This would include four actionable steps

1. Stating the major problem areas in a BCF (Behaviors, Consequences and feelings) statement
2. Present the BCF statement and agree on the conflict



3. Asking for, and/or suggesting alternative conflict resolution methods
4. Making an agreement to change for the better.<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Stating the major problem areas in a BCF (Behaviors, Consequences and feelings) statement**

The first step in seeking a solution involves identifying the major problem areas. This is the planning stage and involves taking ownership of the problem. This means acknowledging that the problem affects you and you need to take action to resolve it. This involves short statements in the format of, “When you do a certain thing (behavior), some consequences result and it makes me feel a particular way”. An example relevant to Michael’s situation would be, “When you criticize me in public, I feel as if you are undermining me and this is affecting my morale”. It also helps to think of these situations from the point of view of the other party and refine them further. The main reason for this is to keep the other party from feeling defensive. In extension to this, Michael may also present other issues in the workplace, for example, low customer numbers in order to work towards them together as the senior-most employees.<sup>2</sup>

### **2. Present the BCF statement and agree on the conflict**

This involves setting up a meeting with Rebecca with the aim of ironing out the issues identified in the earlier stage. This involves presenting your statements and waiting for

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1 Robert Lussier and Christopher Achua, *Leadership: Theory, Application, & Skill Development* (Cengage Learning, 2012) 246.

2 Robert N. Lussier and David Charles Kimball, *Applied Sport Management Skills (Human Kinetics, 2009)* 87.

the other party to respond. It may involve restating the problems so that Rebecca acknowledges that there is a problem. The point of this stage is to agree that there is a conflict in order to move on to seeking a solution for it. For Michael, this would involve getting Rebecca to acknowledge that things have not been smooth between them and that they need to seek a working solution for the problems they identify. For example, they may need to acknowledge that their arguments have been affecting the business since customers are hearing about them.

### **3. Asking for, and/or suggesting alternative conflict resolution methods**

This is the most important stage and is the defining moment of the meeting. The first step would be agreeing on common resolutions that you both agree on then suggesting others later. One of the potential solutions is the establishment of workplace regulations, and adhering to them. Both parties should play a role in this because they are obviously not following such regulations. They should both acknowledge their mistakes and choose to be non-biases in the application of the rules.

Another potential solution would be agreeing to put the needs of the customers first. This would solve most of the issues they have with each other that affect the business in some way. This should also be the standard for the whole organization. This should also be employed company-wide to align all the employees towards this common goal. This would also contribute to the resolution of some of their personal problems, since they would have to agree not to behave disrespectfully in the workplace, and therefore the yelling would stop.

With regard to their personal problems, they should agree first to have their arguments away from other employees and the customers. They should also schedule regular meetings to deal with any differences that may crop up between them in a civilized manner. These should be

scheduled outside office hours, for example, during lunch or after hours, to ensure that issues are not raised during working hours in the presence of other parties.

An alternative solution would be to introduce a third party who would listen to their concerns when they were completely unable to agree and suggest a reasonable solution. Ideally, this should be a person with no interest whatsoever with the outcomes of the decision. They could agree on a party to take on this role.

With regard to other workplace issues, they should agree to hold staff meetings regularly to also deal with the issues that other employees may be having. This is also an excellent platform for employee motivation and also evaluation of objectives and assessing their achievement or lack thereof.

#### **4. Making an agreement to change for the better**

This involves specific actions that every party should take. These are mostly personal decisions that the parties agree to take to mitigate future conflicts. An example would include Michael committing to never storm into Rebecca's office without scheduling a meeting. Rebecca would also commit to always communicate to Michael any changes in his work schedule, pay check or otherwise. This would create a sense of accountability for conflict avoidance in future. They should also commit to play a part in creating a conducive working environment, not only for them but also for their staff and the customers they serve. They should also agree to hold each other accountable if they do not adhere to the deliberations they make in this meeting.

### **Conclusion**

There are numerous problems facing the Waterview, but it is upon Michael and his boss to implement conflict resolution between them in order to enable collaboration and joint input in solving the other issues facing the Waterview.

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