

# Negotiating the Change Process

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## Introduction

Change is an inevitable process in the modern day organisational context. In order to remain efficient and effective, management in their own capacity and after an evaluation into internal and external sources propose various changes that shall help organisation attain its strategic objectives while remaining competitive. Naturally, every individual has a different perception towards the proposed change and as a team leader; it is important to keep the workforce motivated and ensure that every individual is ready to adopt that change. Unless this is done, it is very much likely that the change may backfire and thus will have a negative impact on the overall performance. Another important aspect to keep in mind here is the presence of a Union which could also influence the change implementation process and can be seen as an inherent challenge to the hospital management.

In this assignment we shall evaluate how the proposed change of rostering hours can be implemented effectively and the strategies that should be used by the team leader in the negotiation process of motivating the staff towards adopting this change. Furthermore, we shall also look into the communication techniques that should be used during this change process, since communication will play an integral role in how well the change is implemented.

## Aims and Objectives of Negotiations

Before getting on to the negotiation table, it is critical to know what to seek from the staff and what to offer them in return (Boonstra, 2008). In contemporary scenario, it is vital to appreciate that authoritative style of negotiations may not be fruitful in the long run and especially where there is a presence of union, negotiator must look to have more of a diplomatic approach. In context of the case at hand, following shall be the aims and objectives of the negotiations;

1. To communicate the need of this change not only from an organisational standpoint but also how this shall contribute to the individuals' growth and prospects.
2. To convey that every member of the team is highly valued, therefore the change may not be implemented effectively unless everyone is up for it.
3. To highlight how the organisation has benefited from this change during the trial period and how this advantage is to be passed on to the workers.

## Concerns, Interests & Goals of the Parties

It is vital to evaluate the different concerns, embedded interests and goals of the parties involved in the negotiation process to carry out this to a better effect. In this case, there are three parties and we shall now evaluate each in isolation;

### 1. Staff who view the change positively

During the trial period a group of workers saw the introduction of rostering hours with positivity since it was better suited to their lifestyle. A modern day phenomenon for a motivated workforce is to ensure a proper work-life balance, which the new concept better adhered to. This also meant that the workers could spend some more time with their family members and

enjoyed their work rather than seeing it as obligatory. However, a potential concern for them could be the divide among the staff members and the fact that the trial period was initiated without taking the union on board, which could mean that the union may back those who are not satisfied with this change. Such concerns could lead to a certain degree of ambiguity which would then translate into a drop in motivation levels.

## **2. Staff who view the change negatively**

This is going to be the biggest concern for the manager since most of the negotiation process would center on them. Getting their support would be a key objective of the negotiation process along with seeking consent from the union members. These workers may not be ready for this change, predominantly due to sense of insecurity that may be associated with a change being introduced. Studies suggest that whenever a change is introduced with cost effectiveness as an objective, workers perceive this with negativity majorly because they feel the management may look to replace them or cut down on the workforce (Cellich, 2012). Another concern within the workforce could be the reduction in work hours which would mean lesser wages at the end of the month. In order to motivate this group of workers and seek their complete support, manager would have to communicate the brighter side of the picture and identify areas that shall help in development of these workers with the institutionalization of the new shift-pattern system.

## **3. Manager/Negotiator**

As the manager or the head of group, the major concern would be to eliminate the bridge that is fast growing among the workers since this could send an extremely negative message across the team and even worse for lesser experienced members of the team. Secondly, handling the union members could be even more difficult now keeping in mind that they were not made a part of this decision before putting the trial period in effect. Adding to this, the top management would also expect this change to be implemented soon, for the hospital to remain financially sustainable.

The manager would have to address the divide by holding regular interactions, communicate the benefits of this change and regroup the workers to ensure that the divide among the workers do not grow (Fells, 2012).

## **Constraints in the Negotiation Process**

Negotiation processes are usually faced with several constraints depending upon the interests of each group. It is reckoned that the key to having successful negotiations is to overcome these constraints and get every party on the same page. Speaking of negotiations from the staff that views this change from a positive viewpoint, a major constraint for them would be to gain support from the union or other staff members who are against it. Naturally union can be seen as a source of power in this scenario, therefore gaining their support would be important.

Similarly, workers who are not in support of this change would be most concerned about the information and the change process that shall be implemented. It has been observed that most of the reservations on the party against a proposed change is the lack of clarity in information that is shared with them (Lewicki & Hiam, 2011). Not only is the information sharing an important aspect, but equally important would be how the change is interpreted by individuals. If the manager is able to communicate that this change is not to replace them instead is to enhance the efficiency of the workers, it is very much possible that this group of workers would perceive this as a positive whereby the management is interested in their professional development.

From a manager's perspective, a key challenge would be to ensure balance between the workers and the top management (Anderson & Ackerman, 2010). Secondly, the top management may look to witness quick results which would mean that the negotiation process would have to be successfully completed within a short span of time together with the correct use of authority given by the top management. The manager must ensure that excessive use of authority is not shown which could further demotivate the workforce, hence hampering the entire negotiation process (Paton & McCalman, 2008).

## **Strategies for the Negotiation Process**

For the negotiation process to be effective, it is important to have well drawn strategies. In this regard, first and foremost, get all the stakeholders on the discussion table and listen to what they have to say about the proposed change (Gates, 2011). A major differentiating factor between a successful and an unsuccessful negotiation process is to listen to all the parties involved and clearly identify their approach towards the change that is making it difficult for them to accept. For instance, if the team against this change sees this as economically unviable for them or to be compromising on their job security, it would be imperative to address this issue.

Secondly, the manager must not rush into the negotiation process; instead give each team their due time (Benoliel, 2011). It is vital to allow them to go back to drawing board and evaluate their stance towards this change. Thirdly, the manager should ensure that there is correct use of authority given from the top management and the reasons of this change is effectively communicated to all the parties involved in this change (Opresnik, 2014). The manager would have to instill this belief within the workforce that every staff member is of great value to the hospital and a collective effort is required from every level for the change to achieve the desired results.

Moving on, a negotiator must not at any stage think negatively about the entire process and its eventual outcome (Siedel, 2014). Negative mindset of the negotiator could result in frustration and thus the objectives of the negotiation may not be achieved successfully.

Rationally speaking, in all the above stated strategies, it is clear that no negotiation process could be successful unless complete support is sought from every party for which it is important to communicate every piece of information and make them realize of their importance to the hospital (Jones & Recardo,

2013). Secondly, the mindset of the parties to the negotiation tend to impact the end result, hence these strategies shall be geared towards ensuring a positive approach from every party to the process.

The successful implementation of these strategies could be closely linked to the attitudes and behaviour of the people coming to the negotiation process (Rao, 2009). The team against the proposed change would have a resistant approach and would bring support from the union members. There is a high probability that representatives of this team may threaten to go on strike and launch protests against the management to derail the negotiation process, however as a negotiator it would be of utmost importance of remain calm and rather than compel them to abide by the change, win their support by incorporating the above discussed strategies in the process.

On the other hand, those in support of the change would be more concerned about the approach that the management is likely to have towards this change (post trial period). The reason being, this group of workers would not want the management to take a step back and would definitely look to seek some sort of assurance from the manager/management, else they could find it extremely difficult to get along well with their co-workers who initially opposed this change.

As a manager it would be important to have a democratic approach whereby grievances and concerns of the both the parties are heard and addressed within the scope of this change and efforts are made towards getting maximum support from the parties involved. Greater focus would be towards the party against the change, therefore the dialogue process with their representatives should be held more frequently. Since the representatives against the change may assert their power using the union members, as a negotiator it would be critical to remain calm during the entire process. Moreover, union could be used as a source of mediation (Hornickel, 2013). In this regard, help must be sought from the union as well since they are on better terms with the workers and would be able to better convince the staffs who are not in favour of this change. Furthermore, for negotiations to be effective the negotiator should also keep the top management up-to-date on the entire proceedings so that it becomes easier to address the reservations raised by the staff members who are not up for this change.

Conclusively, the focus should be on getting everyone on board for this change by communicating the advantages that this change will bring in to the organisation and to the individuals on the whole (Ross, 2010). It should be conveyed that the personal growth of workers may not be materialized in isolation, rather is closely tied to that of the hospital. This should be a key aspect of the negotiation strategies set in place as getting this message across the board would help minimize resentment among the workers.

## **Change Process**

Once the negotiations are over and the change is implemented, the next important step is to regularly evaluate the change process and assess if the intended change has been implemented accordingly or not. In cases where this is not done effectively, it is important to look for alternate solutions and every care should be exercised to ensure that the process does not halt in the middle (Guasco & Robinson, 2007). One of the standards along which the progress could be measured is the number of workers making a shift from opposing the idea of shift hours to start supporting it. This would give a quantitative

measure of how well the negotiations were carried out and if the intended change has been implemented to good effect. In parallel though, it would also be of equal importance to assess the cost effectiveness that could be capitalized upon which would help evaluate if the workers have actually accepted the change with their will or are still uncertain about the idea.

The results must be shared with the top management for which in the first three months of the change process, a meeting shall be held every two weeks where the outcome of the change in view of the hospital's performance and that of individuals will be discussed. It is suggested that representatives from both the 'for and against' party be made a part of these meetings so that complete transparency is ensured. In addition to this, updates on the shift hours concept could be shared through the monthly communication magazine/newsletter or any other source of internal communication whereby key highlights of the change are communicated across the hospital staff. In addition to this, it would be critical to ensure that the workforce is kept motivated throughout the change process for which initiatives such as employee of the month, financial incentives or public appreciation could be used.

## **Final Remarks**

While an ideal scenario would be the successful implementation of this change, it is possible that the idea even after series of negotiations is seen with skepticism by a few members of the team and the results may not be seen unless the entire workforce is motivated towards this change. For this purpose, regular meetings should be held where workers from both the groups interact and share experiences. Furthermore, it must be ensured that the staff members who still aren't on board are not left to any kind of isolation, instead should continue to be thought of as integral team members. This way they would feel valued by the hospital management and the likelihood of the shift towards this change from their end would increase significantly, thereby the chances of a complete support from all levels.

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