



TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT
STUDENT WORKBOOK

SHRMTM

SOCIETY FOR HUMAN
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

New Kid on the Block:
Diagnosing Organizational
Development Issues Using Data

By Steve Weingarden, Ph.D.



PROJECT TEAM

Author: Steve Weingarden, Ph.D.
SHRM project contributor: Bill Schaefer, SPHR
External contributor: Sharon H. Leonard
Copy editing: Courtney J. Cornelius, copy editor
Design: Blair Wright, senior graphic designer

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For more information, please contact:
SHRM Academic Initiatives
1800 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, USA
Phone: +1-800-283-7476 Fax: +1-703-535-6432

Case Overview

YOUR ROLE AND THE ORGANIZATION

You are an organizational development consultant for a large operational division of a book and audio retailer customer service center that processes online and phone orders. While the majority of sales come from retail stores, a little more than one-third are made through the customer service center. In addition to sales, the customer service center is responsible for working with customers to ensure quality, market rewards programs and support customer needs. Among the key metrics for the organization are market share and profit.

The organization is composed of 30,000 employees, working at the more than 1,000 retail locations. Approximately 5,000 employees work at the customer service center, and nearly half of those employees are unionized. Operational supervisors, who are nonunion employees, manage most of the union personnel at the customer service center.

THE REQUEST

Directors from the customer service center have asked you to offer more training to the customer service supervisors. The directors suggested that supervisors are not managing properly, and as a result, customer service is not consistently meeting its goals or the organization's goals. The directors are concerned that the situation will escalate and negatively affect market share and profit.

The directors feel that the supervisors—particularly recently hired supervisors—do not have the skills needed to perform their jobs effectively. Apparently, the quality of the recruiting pool for supervisors has been weaker than the directors remember it being in the past. Currently, training for supervisors is inconsistent and may be lacking. There are existing training programs available to supervisors, but there is no requirement that they participate. Also, the training is designed for leaders across the organization and not specifically for the supervisors in the customer service division. Existing training delivery metrics are mostly composed of reaction measures (e.g., “Please rate how much you enjoyed this training session”), with a few learning measures included (e.g., “Please select the example below that represents a correct way to track attendance during a shortened workweek”). Learning outcome metrics specific to the operational supervisor job are nonexistent; no measure of the effect of training on job performance takes place.

THE FOLLOW-UP

After meeting with the directors, you meet with the organizational development director. The organizational development director is your manager and is responsible for ensuring that consulting solutions are appropriate and will help the organization reach its goals. The organizational development director, who has been with the organization for eight years, tells you that the issues with the supervisors may relate to something different than training because training currently exists for supervisors. Directors expressed the same concerns almost five years ago and special technical training—highly encouraged but not mandatory—was created for the supervisors at that time. That training focused on tactics supervisors could use and seemed to resolve the performance issues over time. Slowly, new supervisors who had struggled at the outset improved their skills. The organizational development director also points out that the customer service center directors may not be close enough to the supervisors to provide full information.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment is to respond to the request made by the customer service center directors.

- Work in groups of three to five.
- Write a two- to four-page paper recommending what the organizational development department should offer as a consulting solution. Include a section that identifies the business need and a section that supports the suggested solution through an interpretation of the existing data.
- Develop a simple plan to design the solution.
- Present recommendations to other groups in the class.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Here is what you know as you begin preparing your recommendations:

- The customer service center directors are having trouble ensuring their units meet operational goals.
- Customer service center directors report that supervisors are the source of the issues.
- According to customer service directors, supervisors are not receiving enough training.
- Directors believe that the worst-performing supervisors are the newly hired operational supervisors.
- The organizational development director believes the source of the issue may not be the supervisors. If it is an issue with the supervisors, it may be something other than training.

- New training for supervisors was created approximately five years ago. Training was focused on tactics for frontline managers and was offered to all supervisors.
- Supervisor training is still available.

Contact your instructor as needed to obtain more information about the organization.

Data

The following pages contain data that can assist in your assessment of the situation and the development of a recommendation.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT TRAINING FOR OPERATIONAL SUPERVISORS

Call Center Supervision Training

Purpose: To train operational supervisors on tactics that can be used in managing a call center.

Sample content: Managing call queues, reviewing call center reports, scheduling customer service representatives, monitoring calls.

Origin of training: Purchased from vendor with expertise in call center management.

Audience: Operational supervisors.

When to enroll: As needed. Determined by operational supervisor and his or her manager.

When offered: Annually.

Frontline Leader Training

Purpose: Competency development for frontline leaders.

Sample content: Learn how to motivate others, give and receive feedback, be a better communicator, set goals, and build teams.

Origin of training: Purchased from vendor with expertise in leadership.

Audience: All frontline leaders in the organization, particularly those at the manager level.

When to enroll: Optional.

When offered: Quarterly.

HIRING DATA FOR OPERATIONAL SUPERVISORS

Job title:	Operational supervisor
Total number of employees in job title:	258
Salary grade median (annual):	\$38,000
Number of hires in job category per year:	60
Number of hires in job category per year—promotions:	45
Number of hires in job category per year—hires from outside the organization:	15
Previous experience of hires in job category (out of 60)	
Supervisory experience:	30
Related technical skills:	54
Number of incumbents turning over from organization per year:	15
Number of incumbents turning over from job but remaining in organization per year:	5

Operational Supervisor Selection System

The operational supervisor selection system consists of resume screening, a structured interview and a performance test.

Percentage of applicants successfully completing selection system – 2008

Resume Screening	Structured Interview	Performance Test
55%	98%	16%

Percentage of applicants successfully completing selection system – 2003

Resume Screening	Structured Interview	Performance Test
64%	85%	23%

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR OPERATIONAL SUPERVISOR

[Adapted from O*NET Online]

43-1011.00: Frontline Supervisors/Managers of Office and Administrative Support Workers

Supervise and coordinate the activities of clerical and administrative support workers.

Essential Tasks

- Resolve customer complaints and answer customers' questions regarding policies and procedures.
- Supervise the work of office, administrative or customer service employees to ensure adherence to quality standards, deadlines and proper procedures; correct errors or problems.
- Provide employees with guidance in handling difficult or complex problems and in resolving escalated complaints or disputes.
- Implement corporate and departmental policies, procedures and service standards in conjunction with management.
- Work with employees to identify causes and develop solutions to any job performance issues.
- Train and instruct employees in job duties and company policies or arrange for training to be provided.
- Evaluate employees' job performance and conformance to regulations and recommend appropriate personnel action.
- Review records and reports pertaining to activities such as production, payroll and shipping to verify details; monitor work activities and evaluate performance.
- Recruit, interview and select employees.
- Interpret and communicate work procedures and company policies to staff.

Skills Required

- Active listening
- Communication
- Reading comprehension
- Critical thinking

- Monitoring
- Time management
- Management of personnel resources

Education and Experience

- Bachelor’s degree in related field
- Previous leadership experience preferred

**AVERAGE ANNUAL SATISFACTION SURVEY SCORES
OVERALL RATING—OPERATIONAL SUPERVISORS BY JOB TENURE**

Job Tenure of Operational Supervisor (in Months)				
	0-12	13-24	25-36	More than 36
2008	2.3	2.7	3.8	4.6
2007	2.2	2.4	3.5	4.4
2006	2.8	3.2	3.3	4.9
2005	2.6	3.2	3.7	4.7

7-point scale; 1 = very dissatisfied, 7 = very satisfied

**AVERAGE ANNUAL SATISFACTION SURVEY SCORES
OVERALL RATING—UNION PERSONNEL CATEGORIZED BY
JOB TENURE OF THEIR SUPERVISOR**

Job Tenure of Leader Reporting to (in Months)				
	0-12	13-24	25-36	More than 36
2008	3.0	3.1	3.7	4.2
2007	2.7	2.9	3.5	4.1
2006	3.4	3.3	3.9	4.3
2005	3.0	3.2	4.6	4.2

7-point scale; 1 = very dissatisfied, 7 = very satisfied

AVERAGE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT RATINGS BY TENURE

Job Tenure of Operational Supervisor (in Months)				
	0-12	13-24	24-36	More than 36
2008	C	C	B	C
2007	C	B	C	C
2006	B	B	C	C
2005	B	B	B	C
2004	C	C	C	C
2003	C	B	C	C

5-point scale; F = unsatisfactory, A = exceptional

Best Practices: Models for Diagnosing and Planning

When approaching HR requests such as the one described in this case study, taking a systems view can help uncover the root causes and guide the proper solution. Implementation of data-gathering and talent management models help assess situations and provide appropriate recommendations.

Using a model ensures an objective approach to data-gathering and helps keep a needs assessment accurate. One of the more common models used in organizational development initiatives is the action-research model, which includes the following steps:

1. **Diagnose:** Identify and understand the issue or theme.
2. **Plan:** Propose actions that will affect the issue or theme.
3. **Act:** Implement the plan.
4. **Evaluate:** Monitor the changes related to the issue or theme.¹

This cyclical model aids in the production of quality solutions to organizational effectiveness issues. At the diagnosis stage, the consultant may consider completing an initial diagnosis, but then gather additional data to fully understand the issue. Consultants should seek out data related to problems, causes and symptoms, and then consider the immediate and long-term issues and implications if the problem is not resolved. Decision criteria should be determined to help decide how to move forward. Once criteria are in place, alternatives are developed and recommendations selected. After due diligence in the first stages of the diagnosis process, the consultant meets with the client to provide feedback.

Viewing issues through the scope of talent management can help ensure a proper diagnostic approach and ultimately help guide the planning stage. Talent management is broadly defined as “the implementation of integrated strategies or systems designed to increase workplace productivity by developing improved processes for attracting, developing, retaining and utilizing people with the required skills and aptitude to meet current and future business needs” (SHRM, 2008). In internal consulting initiatives, a review of all the relevant talent management processes (e.g., workforce planning, talent gap analysis, recruiting, staffing, education and development, retention, talent reviews, succession, and evaluation) as an integrated function is considered a best practice (McCauley & Wakefield, 2006).

Talent management models vary by organization, and for this case, all components are likely to be relevant, but the primary focus is on the processes around criteria definition, recruiting and selection, and onboarding and socialization. Some of the data provided fits into the category of performance management. In the current context, a fully integrated solution would likely involve a review of the relevant HR processes, and an ideal solution would be fully integrated. Realistically, a partially integrated solution based on diagnosis that resolves the issues in the customer service center would serve as a bridge to the next diagnosis.

¹ Adapted from French and Bell (1999).

Data can be critical to an accurate diagnosis. Data can be used to analyze how existing HR processes are being applied by the customer service areas. Ultimately, the HR processes should be in place to help the organization accomplish its goals. If the application of the HR processes does not help employees achieve organizational goals, then changes to the HR processes may be needed.

When considering any work, including management-level work, defining the criteria for success is at the foundation of talent management. Success criteria will vary by organization according to the contextual factors of the particular organization (Cascio, 1998). It is critical to identify how the work of the manager is accomplished. The way the work is done in a particular organization drives the HR practices for managerial selection, another aspect of the talent management cycle.

Once HR staff members understand how the work is accomplished, a recruiting and selection system can be created. The system should correspond to the job criteria and context. Periodic review of the recruiting and selection strategy provides a measure of whether qualified candidates are being attracted to apply for positions and whether the selection system is screening out candidates who are less likely to be effective at performing the job. To measure the validity of a selection system, a comparison is made to predetermined criteria of managerial success (SIOP, 2003). Some of the methods for measuring this include performance reviews, productivity, surveys of managers and turnover.

Onboarding and socialization² are the next important aspects of the talent management system. Ensuring that transition to a new role goes smoothly is a critical responsibility for HR (Tyler, 2007). Several transitional tactics can help new managers improve their likelihood of success, including those tactics related to alignment, resource gains, networking and team-building (Watkins, 2003). Providing those new to a position with opportunities to learn job-related information prior to the time it is needed helps provide faster and more efficient responses. Consideration should also be given to the potential differing needs, if any, of those recruited from within the organization versus those who are hired from outside the organization.

Expectations for job performance should be included when developing an onboarding program separate from orientation. Clear expectations result from well-crafted job descriptions, consistency between job descriptions and instructions on how the work is actually performed. It is useful to interview job incumbents regarding job expectations and use that information to compare with the job description. Parsing out the essentials helps separate onboarding from a generalized training plan. Focusing on the most productive content sends a clear message to those new to the job about what they really need to know to be successful. Most important is to provide information related to organizational strategy and goals, social networking and resource awareness. These are the topic areas that provide the greatest return in performance, especially if the performance management system is built with a sturdy connection to goal alignment. Some tactic-specific material can be incorporated into onboarding, but tactic-specific material can also be included at later stages of transition to the job. Tactics can be taught through general training and as part of career development. Onboarding content is most effective when orienting a new-to-role individual toward the organizational-level needs.

Talent management models can be useful in helping apply a systematic approach to diagnosing and resolving organizational issues. HR professionals can work from the talent management model to determine what data is needed and then analyze the data to decide what processes should be adjusted.

² Onboarding and socialization are formally separated from job transition.

Onboarding and socialization often refer to the process that new-to-organization employees engage in to shift from outsiders to insiders (Bauer et al., 2007). However, in practice, job transition—an insider moving to a new role—is often considered a special case of onboarding and socialization.

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Appendix

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATION PROPOSAL

The Operational Supervisor Onboarding Package will ensure that new operational supervisors are effective in meeting operational and organizational goals. Reasoning for this recommended package is provided herein.

Business Driver

Our organization currently exists in an industry with wavering consumer demand and intense competition over market share. Profitability depends on our organization being able to provide accurate customer service that is faster than our competitors and enhances the marketing and distribution of our products. Additionally, our industry is labor intensive, and so frontline leadership is critical to how we conduct our business and interact with our customers. Failing to continually address the need for superior leadership and efficient transactions with our customers will cause an erosion of market share and profitability.

Supporting Data

Our data analysis related to the operational supervisor job led to the following inferences:

- The job description for the operational supervisor job should be revisited and possibly reanalyzed to ensure it accurately portrays the relationship and leadership elements that are specific to our organization.
- Selection rates of operational supervisors have not varied much from 2003 to 2008. Thus, the quality of the operational supervisors has remained similar in the last five years.
- Some hurdles in the current operational supervisor selection system, such as the structured interview, are not providing the expected separation of candidates. These hurdles may need further review.
- On average, newly selected operational supervisors perform equal or better than longer-tenured operational supervisors, as demonstrated by our current performance management system.
- Current operational supervisor training provides operational supervisors with either (a) generalized leadership competency development or (b) tactical skill development. No current training provides operational supervisors the opportunity to develop role clarity, social networks or prioritization schemes that are needed when first beginning the job.

- On average, newer operational supervisors have low levels of satisfaction, and have lower levels of satisfaction than their peers with longer tenure.

Program Recommendation

Findings listed above support the development of a package that will:

- Occur when operational supervisors are transitioning to the job.
- Build awareness of available tools within our organization that are designed to support operational supervisors.
- Provide social network opportunities for operational supervisors who assist in successfully completing the work of the organization.
- Be required of all new operational supervisors.
- Be integrated with other portions of the talent management system, which should be reviewed on a regular basis.
- Change, as needed, based on changes to the job and to our organization.

The strategy recommended in this proposal should improve the consistency of work produced by those in our operational supervisor job. Consequently, organizational performance should also be improved.

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