

RUNNING HEAD: LEADING YOUR TEAM

Leading Your Team:  
A Case Study on Strategies to Improve Employee Performance  
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**Institution**

Azusa Pacific University

A mid-sized Christian University located in Southern California

**Unit**

Office of World Missions- a department of the Institute for Outreach Ministries

**Job Responsibilities**

**Supervisor- Assistant Director of the Office of World Missions**

**Job Responsibilities-**

Direct supervision of Student Coordinators

Co-chair of the Global Vision Week Committee

Oversight of the Global Relief program

Direct supervision of the Global Relief Graduate Assistant

Sits on the Justice Week and Unlearn Week Committees

Manages the budget for personnel and Global Relief

**Supervisee- Student Coordinator (undergraduate) in the Office of World Missions**

**Job Responsibilities-**

Provide clerical assistance to the Global Relief Graduate Assistant

Coordinate and implement a weekly event- Tea Together

Assist in the development & implementation of a semester-long awareness

& fundraising campaign for Global Relief

Participate in Focus International mission trip events & planning as

needed

**Situation**

The Global Relief Graduate Assistant brings to your attention during your weekly one-on-one with her that the Student Coordinator who is working on Global Relief with her is not meeting performance standards. You ask the Graduate Assistant, to give examples and this is what she tells you:

-The weekly Tea Together event happened every week, however, there was only a program put into place by the Student Coordinator one week of the whole semester. The other weeks the Graduate Assistant came up with a plan last minute and/or allowed for the event to just be a “hang out time” for students (which worked out well and met the goals of the event).

-Several times throughout the semester, the Student Coordinator has brought it to the Graduate Assistant’s attention that she has felt unguided in what she should be doing in the office and that she does not feel that she has a role in the office dynamics.

-When given a task to do, the Student Coordinator needs direction above and beyond (from the Graduate Assistants perspective) that of the other Student Coordinators in the office. So much so, that it is affecting the amount of work the Graduate Assistant is able to get done while she is in the office.

-In the final one-on-one between the Student Coordinator and the Graduate Assistant for the fall semester, the Graduate Assistant laid out the expectations for the spring semester. When finished, the Student Coordinator replied, “I know you want to empower me to do all this stuff, but I just don’t feel comfortable doing any of it on my own.”

### **Question**

How do you as the Assistant Director-

Guide the Graduate Assistant in supervising the Student Coordinator?

Supervise the Student Coordinator so she begins to meet expectations?

## **Approach and Specific Strategies**

### **Structural Frame** (Bolman & Deal, 2008)

The first critical piece to leading this team effectively is promoting the Structural Frame which in its purest form would give “clear, well-understood goals, roles, and relationships and adequate coordination” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 46). The importance of the structural frame is also discussed in Tucci’s (2008) article entitled *Effective Leadership in Government*. Tucci discusses how it is critical for leaders to build “unity of purpose” and to create “a compelling vision of the future” (p. 31) in order for employees to grasp onto how their everyday tasks meld into the overall goal of the organization. According to Bolman and Deal, “the structural perspective” also promotes “putting people in the right roles and relationships” (p. 47) within the organization.

The Structural Frame of the Global Relief program is weak and this may be a large contributing factor to the Student Coordinator’s feelings of not fitting into the office dynamics and having to be walked through each task by the Graduate Assistant. The structure of Global Relief is ambiguous by nature, due to the inability to know when and where disasters are going to strike; however, there are parts of the Global Relief program that could be more solid. For example, at the present time the mission statement of the program is still being formulated. A preliminary mission statement was hastily put together last year because one was needed for a publication, but the revised version is still on a piece of paper on the Graduate Assistant’s desk waiting for revision and approval from the Assistant Director. To promote a solid structural frame it is imperative for the mission statement and program goals to be set into place so programs, events, and campaigns can be created that are aimed at fulfilling the mission and goals.

**Suggestions for the Assistant Director:**

Revise and finalize the mission statement and goals for the Global Relief program with input from the Graduate Assistant.

Have the Graduate Assistant coordinate a meeting of those who will be part of the day to day functioning of the Global Relief program so the mission and goals can be formally shared.

Have the Graduate Assistant and the Student Coordinator work together to see how the current and/or proposed programs, events, and campaigns fit into the mission and goals of the program. If programs, events or campaigns do not fit into the mission and goals, re-evaluate to see if they can be redesigned easily to fit into the structure of the program or if they need to be ended.

Evaluate if the Student Coordinator assigned to work with the Global Relief program is the best fit. If the Student Coordinator's passions and talents are better aligned with other opportunities within the office, than perhaps she could be assigned to another program within the office. If the Student Coordinator's passions and talents do seem aligned with Global Relief it is important to keep her focused on the overall vision of the program so she can see how her job is critical to the overall functioning and success of the program.

**Human Resource Frame** (Bolman & Deal, 2008)**Recognition**

Goldsmith (2008) discusses the idea of improving employee performance by implementing recognition into a leader's repertoire of skills. According to the article, employee recognition "is more than plaques and service awards" (par 3). Recognition is about the employee feeling they are "visible" (par 3) to their supervisors and valued for their contributions

(par 4). Providing more recognition to the Student Coordinator could be a key element to improving her performance on the job.

At the present time the Student Coordinator (works 11 hours a week) and the Graduate Assistant (works 15 hours a week) are only in the office together about 3 hours a week. Those 3 hours are usually spent prepping, implementing, and cleaning up the weekly Tea Together program. This limited amount of time together does not promote the visibility of the Student Coordinator to her supervisor. Due to dynamics within the office (the Assistant Director likes things done a certain way and is not always open to suggestions) and the nature of Global Relief (being a program that needs a lot of creativity and vision), it is also very likely that the Student Coordinator does not feel her contributions to the Global Relief program are valued.

#### **Suggestions for the Assistant Director:**

Mandate the Graduate Assistant to have an overlapping schedule with the Student Coordinator for a minimum of 6 hours a week (preferably more).

Have a weekly meeting with all the Student Coordinators. Have them share the tasks and projects they are working on. This will allow for all the Student Coordinators to have a grasp of the bigger picture of what is going on in the Office of World Missions and will also allow each employee to feel their contributions to the office are visible.

Be more open to the ideas and thoughts the Student Coordinator offers towards the vision and direction of the Global Relief program. Though the ideas do not need to be implemented as presented by the Student Coordinator, finding ways to incorporate their ideas into the program would help them feel that their contribution is being recognized.

#### **Inspiration**

Gallo's (2008) article gives the following suggestions for using inspiration in the workplace to promote effectiveness: "exude passion" (par 2), "have a clear, concise vision" (par 3), "sell the benefit" (par 4), "paint pictures" (par 5), invite participation (par 6), "radiate optimism" (par 7) and "encourage potential" (par 8). All of these are critical pieces to bring inspiration to a situation and several of these themes can be found in books written about leadership. For example, painting pictures could be equated to the idea of telling stories that is presented in *Leading with Soul* by Bolman and Deal (2001) or the idea of vision that was discussed earlier in this paper that was presented as a structural framework from Bolman and Deal's (2008) *Reframing Organizations*. If a leader is not excited about the organization, how can the employees be expected to be inspired to take part in "menial" tasks that contribute to the overall vision of the institution?

In the present situation in the Office of World Missions, the vision is there but it has not been shared in an inspirational way with the Student Coordinator. Part of the reason the vision has not been shared in this manner is because, as stated previously, the mission and goals for the program have not been solidified. The Graduate Assistant also needs to take part in this inspiration by being optimistic and painting clearer pictures for the Student Coordinator. At the present time, the Graduate Assistant and the Assistant Director are effectively inviting the participation of the Student Coordinator into the process and encouraging her potential.

**Suggestions for the Assistant Director:**

Finalize the mission statement and goals for Global Relief. Once they are finalized, have a meeting with the Graduate Assistant and the Student Coordinator to share the mission and goals, with the goal of providing inspiration. It could also be beneficial to have a

meeting with the entirety of the office staff, so the vision can be cast and the work of those involved in the Global Relief program can be highlighted.

Encourage the Graduate Assistant to write down all her thoughts and ideas about the Global Relief program and share them with the Student Coordinator. Creating a free-flow of thoughts could provide a clearer picture of where the program is headed while allowing the Student Coordinator to speak into the program.

### **Conclusion**

This employee's inability to meet performance expectations is rectifiable. All those involved in the Student Coordinator's work environment need to focus on creating a well defined and safe space for her to work. By taking the suggestions into account, the remainder of the year should see a higher level of performance from the Student Coordinator.



## References

- Bolman, L., & Deal, T. (2001). *Leading with soul: An uncommon journey of spirit.*(New & Revised Ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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- Goldsmith, M. (2008). Improve employee performance with improve. *Business' Week Online*, 11/24/2008, Careers, p. 24. Retrieved December 13, 2008, from Academic Search Premier database.
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