

What should Regan do?

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ABSTRACT

The case study looks at Regan's job history and life. He is at a crossroad, trying to decide between two jobs. One provides him with recognition, status and power but is stressful and is affecting his personal life. The other will be easier on his personal life but has very little future potential. His decision will be based upon his personality, individual motives, job environment and ability to handle stress. The case enables the students to discuss the concepts of motivation, personality, decision making and stress management.

Keywords: Personality, Motivation, Quality of Work Life, Decision making, Stress



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CASE OBJECTIVES

This case study will enable students to develop and display a mastery of organizational behavior concepts. The specific concepts covered in it are:

1. Individual Motivation
2. Personality and Positive Behavior
3. Stress in the workplace
4. Decision making

Audience

This case will be suitable for undergraduate business students in Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior courses, and can be used to reinforce or test the knowledge of the above mentioned concepts learned in these courses.

CASE STUDY

Ben had just met Regan, the Chef at Tabala, while eating lunch there. Ben was looking to hire a Chef for a new restaurant to be opened soon and was impressed by Regan's experience in cooking variety of Asian and European cuisine. Regan seemed to be a charming and hardworking Chef with a passion for food. He seemed to be well respected by the kitchen staff and was equally friendly with the waiters and customers. When Ben suggested another meeting someplace else to discuss the new opportunity, Regan seemed willing. At this subsequent get-together Ben found out a lot about Regan.

Regan had started working in a restaurant when he was 16 years old. His first job was as a dishwasher, but he was smart and motivated. The owner, Vila, liked his sincerity, enthusiasm for learning and the way he worked relentlessly. Regan had lost his father at an early age and since his mother could not handle his teenage rebellion and constantly getting into trouble, he was being brought up in Portugal by his Aunt, thousands of miles away from his own family in India. When Vila took him under his wing, teaching him the tricks of trade, he started viewing Vila as his adopted father, looking up to him and wanting to be like him. Soon Regan became a line cook and then a Chef as his experience increased. He became well conversed in European, Asian and Indian cooking, moving from Portugal to Italy, then China and finally India for Vila's ever growing international hotel and restaurant chain. Though he kept in touch with his family, he was too busy to visit them and they could not afford to visit him often.

Unfortunately, when Regan turned 32, Vila fell sick and passed away, devastating the young emotionally attached Regan. Moreover, Vila's own children inherited the hotel chain and restaurants. Even though the heirs did not fire him, Regan found himself feeling like an orphan again. He moved to New York to start all over again.

Without a visa to work legally in United States, he found himself working for an ethnic Indian restaurant for a low salary being paid in cash. It barely met his needs, but he had no

alternative. Then one day, he met his future wife. Laurie was a recovering drug addict, but she needed Regan and Regan needed her. They married and soon after had a beautiful baby boy. His life was turning around. He was happy and fulfilled. When he got his U.S. citizenship, he applied for a better job with a better life style. A well established hotel chain gave him an attractive opportunity to work as a Housekeeping director in a Midwest City. He moved with his family and started enjoying a more comfortable life.

But he was young and ambitious. When a year after, he received an offer from a small business owner, Sam. to help him start and manage a number of ethnic restaurants at a higher salary with a promise of future partnership, he could not refuse. He became a very busy Executive Chef, managing three kitchens located in different parts of the metro. He enjoyed bossing around 45 employees, most of whom were illegal immigrants. They all looked up to him for guidance and help in their daily work and personal lives. He felt like their savior and took on the role of a mentor. He was the link between the boss and the employees. If “his” people had any problems, he would solve these problems.

However, this continued involvement and long working hours took a toll on his personal life. His wife, Laurie, felt neglected as he spent a lot of his time at work. Even when he was at home, he took calls from his boss and employees, sometimes related to work and sometimes related to personal issues they were facing. Laurie was getting estranged and was ready to walk out on him taking his four year old son, John, with her. Regan found his life falling apart. He had high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and found himself turning to alcohol for respite. He started losing patience and throwing anger tantrums due to frustration. When he approached his boss for the long due promotion, he got an assurance that it will happen someday soon, with no definite answer.

When Ben offered him a job of Chef in a new restaurant for just a 10% cut in salary, he jumped at the chance. Instead of working 18 hours a day seven days a week he would be working only 10 hours a day, 5 days a week. By relocating to a small town, which was about 80 miles from the metro, he will be commuting every day only 7 minutes to work in the new job versus an hour every day and more during the day when presently, he has to take care of three restaurants miles away in different counties. This new job will give him more time to spend with his son, even if his wife did not seem to want to reconcile. Moreover, he will not have to deal with illegal immigrants and constant threat of INS immigration raids. The job will be somewhat of a demotion. He will have only 6 employees to supervise, with him becoming the main Chef and Cook with only a couple of assistants in the kitchen. The promotion opportunities will be limited in the near future, but the job will be less stressful. The decision required careful consideration. Regan wanted time to think but Ben wanted the answer within a week.

TEACHING NOTE

Case Summary

The case study looks at Regan’s job history and life. In the twenty years he has spent working Regan has accumulated many years of experience as a Chef and specializes in European and Asian cuisine. He has moved from restaurant to restaurant around the world as life events dictated. He is at a crossroad again, trying to decide between two jobs. One provides him with recognition, status and power but is stressful and is affecting his personal life. The other will be easier on his personal life but at present has very little future potential. His decision to switch jobs will be based upon his individual motives, personality, and ability to handle stress.

Teaching Suggestions

The case can be used as a recurring case for the unit “Individual Behavior” in Organizational Behavior course, or as an integrated case at the end of the unit. It can also be used in the Principles of Management class to discuss any of the following topics with the specific questions related to that topic. The case can also be utilized as a “practice” case as the relevant topics are discussed.

The students’ mastery of the concepts can be tested through their participation in an oral or a written discussion as applied to the case. It can be given as an individual or group assignment for homework or classwork.

Suggested Case Discussion Questions and Answers:

Personality

1. What personality traits does Regan have? Does he have the traits that can translate to successful performance in his new job?

Personality refers to the unique qualities of an individual. Regan exhibits some of the “Big Five” Personality traits (Digman, 1990), specifically, Conscientiousness, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Extroversion. He has worked hard throughout his life. He is reputed to be friendly to employees and customers. He is willing to learn new things, as demonstrated by his learning of different cuisines and different roles he has under taken in his jobs from being a dishwasher to chef to housekeeping to management of kitchen. His anger management and stress management is not up to par, leading to the conclusion, that he may have to work on his Emotional stability.

Regan seems to have high Self-efficacy since he has been successful in all his jobs. He is respected by his employees and colleagues. He has not had any problems finding good jobs with good pay. However, his present family problems may be affecting his Self-esteem. Regan also seems to have Optimism and Resilience. His childhood and young adulthood has been difficult,

but he has managed to keep a positive outlook and overcome adversity and build opportunities for himself until now.

Research indicates that people with the Big Five personality traits and Positive Psychology have better performance at job and in life (Witt et al., 2002; Barrick et al., 1998). If Regan works on his weaknesses, there is no reason why he cannot be successful in his new job.

Motivation and Performance

2. What needs seem to have motivated Regan throughout his life? Explain using the Content theories.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), Alderfer's ERG needs theory (1969) and McClelland's Three Growth Needs theory (1978), Regan seems to have a very dominant Love need, Relatedness need and Need for Affiliation respectively. His childhood experiences made him look up to Vila as a father, and he did everything to make Vila proud of him. In New York he got attached to his wife, Laurie, in spite of her problems, because she needed his support and he needed to be loved. He wanted a better job to fulfil his responsibilities towards his family. There may also have been the influence of Esteem needs at this point. However, he became a mentor for the illegal immigrant employees because they satisfied his need to be needed and loved. They also satisfied his Esteem need and need for Power. He is frustrated with his job because he does not have enough time to bond with his son and give attention to his wife. It is possible that the need for love and affiliation may influence his decision to choose the job that may provide for these needs more than the need for Self-esteem and other Growth needs.

3. Using Herzberg's theory and Quality of Work Life concept, explain what Sam can provide Regan to keep him from leaving his ethnic restaurants, Tabala.

Herzberg's Two Factor theory (1964) would have provided Sam with ideas of how to prevent Regan from leaving by providing him with a good job environment such as, fair wages, a good physical work environment such as reduction of work hours and more breaks, two way trust and communication; all of which seem to be presently questionable and missing from the work environment. Is he getting enough compensation for working overtime? Is Sam communicating with him regularly about his job satisfaction? Regan definitely feels overworked and not rewarded enough. His motivation is also being affected due to his perception of not being appreciated.

Quality of Work Life (Sirgy et al., 2001) takes into consideration satisfaction of needs, satisfactory job content and environment and fair treatment of employees, where they have a chance to develop and grow in addition to a balance of work and personal life. Sam has to provide Regan an opportunity to repair his personal life and help him with stress and anger management before he has a complete breakdown.

Stress Management

4. What are the different kinds of stressors dominating his present job situation? What has been the effect of these stressors on him?

There are four different categories of stressors, extra organizational, organizational, group and individual (Luthans, 2011). Regan has all kinds of stressors in this job. He is affected by the breakdown of his marriage and INS raids which are the extra organizational stressors. Organizational stressors are overload of work which includes managing three different locations and driving for hours in the city and also his relationship and lack of communication with Sam. Group stressor is having to solve his employees and co-workers problems. His own needs and emotions and inability to manage them are the Individual stressors.

All these stressors have led to manifestation of physical problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol; psychological problems such as frustration and anger, and behavioral issues such as tantrums, alcoholism and losing patience.

5. If Regan decides to stay in his present job, how can he deal with his stress and improve his personal life?

Regan has to first understand the stressors in his life and then manage these stressors. There are four ways to deal with stress- avoid stressors, alter the stressors, adapt to the stressors, and accept the stressors (Smith, 2014). Regan could take the following steps:

A: Avoid unnecessary stress

He has to learn how to say “no”. He should discuss his work load with Sam and ask him for an assistant. He should also avoid people who stress him out. He can set aside a special time for his family and for his employees to listen to any grievances. He has to take control of his environment, by paring down his to-do list by delegating work.

B: Alter the situation

He has to learn to express his feelings in a positive way instead of bottling them up or getting angry. He should talk to his boss, talk to his wife and go to a behavioral therapist to help with some of the issues. When dealing with employees he should try to be more patient.

He also should be willing to compromise. He has to set time for his wife and child, and give them priority over his employees’ personal problems.

He has to learn to manage his time better. He should spend a few minutes planning so as to avoid day to day trouble shooting. While driving from one place to another, he could listen to relaxing music and self-help tapes.

C: Adapt to the stressor

He has to be optimistic, and reset his priorities by looking at the big picture and what his needs are.

D: Accept the things that can't be changed

He should try not to control the uncontrollable, such as his spouse's feelings.

E: Make time for fun and relaxation

He has to set aside relaxation time and reconnect with his family. He also has to learn to keep his sense of humor. This is possible by adopting a healthy lifestyle. He can do this by exercising regularly, maybe with his family members. He should eat a healthy diet, reduce caffeine and sugar, avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs and get enough sleep.

Decision making

6. What are the factors influencing Regan's decision making process? What are the barriers to rational decision making that exist in this situation?

The factors influencing any individual decision making and causing barriers to decision making can be categorized under organizational barriers and individual barriers (Bazerman, 1994; Simon, 1957).

Organizational barriers and influences in Regan's case will be lack of information: not knowing if Sam will give him a promotion or reduce his work load or provide resource support. He is also being pressured by Ben to make a decision within a week, which may not be enough time to gather all the information needed to make a good decision.

Individual barriers will include his inability to weigh options objectively, because of his emotions. His perceptions may be biased due to his commitment to his family, his boss and his employees.

7. What should Regan do about the new job offer? Evaluate all the pros and cons.

The students may have different conclusions to this question. It is, however, important to evaluate the pros and cons of each alternative.

Stay at present job:

Pros:

- a. Higher level job with more authority, power and responsibilities. Job content is enriched.
- b. Better pay

- c. Incentive for future growth
- d. Lives with family
- e. Needed by employees

Cons:

- a. Stress due to overload of work
- b. Bad health
- c. No time for family
- d. Illegal aspects of job which could lead to problems- immigrants with no work visa
- e. Sam may rescind from his promises of promotion

Join with Ben

Pros:

- a. Stress free environment- away from most stressors
- b. Chance to recuperate and take care of health
- c. A job that still utilizes his skills and knowledge and gives authority and responsibility
- d. Chance to deal with personal issues, and spend time with family on weekends

Cons:

- a. Away from family unless they relocate with him
- b. Future growth in job uncertain
- c. Less salary
- d. Less people to boss around, may lead to doing more work himself

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