

Sick Leave Case

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Introduction

Sick Leave Case involves a cultural difference conflict between Higashi, a supervisor for the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program employees, and the employees who come from different countries. The cultural differences and practices between the western countries and Japanese come to the limelight from the altercation that happens between the leader and the employees. Kelly from Canada, Suzanne from Great Britain, and Andrea from America were involved in the conflict with the supervisor (Turek, 2006). There usually exist cultural communication problems between people from different cultures. Working relations may be disrupted by such differences, and thus, there is a need for management of organizations and employees to find a compromise on the issues arising from the case.

Dispute for Kelly and Higashi

Upon placement in the program, Kelly first appreciates the role of Higashi in the organization as he helps the recruits fit in their jobs and feel comfortable in the new country. Higashi helps the three foreigners in being settled by facilitating their travel from the airport and shopping for necessities. The three foreigners viewed the supervisor as a father who was helping them with almost every aspect of the job they were doing. However, conflicts start to arise because of the cultural differences between the Western organizational practices and the Japanese practices. It was evident that the foreigners followed a bureaucratic working practice by arriving at their job stations at the specific time stated in the contract and left early. Additionally, the foreigners found it necessary to take time off during the weekend, a practice that other Japanese employees found unnecessary. The three foreigners found it absurd that the Japanese

employees were showing more loyalty to the company by staying in the office late and coming to work on Saturdays.

Higashi started having a conflict with the employees for their lack of knowledge in the Japanese culture. He would continually encourage Kelly to participate in activities that Kelly found to be gender sensitive, a practice that is different from those of the Western world. Another source of conflict for Kelly is the lack of interest in the activities that Higashi was suggesting and encouraging the foreigners to learn. Kelly realized the male domination of the Japanese organizations and found that there were no Japanese women who had been promoted to higher levels of management in the board of education. The distinct cultural difference between the organizational culture in the Western organizations and the Japanese practices worked to increase the dispute between the employees and the management of the organizations.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to enhance understanding of the three employees to the life in the new country. However, Kelly got into a dispute with Higashi because he was not ready to give them correct information related to their problems. He would either ignore their questions or provide incorrect information. In this perspective, it was clear that Higashi loathed the foreign employees. Higashi was not able to create an understanding with the foreigners because he viewed them as short-term contract employees who would later return to their countries. The three foreigners felt that the supervisor was not ready to help them with issues and started going to the office woman for assistance. The male chauvinism of Higashi was another source of conflict since he would always arrange conferences and projects for the participants and later cancel them without bothering to inform them. In this context, Higashi lacked communication with the lower level employees making it hard for working relationship to be established. Higashi also has a dispute with the employees because of their disloyalty to the

organization. The conflict arises when the three employees are asked to sign a sick leave as a vacation to their displeasure. Since a sick leave is a paid leave, they found it inappropriate to ask them to give up their vacation because they felt sick. Higashi was skeptical of the three employees getting sick at the same time. When management in an organization starts having distrust to the employees, it may lead to communication and working relations breakdown. Further, cultural problems emanate from the fact that Higashi and other organizational employees do not have similar interests.

The two disputing parties can reach a compromise through enhancement of the understanding of the cultural differences. When people in an organization have cultural differences, the first step should be ensuring there is understanding of how the differences are likely to affect work relationship and work towards finding a solution. Communication is important in any organization since it helps management to solve issues (Hopkins, 2016). Additionally, the supervisor and the employees should have open consultations on different issues to ensure that they can find lasting solutions.

Communication between Cultures

Communication between cultures is important in any negotiation. Lack of communication between Higashi and the employees on different issues is only aggravating the problems. For instance, when Higashi gives incorrect information, the employees feel cheated, and distrust starts to build. Kelly feels exasperated upon realizing that he is signing a vacation form instead of sick leave, which he had taken. In this perspective, without open and honest communication, there cannot be easy solutions to the problems facing an organization. Communication across cultures may become a challenge when the organizational cultures are

different the parties have a misunderstanding on the steps the organization should take to solve issues (Hopkins, 2016).

Tangible and Intangible Factors in the Situation

There are tangible and intangible factors in the negotiation between the employees and Higashi related to the cultural differences in the organization. One of the tangible factors is the failure by Higashi to communicate to the employees on different topics that touch on their work. For instance, Kelly realizes that Higashi has been dishonest in communication on different issues relating to their life in Japan. Additionally, when the employees take sick leave, the accountant presents a vacation leave forms without finding it necessary to communicate. If the terms of the contract have been changed, there is a necessity for the management to engage the employees and find a solution that fits into the Western culture (Turek, 2006). The contract should be the basis of working relationship. Additionally, the act of organizing conferences and later changing without communicating with the employees is an intangible issue that the management and employees should engage one another to solve.

The intangible factors in the organization are the most important to the employees and the management since they determine the ability of the organization to create a working relationship. With the male dominance in the Japanese organizations, it is very hard for the employees to fit in the organization without honesty and open communication between the parties (Hopkins, 2016).

References

Hopkins, B. (2016). *Cultural Differences and Improving Performance: How Values and Beliefs Influence Organizational Performance*. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Turek, L. (2006). Sick Leave. *Case 8*.

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