Chapter 12

Case Incident 1: Sharing Is Performing

Replacing Nicholas Dirks as the chancellor of University of California at Berkeley, Carol T. Christ is taking on a strategy that her predecessors did not utilize: sharing leadership. Notably, the prior chancellor and provost would not consult other decision makers and stakeholders at the university when they proposed to dissolve completely the College of Chemistry. Christ, on the other hand, met with Frances McGinley, the student vice president of academic affairs, reaching out to “get a beat on what [student government] was doing and how [she] could help.” This move was unusual because McGinley would often have to track down the other administrators to even get a meeting (or would be merely delegated work). Another such arrangement between Jill Martin and David Barrs at a high school in Essex, England, designates special interest areas where each takes the lead, and they both share an educational philosophy, meet daily, have the authority to make decisions on the spot, and challenge one another.

As Declan Fitzsimons suggests in a *Harvard Business Review* article, the twenty-first century moves too quickly and is too dynamic to be handled by one person. By sharing leadership among multiple individuals, the organization can respond more adaptively to challenges, share disparate but complementary perspectives, and ease the burden experienced by the traditional charismatic leader figurehead. However, sharing leadership leads to its own issues and obstacles, which are apparent in the multiple relationships between team members, subordinates, and other employees. Not only do individual identities become involved, but so do collective identities shared as a group. It is also important to recognize that shared leadership is not about delegation but about putting in effort to coordinate and collaborate, along with balancing individual and collective goals.

Recent reviews of the research on shared leadership suggest that, overall, shared leadership is effective at improving team performance, attitudes, and behaviors, especially when the leadership is transformational or charismatic and when the team tasks are complex.

Questions

1. 12-13. What kind of obstacles can you foresee in taking a shared leadership approach? How might they (or can they) be solved?
2. 12-14. How would you implement a shared leadership initiative in a company where you were the CEO? What elements of job design and redesign might you draw on to increase the effectiveness of the shared leadership initiative?
3. 12-15. Can you think of any instances in which nonshared, traditional approaches to leadership would be preferable to a shared leadership approach? What are they, and how are they preferable? What sort of situational or individual factors lead to the traditional approach being more effective in these instances?

# Chapter 15

# Case Incident 2: Turbulence on United Airlines

The beginning of 2017 was not good for United Airlines. Several incidents involving United Airlines personnel enforcing a variety of rules, regulations, and protocols in employees’ interactions with customers caused international outcry. The first incident involved two teenagers who were wearing leggings for their flight from Minneapolis to Denver. They were stopped by the gate agent and not allowed to board for violating the United Airlines travel perk program. These travel perk passes hinge on a requirement for users of the passes to dress themselves so that the airline is presented in a favorable light. United defended its decision via Twitter: “Leggings are not inappropriate attire except in the case of someone traveling as a pass rider.” Comedian Seth Rogan tweeted, “We here at @United are just trying to police the attire of the daughters of our employees! That’s all! Cool, right?”

A second, more severe incident occurred when David Dao, a doctor who needed to see his patients the following morning, was aboard a Louisville-bound flight from Chicago in April. Four United employees needed to get to Louisville at the last minute, and it was announced that four people needed to give up their seats or else the flight would be cancelled. Attendants called the police after no one complied. The police approached Dao and forcibly removed him from the plane. Dao suffered a broken nose and concussion after his head smashed into an armrest. United policy allowed for the involuntary removal of passengers from flights, although this time United was not as defensive. Dao later filed a lawsuit against United for its actions.

A third incident, in Houston, involved a soon-to-be-married couple, Michael and Amber, headed to Costa Rica for their wedding. When they entered the plane, they noticed a man sleeping in the row where their seats were assigned. Instead of disturbing him, they found some seats three rows up and sat there instead. They were soon asked by an attendant to return to their seats and they complied. A U.S. marshall approached them soon after and ejected them from the plane. According to United statements, the couple “repeatedly” tried to sit in upgraded seats and would not follow the instructions of the attendants and crew members, and, as such, they were within their power to eject the passengers.

These incidents suggest that, starting with the structure as created by the CEO, United employees do not have much latitude or flexibility when dealing with day-to-day policy breaches. Taking cost-minimization and efficiency-boosting strategies to the extreme may also have had an effect given that the focus drifted from the customer and toward rule following. Many attribute this inflexibility to the strict, rule-following bureaucracy created by United managers. In this bureaucracy, their 85,000 employees may be reluctant to deviate from the rules—intracompany historical precedent suggests that many employees face termination if they break the rules.

# Questions

1. 15-13. How do you think United Airlines should have handled the recent string of incidents? Do you think that United Airlines was within its power to have removed these people from the flights? Why or why not?
2. 15-14. What are the pros and cons of having a bureaucratic organizational structure for an airline? Do you think the pros and cons are justified for United Airlines and that they should keep the structure they have? Why or why not?
3. 15-15. What do you think United Airlines should do in the future? Do you have any suggestions for enhancements or improvements to the United Airlines organizational structure? Would you consider restructuring? Why or why not?

# Chapter 16

# Case Incident 2: Active Cultures

Employees at many successful companies start the day by checking the economic forecast. Patagonia’s Ventura, California, employees start the day by checking the surf forecast. The outdoor clothing company encourages its workforce to take time from the workday to get outside and get active. For Patagonia, linking employees with the natural environment is a major part of the culture.

New hires are introduced to this mindset very quickly. Soon after starting at Patagonia, marketing executive Joy Howard was immediately encouraged to go fly fishing, surfing, and rock climbing all around the world. She notes that all this vacationing is not just playing around—it’s an important part of her job. “I needed to be familiar with the products we market,” she said. Other practices support this outdoors-oriented, healthy culture. The company has an on-site organic café featuring locally grown produce. Employees at all levels are encouraged through an employee discount program to try out activewear in the field. And highly flexible hours ensure that employees feel free to take the occasional afternoon off to catch the waves or get out of town for a weekend hiking trip.

Are there bottom-line benefits to this organizational culture? Some corporate leaders think so. As Neil Blumenthal, one of the founders of Warby Parker eyewear, observes, “[T]hey’ve shown that you can build a profitable business while thinking about the environment and thinking about your team and community.” As Patagonia CEO Rose Marcario says, “People recognize Patagonia as a company that’s … looking at business through a more holistic lens other than profit.” However, she is quick to add, “Profit is important; if it wasn’t you wouldn’t be talking to me.”

Patagonia’s culture obviously makes for an ideal workplace for some people—but not for others who don’t share its values. People who are just not outdoor types would likely feel excluded. While the unique mission and values of Patagonia may not be for everyone, for its specific niche in the product and employment market, the culture fits like a glove.

# Questions

1. 16-16. What do you think are the key dimensions of culture that make Patagonia successful? How does the organization help to foster this culture?
2. 16-17. Does Patagonia use strategies to build its culture that you think could work for other companies? Is the company a useful model for others that aren’t so tied to a lifestyle? Why or why not?
3. 16-18. What are the drawbacks of Patagonia’s culture? Might it sometimes be a liability and, if so, in what situations?