

## Case Memo 3: “Upwardly Global...”

In January 2000 the Upwardly Global organization helped change the way that refugees and asylees were introduced into the United States’ job market. A person by the name of Jane Leu took it upon herself to develop this organization because she felt that these types of immigrants were being ill served by the current programs, which strived to help them with job placement.

Essentially, most of the previous programs and voluntary agencies worked to find refugees as many jobs as possible. Public funding for organizations, like the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), where Leu worked between 1997 and 1999, depended more on how quickly jobs were found and less on the compatibility between the positions and the job candidates. This was also the case with private organizations that provided similar services. There was more incentive for staff members in these for-profit companies to achieve high rates of job placement, which gave them opportunities for added bonuses. Neither of these organizations took into account the high-skill or professional worker type who had potential for higher-level positions. As a result, these types of groups were “under-employed,” being sent to the same level jobs as any other less-qualified individual. It took Jane Leu, a motivated leader with a clear vision, to create a public service that could find a different way to treat the more professional worker.

The issues in this case are the nonfunctioning work structure and/or design, the need for a capable and intelligent leader, the question whether to change systemic goals, and the ability to problem solve. The leader in this case was Jane Leu and she helped spark the changes that were necessary in this system. However, initially the decision on how to act was not so clear.

With LIRS, Leu questioned whether her services, as a public servant, should go beyond the responsibility of simply finding jobs for refugees promptly. She asked herself this question

because she wanted to understand whether this system was operating correctly, and ultimately if the goals matched her own. Eggers & Goldsmith (2004) note the importance of strategizing and asking appropriate questions in order to realize the most prudent course of actions. The case did not specify the organizations' specific goals, but it did explain that the infrastructure of both of these public and private organizations did not serve professional refugees well. It was a stagnant system in this regard and Leu wanted more. Bolman & Deal (2003) note that organizational change can occur as a result of leadership change or pressure. Leu was an emerging leader on this issue and, ultimately, she made an important recommendation to make a change and create a new system.

According to Kettle (2002), based on the Principal-Agent theory, the outcome of an organization's work stems from the initial contract between the employer and employee. For example, it was well understood that if the public or private organization wanted funding or profit, they would have to succeed in high rates of job placement. This contract did not entail any reward for the staff if they found more appropriate or fitting job placements. In the eyes of Jane Leu, as a result of this poor contract or structure, the public was being underserved.

There is somewhat of an ethical dilemma that Leu was faced with here. It took some deep analysis for her to realize whether to act on her sudden desire for change. According to Svara (2007) it takes courage for a person to step up and act on what they feel is right. However, they also have to be a good problem-solver because the right thing to do is not always clear (Svara, 2007). Svara (2007) emphasizes the ability to see and understand other options. Leu was an intelligent enough person to envision alternatives to the current system, while courageous enough to act.

References

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