

CASE EXERCISE BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

A GO-GETTER IN DOD (CR15-04-1747.0)

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

OBJECTIVE:

- Introduce entrepreneurship as a way for a small bureaucracy to more effectively serve its customer base in light of the often sluggish ways that are presently perceived.
- Apply concepts from Sorensen and Kallman & Maric readings to explain the shortcomings of entrepreneurship and propose solutions to these shortcomings.

CONTEXT:

- The mid and late 1990s were host to a new spirit of government led by Clinton and Gore. Popular phrases during this time were “reinvention,” “customer service,” and “entrepreneurial government.”
- The Office of Humanitarian Assistance, or HA, is a small federal agency at the end of the line to receive excess Department of Defense property due to procedural requirements.
- Pierce and Minor resort to their own resourcefulness and connections to circumvent established procedures and secure top pick in equipment and supplies for HA’s customers.
- After Pierce leaves, Minor continues this work, as complaints about procedural oversights from Congress and item delivery from customers begin to amass. The new HA head, Milano, must decide whether or not to keep Minor, as his behavior is risky but he delivers results.

APPLICATION OF THEORY/METHODOLOGY/READINGS:

- Sorensen’s finding that smaller, less bureaucratic organizations tend to foster entrepreneurial activity is exemplified by the emergence of Pierce’s entrepreneurial spirit within the small HA. An immediate work environment of red tape would not have allowed Pierce and Minor to bend rules and innovate.
- Bozeman and Kingsley, however, mention common concerns about public employees engaging in entrepreneurship – the undermining of democratic, legal and structural controls, in particular.
- Kallman and Maric’s refined risk management paradigm can be used to elaborate on the shortcomings of Pierce and Minor’s entrepreneurial style. While they deliver results, their style is not communicated to others, so it cannot be replicated, and it lacks accountability. This paradigm offers a way to better manage a risky program or activity.

PROPOSED “WAY AHEAD”:

- Establish written procedures to be used by HA for risk analysis per Kallman and Maric’s Refined Risk Management Paradigm.
- Create and implement a system administration program that involves monitoring, judging and communicating to provide cyclical feedback and assessment of activities.

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CASE EXERCISE SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

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CLASS DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS:

- Debate on the burden of responsibility had Minor's entrepreneurial style failed. Although his style was risky, he was not given clear goals, aside from obtaining supplies for HA customers.
- Discussion on whether Minor could still be effective if the Refined Risk Management Paradigm were used to add structure and procedures to HA operations. After all, his entrepreneurial spirit emerged precisely because there were no bureaucratic layers to overcome.

CONCLUSIONS:

- Agreed that Pierce and Minor's style brought results for customers, but their lack of accountability put HA at organizational risk. Minor was able to behave in a cavalier manner because he assumed little individual risk, given his high rank and the fact that he was not officially an HA employee.
- Agreed that the Refined Risk Management Paradigm is useful in highlighting the weaknesses of Pierce and Minor's style, but a thorough understanding of the problem can be attained through the exploration of visioning and leadership, which can be used to minimize organizational risk.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS:

- Organize a leadership training session for the new HA head Milano during which she learns to set clear goals for employees and to encourage innovation while stressing the importance of accountability in all HA operations.
- Use Kallman and Maric's Refined Risk Management Paradigm to establish written procedures for risk analysis and the implementation of a system administration program.