

A Case study of Leadership: How Do I Lead Them?

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Entering the Legal department, Mr. Hairul takes a look at his staffs. Some of them were talking over the phone, trying to explain about something to the person at the other side. Some of them had constantly put their heads down with frown on the forehead trying to understand the documents in their hands. Some of them conducted a small discussion at the discussion area near the entrance to discuss urgent matters that need their attention. "All of them are working very hard, but what have gone wrong?" he muttered softly. Earlier today, the management had an emergency meeting. All of the head of departments were called to attend a meeting with the presence of all superiors including the Executive Directors. Usual meeting will only be held with the presence of Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operation Officer. A meeting with Executive Director must be very urgent and important. "I am sorry that I had to call all of you for an urgent meeting today" the Executive Director, Haji Kamarul breaking the silent atmosphere. "I had been received complaints from our agents about their delayed drafted documents. All of you must aware that I have direct access to our agents. Thus, these kinds of complaints will be directly reached me from the agents themselves. Look, imagine our organization is a cruise ship. As an Executive Director, my responsibility is to decide what route we should take in order for the ship to arrive safely and also anticipate any opportunities or challenges that may come in our way. I don't know what happened in the engine room. Our CEO and COO are the leader in the engine room.

All of the crew must play their roles and also know the roles of others in order to make the engine room completely functional. If one crew in the engine room decided to put a screw in the fuel tank, that's it. We are doomed. Even how good the captain sail the ship, we will end up like Titanic. Thus, we should keep up with our standard. Our deliverable should be brushed up to increase our speed. When we first started, our advantage is our speedy deliverable. As we grow I can see that we started to lose that competitive advantage." Leaving the meeting room, Mr. Hairul felt responsible for what had happened to the organization. The efficiency in Legal department had been pointed as the root cause of the problem. This is because document drafting is the job scope of the department.

Looking at Haji Kamarul who was so worried about the operation make him even guilty. Mr. Hairul had started his career in Urus Harta Sdn Bhd since he graduated. His lecturer, Dr. Norliza proposed him to Haji Kamarul as Dr. Norliza and Haji Kamarul are acquaintances. Starting from being a Legal clerk, now, he is the head of department leading around 12 staffs under him. He determined to prove to Haji Kamarul that he is capable in leading and managing the department.

Background of the employees.

When Mr. Hairul started his career in Urus Harta Sdn Bhd, he is just a normal graduate who has zero experience in dealing with real case situation. He started working with a lawyer who is also the staff of Urus Harta Berhad. His job scope back then is to draft documents. However, his job is much easier compared to now since there were only few products available. With his tremendous achievement, he had been promoted to the higher level and now he is the head of department of Legal department. He used to be very introvert and not socialize much. But being a leader he needs to be extrovert and have the ability to interact with people especially his staffs. Being the head of the department, he is the middle management within the management and his staffs. Thus, he must be able to communicate to convey what the management wants to achieve and disseminate the information to his staffs. As an introvert when he first started his career, he had developed and improved so quickly and able to gain trust from the management to lead a department.

In Legal department, the background of the employees has some similarities. Due to the nature of the work to draft a legally binding documents, the talents that been absorbed must adequate themselves with the minimum understanding of law and legal background. Thus, most of the employees have a law background and comes from Law and Shariah faculty from universities all over Malaysia. Years ago, Urus Harta Sdn Bhd signed a memorandum with the faculty of Shariah from UKM. This collaboration is to boost each party's competitive ability and share expertise in the industry. As a result of the collaboration, Urus Harta Sdn Bhd absorb many talents who majority of them are graduates from the faculty. This strategy is implemented to reduce the cost for training new staffs and easier for them to understand the norms of the industry as they have a glimpsed of the industry background. In return, Urus Harta Sdn Bhd will fund a research conducted by the University and will be used as the base to innovate their new product and services.

That is the reason why majority of staffs in the Legal department comes from the same background. Even Mr. Hairul himself is graduated as the best student of the faculty in 2008. For Mr. Hairul, there were no issue for him to read his staff behavior between the lines. He will try to put himself in their shoes to think about what is the best structure that can be implemented within the department.

Current Structure.

The legal department practice linear organizational structure. All of the staffs will directly report to Mr. Hairul. He encouraged his staffs to fill in the daily report as it is easier for him to gauge and anticipate the capability of the staffs in completing their daily routine. The department are separated into several units according to the job scope. One unit is responsible for documents drafting. This unit comprises of 3 staffs. One senior staff is assigned for complicated cases while the other 2 staffs who just joining the organization are assigned to do the straight forward cases. The aim of the units is to make sure all the documents are drafted within the Standard Operation Procedures (SOP). The drafted documents must undergo several checking before it will be endorsed by Mr. Hairul for client's signing. The checking process for drafted documents has been circulated among the staffs in the units. Thus, their job scope is to document and also draft checking. Next, the other unit is documents review. Documents review is the first step in Legal department. All of the cases must be review in terms of their complete supporting documents, format validation and either it is lawfully effective. The raw documents will undergo several reviews from this unit before it is pass to the drafting units for documentation and clients' signing. In this unit there are two people who responsible for the document review. Last but not least is the compilation unit. Compilation unit is responsible to compile all the documents with clients' signature. This process is conducted after the agents had return back the signed documents. This unit is also responsible for documents tagging in order to keep the documents.

With the heavy inflow of new documents, the process had been disrupted. The drafting units received a lot of documents that they need draft but must undergo several checking which will slow down the operation. The checking process is a must to avoid any mistake when the documents were already at the clients' hand. If the process had been taken away from the operation, there are big chances that clients will receive documents with errors and this will jeopardize the good name of the organization. The company could not afford to add another staffs as it will increase the cost of operation. The aim of the organization is to minimize the costs as the volume of documents processed increase. If the cost increased aligned with the volume of the documents, the revenue margin will be smaller. Mr. Hairul had no choice but to restructure the whole departments so that it will be flexible to process more documents without adding new staffs.

Restructure of the department.

On the evening, Mr. Hairul called all Legal staffs for a meeting. "I am sorry that I had to call all of you this evening. I hope that you will catch up with your work after this. As you all know, we are kind of left behind regarding the SOP. The management had instructed me to think of something to avoid this kind of problem to occur again. Thus, this announcement might shock some of you. We

need to restructure our department. Some of you might need to be transferred to other unit. I hope that you can accept this with open heart as our organization is a dynamic organization. So we all need to be as dynamic as the organization for us to be able to achieve the organizational goal.” Mr. Hairul started.

The restructure of the department now focusing on individuals carried out specific job routine. The drafting unit is to be the starting point of the restructuring strategy. This is because they need to speed up the drafting process so that the other process after drafting will not delayed. Before this, drafting will carried out two SOP which are to draft documents and also checking before final printing. The drafting process is slowed down before because the person who need to draft documents also need to do the checking. Thus, there is overlap of SOP that need to be carried out by a staff. Mr. Hairul strategy now is to specialized one person to do only checking. This strategy in his opinion will speed up the process as one person will carried out only one SOP.

His next strategy is to boost the motivation of his staffs. The entire organization knew that the Legal department had problems in catching up with the SOP. Customer Service Department received many urgent documents that need urgent attention from Legal department. When Legal department failed to meet the datelines, Customer Service Department need to face the tantrum of agents and also clients. This atmosphere will spark the conflict among these two departments and the word spread all over organization about the inefficiency of Legal department. Mr. Hairul sees what happened to his staffs. With the rumours spreading among the organization, the motivation of his staffs is at the low stage.

“Also, I will announce great achiever of the week every Monday morning in our weekly roll call. I do this because I want to show to everybody in the organization that we are taking our job seriously and will continuously to make improvement within the department. It is also important for you to boost your confidence and not to feel small among other departments. We are the heart of the organization because we are the production center. We play the major and the most important part in the organization. So all of you must be proud to be assigned in this department and never compare your performance with other department because they have different Key Performance Index (KPI) from us.”

The restructure aftermath.

The restructure of the department seem to show a result. After a week of the restructure, all the pending documents had been reduced to 80 percents of it. There is a good improvement in terms of the staffs’ motivation as well. They are now not working in a group but as a team. All of the units realized the importance of the each team members to carry out their job scope properly and timely so that it will not affect other units. This will contribute to the success of a department and an organization. With Mr. Hairuls’ strategy on announcing the weekly great achiever in the organization

weekly roll call, it helps to boost the confidence among their staffs. His staffs will do their best to impress Mr. Hairul so that they will be announced as the great achiever of the week. Mr. Hairul was so happy as he can see the productivity among the staffs is increasing.

Apart of it, the team become closer. As they not only know their job scope, they also fully aware about other job scope. They usually going out for lunch together and sometimes Mr. Hairul can hear their laughter for some jokes across his shut door. This kind of situation will boost their friendship and it is the most important part in playing a role as a team member.

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