

OGL 481 Pro-Seminar I: PCA-Human Resource Frame Worksheet

1) Briefly restate your situation from Module 1 and your role.

On Thursday, April 12, 2018, two black men were arrested at the City Center Starbucks in Philadelphia on suspicion of trespassing. The two gentlemen had made a request to use the restroom, which was refused since they had not purchased any Starbucks products, and they were asked to leave shortly thereafter by employees. The gentleman declined the request, and the manager of the location subsequently took matters into their own hands and contacted the authorities to have the would-be patrons removed. It was later verified that they were meeting with another patron, Andrew Yaffe.

My role in the organization will be as an HR representative working with a crisis team to develop a strategy to deal with the aftermath of two African American gentlemen being arrested on suspicion of trespassing during an incident at a Philadelphia Starbucks that took place on Thursday April 12, 2018. My team will have to consider this issue from multiple frames (HR, political, symbolic, ethical, and structural) to respond to both public backlash and political fallout for this blunder. Immediate and affective responses are critical when dealing with a publicly traded corporation.

2) Describe how the human resources of the organization influenced the situation.

“The human resource frame centers on what organizations and people do to and for one another” (Bolman, 2021, p. 116) Starbucks focuses a lot of effort into curating and implementing training modules and programs to prepare baristas for whatever situations they may encounter while working. Among the training modules are “Active shooter”, “Incident Reporting”, “Emergency Response”, “Sick Policy”, and similar training exercises that create a cohesive understanding of the company’s policies and expectations. The corporation wants to give partners the tools they need to confidently handle difficult circumstances.

Starbucks has also made lengthy efforts to create “Partner Networks,” where partners can reach out to one another to form a sense of community. Other programs focused on developing employee skills and competencies come in the form of college achievement programs and opportunities for growth within the company. Partners who wish to voice their concerns over company policies or personal grievances and incidents can report to the human resource department 24 hours a day via phone or digital communications.

3) Recommend how you would use the human resources for an alternative course of action regarding your case.

The company chose to deal with the situation in Chicago by making a public response of apology to the gentleman that were arrested as well as the public, recognizing that the company

had work to do when it comes to handling incidents that may result in discrimination. A little over a month after the incident, on May 29, 2018, Starbucks closed all company-owned stores for anti-discrimination and sensitivity training. Nearly 175,000 partners received a training curriculum designed by nationally recognized experts with the intent to “address implicit bias, promote conscious inclusion, prevent discrimination and ensure everyone inside a Starbucks store feels safe and welcome” (Starbucks Coffee Company, 2018, para 3).

It is difficult to prescribe an alternative course of action based on the human frame because this incident was very circumstantial in many ways. Starbucks does have a policy that guests may stay and use the free Wi-Fi like a home office regardless of purchase. There were no corporate policies in place that would support the removal of these two customers during this time. The only alternative course I could recommend to prevent this incident from happening in the first place would have been to have anti bias and discrimination training in place before it was proven to be necessary. This should have already been a part of the training requirements for store managers on an advanced level. Corporations get sued for discrimination and bias regularly. The entire company can be held accountable in the court of public opinion for the actions of one or two poorly trained or vetted store managers.

4) **Reflect on what you would do or not do differently given what you have learned about this frame.**

From a HR frame, Starbucks was hoping to educate partners and include them in the conversation about what went wrong. By actively holding workshops to complete the training during these store shutdowns, Starbucks gave partners the opportunity to advocate for themselves and share their grievances and experiences with the company concerning bias and discrimination. This was an excellent choice on the company’s part. Rather than give partners a list of things to do and not to do, they gave partners an opportunity to add their voices to the conversation and contribute to changing injustice in our own stores.

While Starbucks did take the time to create a training and workshop curriculum for partners on bias and discrimination, they did not seem to recognize the need for managerial responsibility on this issue. Yes, we want to give our partners the tools to do the correct thing. But, at the end of the day, it was a member of management who made the call to the police in that Chicago store in April of 2018. When my store did this workshop/training, we combined two stores worth of partners and did the training together. In our case, that meant more than 30 partners were trying to contribute to a complex conversation with limited time and opportunity to speak. Management (shift supervisors and store managers) did not go through any separate workshops or training that could have helped clarified their further role of responsibility to handle these situations without bias. I believe we could and should have gone a step further and developed managerial workshops as well.

Reference or References

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2021). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. Jossey-Bass.

Starbucks Coffee Company. (2018, April 17). *Starbucks to close all U.S. stores for racial-bias education*. Starbucks Stories. Retrieved January 12, 2023, from <https://stories.starbucks.com/press/2018/starbucks-to-close-stores-nationwide-for-racial-bias-education-may-29/>

Starbucks' organizational structure [Interactive Chart]. Organimi. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2023, from <https://www.organimi.com/organizational-structures/starbucks/>