

## **Goofing off is in the eye of the beholder A case of trust, culture, and change**

Mildred Golden Pryor  
Texas A&M University-Commerce

Leslie A. Toombs  
The University of Texas of the Permian Basin

Sonia Taneja  
Texas A&M University-Commerce

Randy Odom  
Texas A&M University-Commerce

### **ABSTRACT**

Bailey is the quality manager employed by Golden XYZ Factory. Over the past two years, she has worked to implement a quality management initiative and institutionalize quality as part of the company's culture. At the time of this case, the quality initiative has begun to take root, excitement is building throughout the organization, and employees are sending her suggestions for improvement in their respective job areas. While Bailey is pleased about the employees' building excitement, she is concerned about the willingness of the top leadership team to trust the employees to implement these initiatives. The leadership team members have received training in several areas including: (1) quality theories and tools; (2) leadership; (3) empowerment; and (4) change management. However, there still seems to be a lack of trust in the non-management employees' decision-making capabilities. One example of the lack of trust is the incident in the case where the Vice President of Production, Albert Jones, called a staff meeting because of his perception that when production employees are talking together during work, they are goofing off. He is not willing to believe that they could be discussing various improvement opportunities for the firm, and he demands that they be given demerits. This trust issue is blocking progress in implementing the employees' quality improvement suggestions. Bailey is worried that without the ability to harness the enthusiasm and make the suggested improvements, the non-management employees will lose their improvement momentum and things will return to "business as usual".

Key Words: Trust, Culture, Change Management,

Note: This is a field-researched case based upon an actual situation within a company. The names of the employees and the company have been disguised.

## **THE CASE: INTRODUCTION**

This case raises several issues that must be managed correctly in order to facilitate change through employee involvement in process improvement and other change initiatives. These issues are relevant for management and non-management employees. This case is energizing for students and teachers alike as they debate issues of “goofing off,” trust, organizational culture, change management, empowerment, process improvement, and other related issues.

### **Case Objectives**

A major teaching objective of this case is to facilitate the discussion of the importance of trust between management and non-management employees. Organizational trust has been established as a key driver of firm effectiveness and ultimate performance. Trust becomes even more important during periods of organizational change, including process improvement initiatives. Through the discussion of this primary trust objective, students will also address several underlying issues including: (1) Organizational structure, culture, and loyalty, (2) The change management process, and (3) Empowerment and process improvement.

### **Courses and Levels**

This case is appropriate for use in the organizational behavior course at both the undergraduate and graduate level. It can also be used in principles of management courses, undergraduate or graduate quality management courses, and graduate organizational transformation courses.

## **THE CASE: BACKGROUND**

The quality initiative had been in place at Golden XYZ Factory for about two years. In fact, Bailey Davis had been hired to help plan and implement a quality initiative, first at one plant, then in all plants. She had pulled together an informal team, a vertical and horizontal microcosm of employees from throughout the facility, to develop the quality plan. They presented the plan to the executive leadership team, and all the vice presidents agreed with the plan. Unfortunately, their agreement with the plan did not change the culture of the plant which was definitely “old school,” with a lack of trust between most management and non-management employees. Many improvements had been made by hourly employees, engineers, et al. Even though Bailey presented the improvements, along with savings, to the leadership team, some vice presidents were still suspicious of non-management employees, particularly hourly employees.

### **INFORMATION ON KEY PLAYERS**

Larry Smith, who had hired Bailey Davis, had come up through the ranks. He had been an engineer, an engineering manager, director, and vice president. Now he was Corporate Vice President and Plant Manager. Larry had an MBA from a local university. There were six vice presidents of functional areas, Engineering, Human Resources, Production, Financial Operations, Quality, and Marketing. Albert Jones, Vice President of Production, had also come up through

the ranks, serving as supervisor, manager, and director before he was made Vice President of Production. Many years ago, he had completed two years of college. Bailey Davis, Director of Production, had a Ph.D. in Production Management, with two minors, Quantitative Methods and Organizational Behavior. She had 10 years teaching experience in the College of Business at a local university. See Chart 1 for reporting details.

## **CASE SCENARIO**

As Albert Jones, Vice President of Production at Golden XYZ Factory, walked through the plant, he noticed two people leaning against the wall talking with each other. They were laughing and talking with excitement in their voices. It was not break time, and it was obvious to Albert that the employees were goofing off. He would make sure to give them demerits. Why could they not just do their jobs? He went back to his office and called a staff meeting. When employees were goofing off, it was their manager's fault. He was steaming mad when his staff members came in and sat down around the conference table. They were laughing and talking too. Things were different since Bailey Davis, the new production manager, came on board. Everyone seemed to relax more and worry less about work.

"Can we get down to the reason I asked for a staff meeting? A couple of employees were leaning against the wall laughing and talking for 10 minutes, and it was not break time. I don't want to see that happen again. I want them both to have demerits. If it does happen again, I want them fired." Bailey spoke up and said, "Now, Albert, how do you know they weren't talking about work? After all we have been encouraging the workers to come up with ideas for improving our processes." Albert responded angrily, "They weren't talking about work. They were goofing off. I've been here 20 years. I know when people are goofing off. As a matter of fact, Bailey, you are not serious enough about work either." Bailey responded, "Sorry chief, I'll try to frown more. Hey let's get back to work guys. Let's see if we can catch some more people goofing off!"

Bailey rushed to out to production to see who had caused Albert's fury. Two workers, Jake and Tommy seemed to be working at the same work station as Bailey asked, "What's up?" Jake replied, "The work is faster and easier if we both work at this station and then move around to the other side and work at that station. Plus work is more fun when we can talk about it. It gets boring just standing alone and doing work" Bailey asked, "Did you see Albert this morning?" Tommy said, "Yes, but he seemed angry so we did not talk to him." Bailey said, "Next time, go over and talk with him and tell him your ideas." Jake and Tommy both replied, "Not me." Jake went on to say, "Albert is from the old school. He does not want us to even talk to each other, much less talk to him about changing how work gets done." Bailey replied, "Albert will come around. Just keep doing what you are doing – working together to make continuous improvement a part of your daily work. I'll run interference with Albert."

## **The Next Steps**

Bailey had told Jake and Tommy, "Albert will come around. Just keep doing what you are doing – working together to make continuous improvement a part of your daily work. I'll run interference with Albert." However, Bailey was not nearly as confident as she had tried to sound. She knew this was not just a problem with Albert's attitude, but with many of the people in management positions. All the vice presidents, directors, managers, and supervisors had

integrated quality into their respective strategic and operational plans, and they completed several types of training: (1) Quality Theories and Tools; (2) Leadership; (3) Empowerment; and (4) Change Management. However, there was something missing. Many of them did not seem to trust the non-management employees (i.e., engineers, production associates, et al) to make the decisions that were necessary for them to be efficient and effective in completing their work.

Bailey did not know what the next steps should be. If she reported the trust problem to Larry, the Corporate Vice President and Plant Manager, he would lean hard on his vice presidents. However, she did not know if that would make a difference. She needed some way to make Larry, his staff members, et al aware of the positive results the workers were achieving out on the production floor and in other areas throughout the plant. The newsletter had not worked. Postings on the intranet had not worked. She did not know if anyone read them. She contemplated having members of each team present their results to the leadership team, but she did not want the leadership team members to get involved in the day-to-day improvement activities, particularly in terms of requiring lots of signatures before improvements could be made. She thought perhaps Larry should host team-of-the-quarter and team-of-the-year competitions for which vice presidents, directors and managers would select outstanding teams from their areas.

The next Thursday Bailey proposed both actions to the leadership team (1) having the teams present their results to the leadership team and (2) having team of the quarter and team of the year competitions. The responses were as she had feared. Comments from the vice presidents included: (1) We don't have time to meet with all these people or have team competitions; (2) We need to be concentrating on real work; (3) This is "mickey mouse, kindergarten" stuff; (4) This is what we get by hiring a Ph.D. – you just don't understand what it takes to run a business. After the vice presidents left the room, Larry said, "Don't worry, Bailey. You know that change takes time. They'll come around. You just make the improvements happen. I'll run interference with the vice presidents." To Bailey, this sounded too much like her own statements to Jake and Tommy.

Bailey thought perhaps she and Larry were setting up the non-management folks for big disappointments in the future if something pretty drastic wasn't done soon. Bailey did not know what to do next since every suggestion she made to the leadership team seemed to be rejected or postponed. Fortunately, the decision about the next step was made for her. When Larry sent out the agenda for his next leadership team meeting, one of the agenda items was a presentation by a machine shop team that had significantly improved quality and cycle time as well as cost. Also, there was an email from Larry asking the vice presidents to submit their best teams for the previous quarter and to prepare for a team-of-the-year banquet where all the best teams for the year would be honored with plaques and monetary awards.

## **The Challenge**

Bailey met with each vice president and each of their direct reports to determine how she and her quality engineers could assist with their process improvement efforts and the selection of the best improvement teams in their respective areas. Previously, the improvement initiative had primarily been deployed in Production and Engineering. Now process improvement concepts and tools would be utilized in all areas. While she appreciated Larry's rapid utilization of her suggestions, she knew the potential negative repercussions of mandated requirements as opposed to team consensus. Several vice presidents were not friendly, and one was angry when Bailey

met with them. However, the directors who reported to the vice presidents seemed to be energized and excited about involving their people in process improvement. Also, Bailey began receiving emails from employees in Engineering, Finance, Human Resources, and other areas throughout the facility. The emails were suggestions for improvement. The scenario had changed dramatically. Now the challenge was how to harness the energy for improving since she had neither the resources nor the authority to make the suggested improvements.

Bailey looked out of her office window and realized that it was getting late. She had spent the last couple of hours reviewing the non-management employee emails regarding improvement suggestions and thinking about how much everyone in the firm had to lose if this initiative was not successfully absorbed into the company's culture. There would be finger-pointing at the leadership level, and the non-management employees would probably walk away from the experience thinking the quality initiative was just another "flavor of the month" for top management.

Bailey knew that if employees were disappointed too many times, their morale and organizational loyalty would suffer. She was truly committed to the concept of quality management, and she believed that successful implementation of this initiative at Golden XYZ Factory would position the company to be more competitive in the industry. She took a deep breath as she packed her briefcase. As she walked to her car, she thought: "I am not ready to give up yet! The quality fires are burning because there are pockets of excellence within the company, and we will find a way to grow that passion and improve the culture, no matter what it takes."

### Case Questions

Using scholarly journal articles and your textbook, please answer the following questions (Include in text APA citations for your answers and an APA style reference page at the end of your case analysis):

1. Discuss change management theories and apply them to the organization in this case.
2. Discuss the role of a change agent in helping the change initiative to be successful.
3. Discuss the concept of trust and apply to the organization in this case.
4. Discuss the issues regarding empowerment and process improvement as they relate to this case. How would you solve them?
5. Suggest additional training that could be beneficial to members of the "old guard" (i.e., status quo or traditional managers) in terms of leadership development and changing the culture of the organization.

**Chart 1: Golden XYZ Factory Executives, et.al.**

Name	Title	Reports to:
Larry Smith	Corporate Vice President & Plant Manager	CEO
Albert Jones	Vice President of Production	Larry
Bailey Davis	Director of Production	Albert
Jake & Tommy	Non-management Production Employees	Production Supervisor



## TEACHING NOTES/INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

While a case analysis and solutions are presented, teachers and students will be able to present many other relevant solutions and substantiate their answers through scholarly journal citations.

### Case Analysis

The top management team at Golden XYZ Factory has invested resources for the development and implementation of a quality management initiative. For this initiative to succeed and the firm to receive a return on investment of the resources invested, the quality initiative has to become institutionalized into the corporate culture. Several steps have been taken to ensure that this happens. For example, the top management team has received training to support this movement. In addition, all the vice presidents, directors, managers, and supervisors have integrated quality into their respective strategic and operational plans. Thus, the infrastructure for success was in place. However, the critical missing piece is trust in the non-management employees' ability to handle empowerment, including decision making about, and implementation of, improvement changes in their respective work areas. The Production Vice President's tirade about employees goofing off is a symptom of this underlying problem.

Bailey is faced with trying to find ways to keep momentum for the quality initiative going, while not setting the non-management employees up for disappointment and disillusionment. The Corporate Vice President and Plant Manager, Larry Hammond, has encouraged Bailey to keep moving forward – his closing remark to her is that “change takes time”.

The following discussion questions and answers can be used to facilitate classroom discussion of the case. In addition, students can be assigned to role play the case prior to the discussion of the questions.

### Suggested Answers to Case Questions

#### 1. Discuss change management theories, and apply them to the organization in this case.

One of the most commonly discussed change management theory in undergraduate organizational behavior textbooks is by Kurt Lewin (1938). He believed that change was a three-step process (unfreeze, change, freeze). In the application of Lewin's theory, students may propose that the existing culture hasn't really successfully moved beyond the unfreeze part of the process. Although the top management team has received training and has incorporated quality goals into the planning process, the true resistance to change by some of the leadership team has not been dismantled. Change has happened in some areas of the firm as evidenced by the e-mails proposing quality improvement opportunities. Also there have been quantifiable successes which are evidence of change. Lewin notes that during the change period there is much confusion as the transition is in process. Albert is aware that the existing culture is being modified; however, his existing mindset regarding what productive employees' behaviors “look like” has not been dismantled. Freeze cannot happen until all members of the leadership team have a crystallized view of the new culture and their comfort level with this new culture is at the level of their level of comfort with the old culture. They

must reach the point where they truly believe that quality is the company's way of doing business. See Lewin, K. (1938). *The Conceptual Representation and the Measurement of Psychological Forces*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Selected other change management theories which may be discussed include:

- a. **Kübler-Ross model**, commonly known as the five stages of grief, is also used to show emotional states (i.e., denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) that employees encounter as they are confronted with change. (See Kuber-Ross, E. 1969. *On Death and Dying*. New York: Collier Books) In this case Albert is in the first two stages of the model – he doesn't believe employees can be having a meaningful work related discussion while they are working and his anger at this occurrence has resulted in him demanding they be given demerits. On the other hand, the two production employees have accepted the quality culture and are actively engaged in the process.
- b. **Formula for Change (Gleicher's Formula)** is a model which can be used to assess the relative strengths affecting the likely success or failure of organizational change initiatives. See Beckhard, R. (1969). *Organization Development: Strategies and Models*, Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley).
- c. **Dynamic conservatism** by Donald Schön, who proposed that the inherent nature of organizations is to be conservative. As part of this conservatism, organizational leaders tend to protect their organizations from constant change. Schön recognized that the pace of change organizations face will continue to move more quickly and the firm will need to embrace learning about the need for these changes in an ongoing manner. This is a forerunner to the "learning organization" concept. See Schön, D. (1973). *Beyond the Stable State. Public and private learning in a changing society*. Penguin.

## 2. Discuss the role of a change agent in helping the change initiative to be successful.

Change agents must carry out a variety of activities when planning and implementing changes. Some of those activities include: (1) assessing, and helping create, readiness for change; (2) creating a vision, i.e., a valued outcome or a desired future state, that builds on an organization's core values; (3) developing political support for the changes; (4) designing a roadmap for, and managing the organizational transition from, the current state to the desired future state; and (5) providing (or acquiring) resources needed for change such as a support system for change agents, development of leadership competencies, reinforcing the new behaviors needed to implement the changes; and (6) assisting organizational leaders in staying the course. See Cummings, T.G. and Worley, C.G. (2009). *Organization Development and Change*. United States: Thomson/South-Western.

Change initiatives, including process improvement initiatives, require that change agents understand organizational development theories and tools. In addition, change agents must understand how to put their knowledge into practice. See Hutton, C., & Liefoghe, A. (2011). Mind the gap: Revisioning organization development as pragmatic reconstruction. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 47(1):76-97 and Miller, J. (2011, April). How to achieve lasting change. *Training Journal*, 58-62. Also, change agents must understand



organizational development theories and tools from the perspectives of a myriad of approaches and methods developed over many decades. These approaches include strategic, process, behavioral, and many other theories. See Van Nistelrooij, A. & Sminia, H. (2010). Organization development: What's actually happening? *Journal of Change Management* 10(4): 407-420.

**3. Discuss the concept of trust and apply to the organization in this case.**

Trust is a concept which has been widely researched in the management literature. Students can examine trust from a variety of perspectives in this case.

- a. One area from motivation theory which can be applied is McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y Management styles. This shows that a manager's underlying beliefs regarding the motivation of their employees drives how they treat the employees. For example a Theory X manager believes that employees inherently dislike work and must be managed closely. Albert could have shades of the Theory X manager in his leadership style. On the other hand, a Theory Y manager believes that employees are self-motivated and want to participate in the decision making process at work. For empowerment and the quality initiative at Golden XYZ Factory to work, this has to be underlying belief of the leadership team. See McGregor, D. (1960). *The Human Side of Enterprise*. New York: McGraw Hill. Yoon and Ringquist (2011) caution that "... trust ... (is) a product of the measurable ... factors that build trust, that is, characteristics and behaviors that signal trustworthiness" (pp. 55-56). So Albert should have known from the process improvements that the production employees were making that he could trust them to do their work and that their conversations were relevant to their work.
- b. Models for building trust can also be introduced into the discussion and students can provide suggestions regarding this process for Larry and his leadership team. The following resources provide background information to assist students with this question (there are many other sources in addition to these):

Barker, R.T. & Camarata, M.R. (1998). The role of communication in creating and maintaining a learning organization: Preconditions, indicators, and disciplines. *Journal of Business Communication*, 35(4): 643-663.

Blanchard, K. (2010, November). Rebuild trust. *Leadership Excellence*, 27(11), 14.

Butler, J. K., Jr. (1991). Toward understanding and measuring conditions of trust: Evolution of conditions of trust inventory. *Journal of Management*, 17, 643-663.

Gladis, S. (2010, November). The trusted leader. *T + D*, 64(11): 14.

Jones, G. R. & George, J. M. (1998). The experience and evolution of trust: Implications for cooperation and teamwork. *Academy of Management Review*, 23, 531-548.

Korsgaard, M. A., Brodt, S. E., & Whitener, E. M. (2002). Trust in the face of conflict: The role of managerial trustworthy behavior and organizational context. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(2): 312-319.

Yoon Jik, C., & Ringquist, E. J. (2011). Managerial trustworthiness and organizational outcomes. *Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory*, 21(1): 53-86.

**4. Discuss the issues regarding empowerment and process improvement as they relate to this case. How would you solve them?**

In quality management theory and training, employees are a key element of the implementation of building in quality on the front end of the production process rather than inspecting quality in after production has occurred. In other words, employees are supposed to make decisions during ongoing operations regarding the quality of the output being produced. If an employee determines that the correct level of quality is not being achieved, he/she should be empowered to shut the production process down and make the changes necessary to fix the problem. Also, as part of the quality philosophy of continuous improvement, employees should be encouraged and empowered to look for ways to improve operations in their respective areas. One underlying component of this practice of empowerment is employee training in quality tools such as statistical process control. Of course, all change initiatives, including process improvement initiatives should be integrated into the development and execution of strategic and tactical plans. Pryor, Anderson, Toombs, and Humphreys (2007) indicate that strategic implementation should one of the core competencies for any organization, and they suggest a strategic leadership model that will increase an organization's potential for success.

In the current case, Albert and some of the other management people are not willing to allow employees to be truly empowered. As discussed in the answer to question one relating to change management, these managers have not successfully transformed their thinking regarding what the new organization and the trained non-management employees look like. For example, in the case what Albert sees as goofing off is really two production employees engaging in meaningful discussion regarding ways to improve their processes. For this quality initiative to be successful, employees must be trained appropriately in quality management and then be given empowerment to do their jobs. In addition, they must be rewarded for their successes, and not punished when the improvement initiatives don't yield appropriate results. Selected resources are:

Block, P. (1993). *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self Interest*, San Francisco: Berrett Koehler Publishers.

Pryor, M.G., Anderson, D., Toombs, L., and Humphreys, J. (2007). Strategic implementation as a core competency: The 5P's Model. *Journal of Management Research*, 7(1):3-17.

Pryor, M. G., Humphreys, J. H., & Taneja, S. (2008, September/October). Freeing Prisoners of Work. *Industrial Management*, 50(5), Pages 21-24.

**5. Suggest additional training that could be beneficial to members of the “old guard” (i.e., status quo or traditional managers) in terms of leadership development and changing the culture of the organization.**

Leadership training is necessary so that management people will understand the type of leadership that is required to transform an organization. In fact, they will need to learn what changes they personally need to make in order to transform their organization and its culture. The following article may be helpful:

Humphreys, J.H., & Einstein, W.O. (2003). Nothing new under the sun: Transformational leadership from a historical perspective. *Management Decision*, 41(1): 85-95.)

**Additional Materials/Suggestions for Classroom Case Discussion**

Faculty using this case can also use the scenario to launch a discussion of the organization of work from a historical perspective. Starting with the Scientific Management Era and Frederick Taylor’s approach of specialization to the use of cross-functional teams in the workplace today, the issues underlying this case such as trust and empowerment emerge at various stages. For example with work specialization came the challenges of boredom and reduced quality. Job enlargement, job enrichment, job rotation, and work groups emerged as solutions to the boredom issue. As work groups grew, empowerment of these groups contributed to the emergence of true work teams charged with the management of their performance. The instructor may want to start this discussion with a review of the classic article: Roy, D. F. (1959). Banana time: Job satisfaction and informal interaction. *Human Organization*, 18: 158-168. In this article Roy shows how employees made a game of their work as they tried to find meaning in their jobs.

**EPILOGUE**

Initially, Albert, Vice President of Production, had caused Bailey much concern because of his attitude toward, and lack of trust of, non-management employees, particularly hourly employees. However, as more and more Production processes were streamlined, Albert and the other supervisory people in Production became major supporters of the Quality initiative. Slowly but surely, vice presidents of all functional areas became supporters of the Quality initiative. However, the Vice President of Engineering was transitioned out of his position because of his disregard for the Quality initiative, and it was his successor who encouraged the engineers and their supervisors to play a leadership role in the Quality improvement initiative. Bailey reported to vice presidents of different functional areas and assisted them in their improvement efforts.

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