

Case Study #2



Golkonda, Jyothi

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Case Study – Eating lunch standing up

Susan Parks is part owner and manager of Marathon Sports an athletic equipment store. The store serves a population of 125,000 in a college town. Most of the employees in the store are college students working part-time/full time. The store had 15% growth each year. Susan is very dedicated to the store and works for 50 hours a week and wears several hats in running the store.

According to the style approach, how would you describe Susan's leadership style?

Susan's leadership style can be categorized as task oriented. She runs the business with mostly college students, which means that most of the employees are not long term employees. Since she runs the business with mostly college students she is able to keep down the costs but has to put in extra effort to train new employees with the turn around on employees she will have. She is a hands-on type of manager who knows everything about the business she is managing. She can also be categorized as goal oriented manager and the constant growth in business proves it. Susan's leadership style is more of Authority-Compliance management style (9,1).

Why does her leadership style create such a pronounced reaction from her subordinates?

Subordinates who are also goal oriented have lot to learn from her and appreciate the opportunity. Since Susan makes tasks and goals very clear for everyone and keeps them busy end of the day they feel good about everything they've accomplished. Subordinates who pay attention to people relationship may not like Susan's style because she focuses on the tasks rather than people relationship. They may feel like she is more concerned about results than people and

is focused only on getting the work done. Susan works hard and tries to keep her subordinates also busy and productive.

Discuss whether she should change her leadership style? In your opinion, if she changed her style would she be effective? If so, why? If not, why not?

In Susan's case she is dealing with temporary employees. And hence to some extent employee relationship or employee satisfaction is not impacting the business as much. With her leadership style she is passing the message to potential employees that "to work at Marathon sports you must be task and goal oriented". She only needs 10 employees to run the business. What works for Susan may not work for bigger businesses. She can continue with her leadership style and drive the same amount of growth every year.

Susan is not able to balance her work and personal life. She works very hard at the store and is struggling with her personal life. Her current model is not sustainable model since it is off-balance. To bring balance in her life Susan must focus on bringing in few long-term employees, train them and delegate some of the work. She must start focusing on relationship style and take interest in her employees, value their individuality and respond to their needs. Susan will not have to beat herself up every day if she can find dedicated employees whom she can count on and train them to perform at the same level as she does.

Susan has proved herself to be very effective from task oriented perspective. She is (9,1) type of manager and by incorporating the relationship style also she is trying to move towards (9,9) style. If she can focus on the relationship side and maintain her task oriented style she will be even more effective.