

- Describe how a manager or coach could use the process of self-fulfilling prophecy to enhance an individual's performance.
- Self-awareness is increasingly recognized as an important ingredient for effective leadership. Suppose that you are responsible for creating a leadership development program in a government organization. What activities or processes would you introduce to help participants in

- this program constructively develop a better self-awareness of their personality, values, and personal biases?
- Almost everyone in a college or university business program has developed some degree of a global mindset. What events or activities in your life have helped nurture the global mindset you have developed so far? What actions can you take now, while still attending school, to further develop your global mindset?

## CASE STUDY: BRIDGING THE TWO WORLDS

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I had been hired by Aluminum Elements Corp. (AEC), and it was my first day of work. I was 26 years old, and I was now the manager of AEC's customer service group, which looked after customers, logistics, and some of the raw material purchasing. My superior, George, was the vice president of the company. AEC manufactured most of its products from aluminum, a majority of which were destined for the construction industry.

As I walked around the shop floor, the employees appeared to be concentrating on their jobs, barely noticing me. Management held daily meetings, in which various production issues were discussed. No one from the shop floor was invited to the meeting, unless there was a specific problem. Later I also learned that management had separate washrooms, separate lunchrooms, as well as other perks that floor employees did not have. Most of the floor employees felt that management, although polite on the surface, did not really feel they had anything to learn from the floor employees.

John, who worked on the aluminum slitter, a crucial operation required before any other operations could commence, had a number of unpleasant encounters with George. As a result, George usually sent written memos to the floor in order to avoid a direct confrontation with John. Because the directions in the memos were complex, these memos were often more than two pages in length.

One morning, as I was walking around, I noticed that John was very upset. Feeling that perhaps there was something I could do, I approached John and asked him if I could help. He indicated that everything was just fine. From the looks of the situation, and John's body language, I felt that he was willing to talk, but John knew that this was not the way things were done at AEC. Tony, who worked at the machine next to John's, then cursed and said that the office guys only cared about schedules, not about the people down on the floor. I just looked at him, and then said that I only began working here last week, and thought that I could address some of their issues. Tony gave me a strange look, shook his head, and went back to his machine. I could hear him still swearing as I left. Later I realized that most of the office staff were also offended by Tony's language.

On the way back to my office, Lesley, a recently hired engineer from Russia, approached me and pointed out that the employees were not accustomed to management talking to them. Management only issued orders and made

demands. As we discussed the different perceptions between office and floor staff, we were interrupted by a very loud lunch bell, which startled me. I was happy to join Lesley for lunch, but she asked me why I was not eating in the office lunch room. I replied that if I was going to understand how AEC worked, I had to get to know all the people better. In addition, I realized that this was not how things were done, and wondered about the nature of this apparent division between the management and the floor. In the lunchroom, the other workers were amazed to see me there, commenting that I was just new and had not learned the ropes yet.

After lunch, when I asked George, my supervisor, about his recent confrontation with John, George was surprised that John got upset, and exclaimed, "I just wanted John to know that he did a great job, and as a result, we will be able to ship on time one large order to the West Coast. In fact, I thought I was complimenting him."

Earlier, Lesley had indicated that certain behaviour was expected from management, and therefore from me. I reasoned that I do not think that this behaviour works, and besides it is not what I believe or how I care to behave. For the next couple of months, I simply walked around the floor and took every opportunity to talk to the shop floor employees. Often, when the employees related specific information about their workplaces, I felt that it went over my head. Frequently, I had to write down the information and revisit it later. I made a point of listening to them, identifying where they were coming from, and trying to understand them. I needed to keep my mind open to new ideas. Because the shop employees expected me to make requests and demands, I made a point of not doing any of that. Soon enough, the employees became friendly, and started to accept me as one of their own, or at least as a different type of a management person.

During my third month of work, the employees showed me how to improve the scheduling of jobs, especially those on the aluminum slitter. In fact, the greatest contribution was made by John who demonstrated better ways to combine the most common slitting sizes, and reduce waste by retaining some of the "common-sized" material for new orders. Seeing the opportunity, I programmed a spreadsheet to calculate and track inventory. This, in addition to better planning and forecasting, allowed us to reduce our new order turnarounds from four to five weeks to in by 10 a.m. out by 5 p.m. on the same day.

By the time I was employed for four months, I realized that members from other departments came to me and asked me to relay messages to the shop employees. When I asked why they were delegating this task to me, they stated that I spoke the same language as the shop employees. Increasingly, I became the messenger for the office to floor shop communication.

One morning, George called me into his office and complimented me on the levels of customer service and the improvements that have been achieved. As we talked, I mentioned that we could not have done it without John's help. "He really knows his stuff, and he is good," I said. I suggested that we consider him for some type of a promotion. Also, I hoped that this would be a positive gesture that would improve the communication between the office and shop floor.

George turned and pulled a flyer out of his desk; "Here is a management skills seminar. Do you think we should send John to it?"

"That is a great idea," I exclaimed, "Perhaps it would be good if he were to receive the news from you directly,



## TEAM EXERCISE: WHY DID THEY DO THAT?

**PURPOSE** This exercise is designed to help you understand the attribution process and to apply the three attribution rules to justify your conclusions about causation in each mini-case.

**MATERIALS** None, but it is useful for teams to have presentation resources (flip chart paper) or technologies (presentation slides) to show their analysis to the class.

### INSTRUCTIONS (SMALL OR LARGE CLASS)

**Step 1:** The instructor will organize students into teams with membership size that allows meaningful team discussion and decision making. This exercise can also be completed individually. It can also be conducted in remote or hybrid classes.

**Step 2:** Team members will read each case below and select one of the four answer options, relating to whether the focal behavior (response) should be attributed to the person (internal attribution), to the identified situational entity (resource, person, work setting, etc.), to an unknown situational entity, or to a combination of these. The team will also indicate its level of confidence in their beliefs about the attributional cause of the person's response. The team justifies its conclusion by commenting on each of the three attribution rules and referring to specific facts in the mini-case that relate to those rules. The team should document its justification regarding the three rules to show the class during debriefing.

**Step 3:** The class will debrief the exercise by sharing their results and discussing how the three rules guided those results.

**CASE 1: COMPLETING RISK ASSESSMENTS AT AN INSURANCE FIRM** A national property and life insurance

George." George agreed, and after discussing some other issues, we parted company.

That afternoon, John came into my office, upset and ready to quit. "After all my effort and work, you guys are sending me for training seminars. So, am I not good enough for you?"

### Discussion Questions

- What symptoms in this case suggest that something has gone wrong?
- Explain the causes of these symptoms using your knowledge of self-concept and perceptions concepts and theories. Analyze the case facts separately for each theory and refer to the symptom(s) that the theory explains from the facts.
- What would you recommend to the manager and company overall to improve the situation (reduce or remove the symptoms) in the future. Provide recommendations for both immediate and longer-term actions.

company has one office in every state that helps clients complete the insurance application documents. The state office then digitally transfers those documents to the company's risk assessment department, which has two dozen assessors, all of whom work in one centralized location. One risk assessor, Jess, typically requires one hour to estimate a potential client's risk level. Jess rarely completes an assessment in less than 45 minutes and a few applications require 90 minutes or more. However, when Jess receives client applications from the company's office in State X, the assessment sometimes takes up to two hours. Jess's coworkers also require up to two hours to complete a risk assessment for client applications submitted by State X. Other employees typically require the same range of time as Jess to complete risk assessments from other states. Recently, the director of risk assessment encouraged staff to speed up the assessment process without increasing errors. However, this request had little effect on how quickly Jess or the others completed their assessment of clients in State X or in other states.

Select one of these answers regarding this mini-case, and use the attribution rules along with facts in this case to justify your answer:

- Something about Jess probably caused Jess to complete risk assessments more slowly for State X client application files.
- Something about State X client application files probably caused Jess to complete those risk assessments more slowly.
- Something or someone at Jess's workplace or in Jess's life probably caused Jess to complete risk assessments of State X client application files more slowly.