

The Blake at Gulf Breeze

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ABSTRACT

What could possibly be the downside to a policy that banned workers at an assisted living facility from participating in an activity that was detrimental and debilitating to both residents and employees? In addition to being directly linked to increased employee absence rates and decreased productivity, cigarette smoke annually kills more Americans than AIDS, drugs, homicides, fires, and auto accidents combined (“Tobacco and You”). Glenn Barclay, owner and Principal Manager of The Blake, an upscale assisted living facility located in Gulf Breeze, FL, was considering revising his facility’s current no-smoking policy so employees would not be able to smoke while on the clock. On the surface, it seemed like an easy policy for Glenn to implement. However, he was struggling with the potential repercussions that such a policy could warrant. “Would my employees think that I was too controlling? Would they wonder, ‘what is he going to take from us next?’” Glenn was at a crossroads, but ultimately, he had to choose what was best for his residents, employees, and the future of his facility.

Keywords: Case Study, Rewards, Incentives, Motivation, Change Management, Decision Making

This is a factual case. The case was developed based on interviews of management employed by the organization in question, Glenn Barclay at The Blake.

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COMPANY BACKGROUND

Ever since The Blake's inception in the summer of 2008, Glenn strived for greatness in all aspects of his facility's operation. As one of the premier assisted living facilities in the Florida panhandle, The Blake relied on the principle that "residents will enjoy a luxury, home-like community with resort style services and unmatched access to programs that promote well-being, security, longevity, family and self-worth" (Exhibit 1). The Blake was the flagship facility of Blake Management Group LLC's three senior housing ventures. The group's other facilities were located in Ridgeland, MS and Malbis, AL, but, as the premier facility, the Gulf Breeze location was chosen to set the standard for which the other locations would emulate. Glenn, and his staff of fifty employees, oversaw the well-being of 93 residents that lived in one of the various unit types within the Gulf Breeze facility. Resident ages ranged from 67-100, and Glenn's average resident was approximately 84.5 years old.

Glenn saw to it that all of his employees understood the privilege associated with calling The Blake his or her place of employment. As new employees were hired, each was presented an employee handbook that stated the company's core values and beliefs (Exhibit 1). Glenn also stressed the importance of communication between managers and employees by stationing all employee work areas within an area that he dubbed "The Hub." The Hub was a large work area surrounded by four management offices. All employee lockers and desks were located within The Hub. This kept employees in close contact with one another and afforded management an easy avenue in which to mentor and interact with subordinates. Glenn's ultimate goal was to create a "team" of employees working together to create the greatest possible level of care for The Blake's residents.

This team mentality carried over into additional facets of the facility. Glenn saw to it that all employees were hands-on with day-to-day operations. Managers donned pagers at all times and could even be found waiting and serving tables in the dining room. If aids were not able to assist residents within three minutes of an issue arising, a manager would arrive and handle the matter. Glenn made sure to conduct customer service satisfaction surveys on a routine basis to confirm the company's mission statement was being carried out on a consistent basis. Running a facility as large and demanding as The Blake was not an easy endeavor, but Glenn was confident in his workforce and the corporate policies that he and his partners had established.

ISSUE AT HAND

The Blake had always been a smoke-free facility. However, during its first six months of operation, Glenn allowed residents that smoked to live at The Blake. He did this in order for The Blake to meet its census goals and attract investors as the facility matured. Once The Blake met these goals, the policy was altered and The Blake no longer accepted new residents that smoked. Employees, however, were permitted to smoke during their two 15-minute breaks and 30-minute lunch break, but they had to leave campus to do so. Glenn had always been very understanding to the needs of his employees, but he was beginning to have his doubts regarding the current structure of employee break-time.

Glenn had become very concerned with members of the Gulf Breeze community witnessing employees of The Blake smoking off campus while in uniform. He stated, “It’s not good for a healthcare company to allow smoking, and it surely does not look good for employees to be seen wearing ‘The Blake’ logo while doing so.” A major point of emphasis within The Blake’s marketing strategy was to promote “well-being” within a healthy environment. Glenn was concerned that this positive image could come into question if the public frequently observed employees of The Blake smoking while on break.

Another issue arose when employees left the facility to smoke. In order for a staff member to leave The Blake’s campus, he or she would have to either go across the street or walk into the woods. If an employee were to stumble and injure his or herself, be hit by a car, or toss a cigarette and start a fire in the woods, The Blake could be held responsible. Since property and human costs from fires caused by careless smoking were \$6 billion annually in the United States alone, this could become a serious problem for Glenn if he were to continue to tolerate such a practice (“Cigarette Litter...”).

Glenn was also concerned about the productivity of his employees, particularly those that smoked. He believed, “A healthier employee is a more productive employee.” The U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention claimed that cigarette smoking and second hand smoke cost \$92 billion in productivity losses annually. In addition, research showed that smokers on average missed 6.16 days of work per year due to sickness, compared to a nonsmoker, who missed 3.86 days annually (“Business Costs...”). It was evident to Glenn that this was causing The Blake to suffer productively as well as financially. Insurance rates would be greatly reduced if the entire staff was non-smoking. According to The American Cancer Society, employees that smoke pay an average of \$383 more a year on insurance premiums than those that do not smoke (“Business Costs...”).

It was obvious to Glenn that some changes needed to be made in order for The Blake to continue to build its reputation. Glenn considered enacting a smoke-free workplace policy similar to the one issued by healthcare leader, Baptist Healthcare of Pensacola, FL, and adopt a 100% smoke-free policy. Glenn knew that Baptist Healthcare was voted one of the top companies to work for and believed that this would not be the case if the policy had not been well received. In addition to Baptist Healthcare, there had been close to 30 nursing homes and 2,500 local/state/ territory hospitals that had adopted a 100% smoke free policy in the last forty years (“100% Smokefree...”). The record of accomplishment for such a policy was definitely present in the healthcare industry; Glenn just needed to propose a program that he believed would be the best fit for his facility.

PROPOSAL OF NEW SMOKING POLICY

Glenn and his management team needed to develop a policy that would prevent employees from taking advantage of their break time and also improve the health and productivity of their workforce. In order to accomplish this, Glenn believed that they would have to alter The Blake’s current smoking policy and implement stricter employee guidelines. Glenn saw Baptist Healthcare as motivation and reassurance that such a policy was possible. Teresa Kirkland, head of the human resources department at Baptist Healthcare indicated that their policy had been implemented successfully and with

minimal consequences. Teresa stated that the plan was good for both residents and employees. The frustration that many employees felt after witnessing co-workers taking frequent smoke breaks was eliminated and residents enjoyed no longer detecting smoke on employee uniforms.

Glenn's proposed policy stated that smoking would not be permitted while employees were "on the clock." As a result, Glenn believed the issues resulting from employees leaving the property during their 15-minute breaks would therefore be eliminated. Since employees clock out and leave campus for their 30-minute lunch breaks, they would still be allowed to smoke during this time. While eliminating smoking on the two 15-minute breaks resolves two opportunities for employees to smoke, Glenn still ran the risk of his employees being spotted smoking while wearing their Blake attire during their 30-minute lunch breaks. In addition, the possibility that employees may carry the scent of cigarettes on their uniforms back from their lunch break also still existed. In an effort to combat this issue, Glenn stated, "If an employee returned with the smell of smoke on their uniform, their direct supervisor would handle it just as any other hygiene or grooming problem. We would begin with a verbal counseling session and progress to a written warning. If the employee continued to offend guests or residents with the smell of smoke, the employee would be terminated."

In an effort to deal with the effects of such a policy, Glenn and his management team decided that they would schedule educational meetings to take place during the months preceding the policy's implementation. He would arrange for counselors to visit with employees and provide information about the harmful effects of smoking and how to effectively quit. It would be necessary that these counselors were able to relate to employees with varying educational backgrounds. In addition, Glenn would also provide employees with websites that he believed would help his workers cope with the changes. Tobacco Free Florida (<http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/>) was a helpful interactive website that provided users with information and motivation to quit smoking. The site also recognized individuals who chose not to use tobacco. He would also provide employees with factual information and a guide to quit smoking from The American Lung Association website (<http://www.ffsonline.org>) which offered tips for quitting and informative lessons to encourage employees. All of this information would be made available in an effort to inform, support, and aid employees if they chose to attempt to quit smoking.

The new policy would not prohibit management from hiring employees that smoked. However, the company's new stance on smoking would be fully disclosed upon the recruiting of new employees. In regards to current employees, Glenn was not very concerned about the possibility of them fleeing to competing assisted living facilities in the area if the new policy were enacted. Only twelve of the Blake's fifty employees were smokers and only two had voiced concern about the potential implementation of such a policy. Glenn firmly believed that The Blake was the nicest assisted living facility in the area. He always made sure that his employees had pristine uniforms and collected fifty cents more on the dollar than employees at similar facilities in Gulf Breeze. He also found comfort in the fact that if slight attrition were to occur, he would be able to find talented employees in the area since roughly 1,160 of Gulf Breeze's 6,580 residents (approximately 17%) were employed in the healthcare industry (Exhibit 2). If his employees were to violate the new policy, Glenn and his management staff would follow

existing disciplinary procedures for employees that violated the current Smoke Free Workplace policy (Exhibit 3).

CROSSROADS

Glenn was stuck at a crossroad. On one hand, deciding to adopt the new no smoking policy could help elevate The Blake's admirable reputation. On the other hand, The Blake was thriving as it was and a change in guidelines could potentially raise employee discontentment.

As Glenn reflected on Baptist Healthcare's successful implementation of its no smoking policy, he contemplated some of the advantages the policy could potentially bring to The Blake. He considered factors such as increased productivity due to less employee sick days, significant reductions in the amount of fire hazards, decreased health insurance premiums, and an overall elevated quality of life for his employees. It would be difficult for him to disregard these potential improvements, especially considering the enactment of similar policies had become a popular trend in the healthcare industry. Glenn also realized that such a drastic change in corporate policy would be ineffective if The Blake's employees were not on board. He began to speculate as to whether his employees that currently smoked could tolerate the restriction of not smoking while "on the clock" or not. The potential for agitation and disgruntled behavior was a serious concern for Glenn. Although counselors and resources were available to help employees quit smoking, Glenn wondered if this was enough motivation.

In spite of his concerns, Glenn came to the realization that the problems caused by employee smoking must be addressed. Weighing the pros and cons, Glenn had much to consider.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Excerpt out of The Blake's employee handbook stating the company's core values.

"Blake Management was formed to provide outstanding senior living services that are meaningful, compassionate and innovative. Our central purpose states that our residents will enjoy a luxury, home-like community with resort style services and unmatched access to programs that promote well-being, security, longevity, family and self-worth. We expect that our employees will provide service and care that will make our communities the preferred choice among the senior population. Knowing our values will help you understand what is important at Blake Management." Take a moment to review our values.

Accountability

Each employee is accountable to be and do the very best for our residents and fellow employees.

Compassion

Compassion is to guide our words and actions as we care for our residents.

Integrity

Do the right thing in every situation.

Joy

By providing compassionate, meaningful and innovative care, we bring joy to our residents and their families.

Leadership

We will recruit, hire and develop leaders at every level of our organization.

Exhibit 2: Occupational Demographics of Gulf Breeze, FL

Population in July 2008: 6,580. Population change since 2000: +16.2%

Males: 3,105 (47.2%)
Females: 3,475 (52.8%)

Median resident age: 45.3 years
Florida median age: 38.7 years

Most Common Industries for Males:

- Health care (16%)
- Professional, scientific, and technical services (10%)
- Construction (9%)
- Finance and insurance (6%)
- Accommodation and food services (6%)
- Public administration (5%)
- Administrative and support and waste management services (3%)

Most Common Industries for Females:

- Health care (19%)
- Educational services (14%)
- Public administration (8%)
- Administrative and support and waste management services (8%)
- Professional, scientific, and technical services (4%)
- Finance and insurance (4%)
- Accommodation and food services (4%)

Source: www.city-data.com

Exhibit 3: Excerpt out of the Employee Handbook stating the company's policy regarding Disciplinary Action and Employee Counseling

“When an employee violates Blake Management policies and procedures, fails to report to work, disrupts and fails to promote a positive work environment; practices any unsafe or illegal activity or fails to perform and accomplish essential job tasks, his/her supervisor is responsible for acting promptly to correct the situation and to prevent further occurrences for mutual benefit. Often, the disciplinary actions are taken in a progressive manner in order to provide the opportunity for the employee to correct and improve his/her behavior and performance in order to meet the standards and requirements of Blake Management.

Examples of progressive steps in this process are:

Verbal Counseling

Suspension

Written Counseling

Discharge/Termination

Any and all of these steps may be omitted as we deem appropriate upon review of the circumstances. **There may also be offenses which are deemed sufficiently serious to result in immediate termination.** These may include, but are not limited to, acts of violence; fighting; theft; completing a licensed nursing task without a valid license; resident neglect, exploitation and/or abuse; abandonment of position; failure to show for work without notification; breach of confidentiality; carrying weapons of any sort; sleeping on duty; falsification of records; and the possession, use, sale, purchase, or distribution of any illegal drug(s)/substance(s), drug paraphernalia, or alcohol.”

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INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

Case Summary

Glenn Barclay and management at The Blake assisted living facility in Gulf Breeze, FL were considering the overall affect of revising its current smoking policy and implementing a stricter smoking policy. They were weighing the health and marketing benefits against the possible unintended consequences of implementing a new smoking policy for its employees.

Case Intended Uses

This case is designed for use in undergraduate Entrepreneurship or Strategy classes. Following class analysis of this case, students should be able to recognize the difficulty management faces when implementing change and the resistance to change. This case should be incorporated along with textbook reading assignments over the topics of Change, Motivation, and Decision Making. There are two options for this case to be used in the classroom. The first is to implement with the first chapters in the text over motivation and reward incentives and revisited later when the class discusses chapters over change and decision-making. The second option is to implement the case near the end of the course as a cumulative review over what students have learned and retained. By using the case as at the closing of the course, students will incorporate discussion over Change, Motivation, and Decision Making and how they work together when analyzing this case. This option will allow students to revisit and demonstrate what they have learned throughout the course.

*This case was developed based on interviews of management employed by the organization in question, Glenn Barclay at The Blake.

Learning Objectives

1. To identify ways management can use rewards and incentives to motivate employees.
2. To examine alternatives ways to motivate employees without using rewards
3. To identify ways employees react and resist management-introduced change.
4. To examine possible decision-making tactics when implementing a change in the work place.

Suggested Teaching Plan

We suggested using this case along side an in-depth class lecture and textbook reading of the corresponding chapters on Motivation, Change and Decision Making. As previously mentioned, this case can be used either with each topic or at the end of the course or as a cumulative review of topics covered. Both options allow the instructor to review the students' ability to retain knowledge and build the topics as the course progresses. We suggest addressing the questions in the following order:

Summary List of Discussion Questions

1. What are the key reasons that management would want to implement such a policy?
2. What are the potential unintended consequences management should consider when implementing the new non-smoking policy at The Blake?
3. How would the implementation of this policy affect the morale of employees that smoke and those that do not?
4. How should Blake management educate and inform their employees on the negative effects of smoking?
5. What would be an effective way to discipline employees caught breaking the new rule?
6. If the policy is enacted, should management incorporate a reward incentive program in order to keep employee morale high throughout the implementation?
7. Did the previous non-smoking policy at The Blake make for more productive and efficient employees? If so, why would it be necessary to add the additional restrictions to the policy?
8. If the policy is enacted, how should management prepare themselves and employees for the new non-smoking policy at The Blake?
9. Why might Blake employees, both smokers and non-smokers, resist the policy change?
10. What possible legal implications should The Blake management be prepared to deal with as a result of the new smoking policy?
11. What metrics should management use to measure the effectiveness of the new smoking policy?

Questions

1. What are the key reasons that management would want to implement such a policy?

An average student would point out the obvious answers that are throughout the case. They would mention the positive marketing and clean image the policy implementation would bring to the Blake. Other key reasons they would find in the case are the increased safety, lower insurance premiums, and higher employee productivity.

An “A” student would note many of the above key reasons as well as a couple of other beneficial incentives. They would observe that the change in policy is advantageous for the Blake’s future growth and keeping current with industry changes. Another key motive an “A” student would mention is the overall wellness and health of the staff at the Blake. Having a healthy staff and environment can lead to happy and satisfied employees and residents as well as numerous other improvements.

2. What are the potential unintended consequences management should consider when implementing the new non-smoking policy at The Blake?

An average student would recognize that taking smoke breaks away can cause the potential for unhappy and disgruntled employees and lead to an unstable work environment. They would also note that some employees might feel this action is too authoritative and that their freedom is being taken away. There is a possibility that employees will be asking themselves, “What will they take next?”

An “A” student would take the answer above one step further and acknowledge that an unintended consequence of the discontent employees could be employee rebellion. If employees feel that their right to smoke is unfairly being violated they may intentionally slack on their job or deliberately break company policies. These actions could lead to stressful relationships and an unhealthy environment for residents and staff. An “A” student should also point out the unintended possible legal consequences. The Blake is following Baptist Healthcare's policy implementation and expecting the same results. They should recognize that although Baptist Healthcare did not have any legal repercussions, The Blake should consult with a lawyer in case issues were to arise. Staff members may feel that they are being discriminated against and take legal action, for which The Blake should be prepared.

3. How would the implementation of this policy affect the morale of employees that smoke and those that do not?

An average student would be aware that the withdrawal from an addiction as strong as cigarettes for an employee could cause moodiness and anxiety. They would acknowledge that the morale for smoking employees would greatly decline and possible cause resentment to the management. The average student would see that the morale of employees who do not smoke might increase due to the fact that the smell of cigarettes would not be evident on their co-workers uniforms.

An “A” student, as an average student, would see how the morale of a smoking employee would decrease. They may also note the potential for some positive changes in morale for smoking employees that have wanted to quit smoking but needed a reason and available resources to help them through the process. An “A” student will recognize the potential

for an optimistic reaction from non-smoking employees, but also expect a negative change in their morale due to the fact that their smoking co-workers are unpleasant to work with. The withdrawal symptoms that affect the smoking staff will essentially influence the entire work atmosphere at The Blake.

4. How should Blake management educate and inform their employees on the negative effects of smoking?

An average student would find in the case that the best ways to educate and inform employees on the negative effects of smoking are through counselors and educational literature. They would recognize that counseling could provide information on the most successful ways to quit smoking as well as educating employees on the harmful health effects from smoking. Providing literature and informational websites on quitting smoking would be extremely beneficial for employees to spend time outside of their work hours learning the consequences of smoking.

An “A” student would develop creative ways to enhance the education and counseling for smoking residents. For example, an “A” student might suggest that there be different levels of learning for each employee’s job description. Depending on the level of education required for each specific job at The Blake, employees may need additional assistance in understanding the health risks and quitting smoking strategies. By breaking the employees into groups by job description, educational training can be catered in a way that helps each group comprehend in the most effective manner.

5. What would be an effective way to discipline employees caught breaking the new rule?

An average student would suggest that the most effective way to discipline employees that break the new rule would be through additional counseling and a warning system. Additional counseling would be used to re-enforce the harsh effects of smoking and potentially offer additional advice on ways to fight the addiction and cravings. They should describe a cautionary system that would allow employees to receive a “warning” if caught smoking and notification that if the company policy is violated again the employee will be terminated.

An “A” student would agree with the average student, but in addition have a creative suggestion, such as a performance improvement plan. The plan would assist employees that were having a difficult time discontinuing smoking and help them monitor how many cigarettes a day they smoked. The plan would lay out a schedule and eventually lead to a determined date when zero cigarettes would continue to be smoked.

6. If the policy is enacted, should management incorporate a reward incentive program in order to keep employee morale high throughout the implementation?

An average student would mention the benefits of providing a reward incentive program. They would then find in the case that Glenn and management at The Blake would not offer reward incentive programs because it will create resentment throughout the company instead of comradery because there are some employees that do not smoke. An “A” student will likely point out that while reward incentive programs are a great way to motivate employees and they can put a positive spin on change, they are not always the best option. The Blake could choose to motivate employees not to smoke by example of

how they are essentially helping themselves by improving their health. It is a long-term personal reward as opposed to a management induced monetary reward. Words of encouragement and support are also effective motivational tools to help struggling employees cope with the stress of quitting smoking.

7. Did the current non-smoking policy at The Blake make for more productive and efficient employees? If so, why would it be necessary to add the additional restrictions to the policy?

An average student will be able to point out that the current non-smoking policy at The Blake did not make more productive and efficient employees. They will draw from the case that employees were leaving the site to smoke and thus becoming a liability for The Blake.

An “A” student would take the average student answer and develop the reasons why the current policy is decreasing productivity and efficiency. Reasons may include, but are not limited to, employees giving off a bad image smoking in their uniforms around the property and taking longer and more frequent breaks than permitted. The “A” student would also point out that while implementing a new policy will keep employees from smoking on property and taking longer and more frequent breaks, it may be a distraction to employees at work who are experiencing nicotine withdrawals and cause them to temporarily be less productive. This would draw from considering how management makes decisions and weighs the pros and cons of implementing change.

8. If the new policy is enacted, how should management prepare themselves and employees for the new non-smoking policy at The Blake?

An average student would draw from the case possible ways for management at The Blake to prepare employees for the change in policy. Preparation would include informative meeting to introduce the concept and address concerns, followed by counseling and various programs about the dangers of cigarettes and secondhand smoke.

An “A” student may take it a step further and note that it is important when implementing change in the work place for all levels of employees to be informed and feel like they were involved in the decision making process. An “A” student will also recognize that when there is a change in regulation management should consider the possibility of resistance to change among employees.

9. Why might Blake employees, both smokers and non-smokers, resist the policy change?

An average student would note that it is natural for people to be skeptical about change, especially when it involves lifestyle choices. They would elaborate on the fact that smokers would resist the change because it would require them rearranging their habits and experience nicotine withdrawals. Non-smokers would also experience resistance to the change in smoking policy because they would have to deal with the irritable employees trying to quit smoking and having withdrawals.

An “A” student would note ways for employees to overcome resistance to change. They would also look at the pros and cons of resistance to change and note that often times when management implements change in the work place it is natural for employees to resist the change and wonder what else they will be asked to change in the future. They

would also point out that resistance to change is not always a bad thing and how a change agent could potentially facilitate such a change.

10. What possible legal implications should The Blake management be prepared to deal with as a result of the new smoking policy?

An average student would note that there are always potential legal implications when dealing with changing regulations that are going to interfere with employees personally. They would suggest that management consult with attorneys and make sure that in no way can employees come back and state that they have been discriminated against. An “A” student would elaborate on the previous answer by including how legal implications should be addressed when employees try to claim smoking as a disability. They will also acknowledge the possibility of the employees forming a union in an effort to protect themselves from Glenn’s decision. If this were to happen, the union could grow and become more involved in other facets of the facility’s operation.

11. What metrics should management use to measure the effectiveness of the new smoking policy?

An average student would pick up in the case that overall health of employees was very important to The Blake. They would also note from the case that Glenn did not implement a metric to measure the success of the new policy. Tenant happiness and employee happiness is also a way to measure the success. Savings in insurance premiums is a more monetary way to measure the effects of the smoking policy. Decline in employee absences and shortened breaks will also show that the new policy is working.

An “A” student would recommend and recognize the same as the average student but would take it a step forward to recognize other possible metrics. Such as noticing when employees smell like cigarette smoke. However, an “A” student would also point out that some of these metrics could be a false indicator because they do not take into account what The Blake cannot regulate, such as employees smoking off the clock.

EPILOGUE

The Blake decided to implement the new and revised non-smoking policy that prohibits employees from smoking while on the clock. Employees were no longer permitted to smoke during their 15-minute breaks but were still allowed to smoke on their 30 min lunch breaks because they were not be clocked in. The Blake implemented the policy July 1, 2010. After announcing the new policy to employees earlier in 2010, they held a couple company meeting prior to implementation in order to address any worries or concerns. The Blake provided counseling to employees to inform them of the dangers of smoking and help those wanting to quit. However, according to Glenn, “No employees have taken advantage of the counseling programs or the on-line support program that was reimbursable through the company.” Since implementing the new policy, they had a few complications with one employee, which resulted in a verbal warning. Despite the issues with this employee, Glenn remained positive and believed that he had made the best decision for the future of The Blake.