

## **Assignment 1 - Analysing an Influencing Attempt Using Course Concepts.**

**Deadline: June 6th 11.59 pm.**

**Marks:** This assignment is worth 12% of the total course grade. It will be marked out of 100. The marks will be available in turnitin (not Blackboard)

**Length:** 550 - 850 words (this is a short assignment)

**Submission:** You must use turnitin.com for submission of this assignment. Please go to the turnitin file in the Course Information area for details.

### **Instructions**

This assignment is based on chapter 3 of the course text.

### **General Requirement**

Listen carefully to this recording of an interaction between a Conductor and a Supervisor (A Chief Rail Traffic Controller) working for CN Rail and then answer the following questions in 3 or 4 paragraphs using concepts taken from the course text.

<https://globalnews.ca/video/rd/807cf274-1086-11ea-80e5-0242ac110003/?jwsourc=em>

This recording, from Global News, contains a transcript of the interaction. In the transcript, the Chief Rail Traffic Controller (CRTC) is referred to as 'Dispatch' which is the name of the Department that controls the movement of trains. You may need to listen more than once and take notes. Read the background information and discussion below to help make sense of this interaction.

### **Specific Questions**

1. Using Yukl's framework, what influencing tactics does the Chief Controller use and what tactics does he not use? Describe the tactics that are used in your own words and show how the Controller's words fit with these categories.
2. Using the Power Bases framework derived from work by French and Raven as described in course texts 1.c.5 and 1.c.6, what beliefs does the Conductor appear to have about the Controller? Give evidence for your judgements. What beliefs does he not have?
3. What effect, if any, do you think that a) the influencing tactics used by the Controller and b) the 'Power Bases' beliefs of the Conductor concerning the Controller had on the behaviour of the Conductor, during the interaction and afterwards. Give reasons for your judgement.

### **Form of the Assignment**

Write the assignment in **paragraph form** (3 or 4) not in question/answer form. You may start your assignment with an introductory sentence. But the bulk of your assignment should answer the questions above. You do not need a final conclusion.

Do not provide advice or prescriptions about what 'should' have been done. This assignment requires you to make judgements and provide supporting evidence but not provide a 'personal opinion'. The aim of this assignment is to analyse the interaction and not solve a problem or present your personal viewpoint.

### **Marking Criteria**

- a) The assignment followed the instructions
- b) The assignment was well written and easy to understand
- c) The assignment demonstrated a good understanding of the interaction
- d) The assignment demonstrated a good understanding of course concepts
- e) The assignment applied course concepts effectively to the scenario
- f) The assignment provided plausible and supported answers to all the set questions

### **References**

Do not use or refer to any texts outside of the course material. Course texts should be referenced like this:

2020 Rodwell G. "**1.c.6.Making Use of the Bases of Power Framework in Analysing Real Situations**", Course Text for Sosc2140: Organizational Behaviour. Winter 2021. Douglas College.

### **Keep it Brief**

This is not an essay or a paper. Additional writing that goes beyond the 850 word limit, not counting the title and references, will not be marked. If you have less than 550 words, then your assignment is probably too short.

### **Feedback on this Assignment**

Feedback is provided in turnitin. If you need detailed information about your grade or what you could have done better it is best to visit me in my gathertown office.

### **Late Assignments**

Unless a specific arrangement has been made, late assignments may lose up to 20% of the mark. If you are completing a late assignment at the end of the course you should arrange a date for submission. Assignments handed in after the final exam may not be marked.

### **Academic Integrity and Dishonesty**

Make sure that you are familiar with all Douglas College policies and requirements. You cannot submit any part of the work of another student or allow your work to be copied.

Ideas taken from the course text should be paraphrased with the exception of the specific names of concepts (e.g. 'legitimate power'). Copies of part of the course texts with alterations to a few words and phrases does not count as paraphrasing.

This assignment does not require you to consult other sources. Do not Google.

All violations of the Academic Integrity and Dishonesty policy will be reported to the Associate Dean.

### **How Can I Help?**

I am happy to answer any questions by email or in office hours. The more specific the question the better. Do not leave your questions until the last minute.

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### **Background Information**

This recording of an interaction between a Chief Controller and a Conductor was released well after the event by the Union, the "Teamsters", in support of their campaign for improved working conditions. The conversation involves the question of whether a train is going to be moved to a 'change off' point where another engine crew will be waiting. Following the conversation, the train was not moved by this crew. The Conductor was subsequently disciplined for 'insubordination' (failure to comply with a contractual instruction). The Union did not grieve this or file a complaint with Transport Canada.

The collective agreement at the time of the recording was unclear. Although it gave crew the right to book a rest period when feeling fatigued at the end of a long shift, this right could be overridden, and they could still be instructed to work up to 12 hours and, in exceptional circumstances, even beyond that. CN rail, at that time, operated on a 'work-now-grieve-later' principle in which crew members were expected to comply with instructions and bring a formal grievance after the fact if they could show that the instruction actually broke the collective agreement. In practice this was very difficult to demonstrate and the Union had lost several grievances. (The collective agreement has since been tightened)

Transport Canada is the regulatory body and, at that time (following the Lac-Mégantic disaster), they were very concerned with safety issues. But the formal regulations still said that crew could work up to 12 hours in a shift. Transport Canada does not get involved in operational issues on

a day to day basis. They set regulations, carry out inspections and respond to complaints, usually days or weeks after an event. They do not get involved in giving specific direction about whether a specific train should be moved or not.

At the time of the recording, the conductor said that they had worked over 10 hours. At one point the Union claimed on their web site that the additional travel to the change off point would have taken the shift length beyond 12 hours. But it appears as if this might only have been true if there had been more delay. The Union did not subsequently report the incident to Transport Canada and neither the Conductor nor the Controller talked about this 12 hour rule. So it does not appear, on the surface at least, as if the Controller was breaking any of the current regulatory rules and regulations as interpreted by CN Rail. This is partly because existing rules were so loose and ambiguous. That does not mean, of course, that the actions of the Chief Controller were safe or ethical.

### **What Did The Conductor Really Mean?**

One of the difficult parts of this assignment is trying to understand what the Conductor really means by his request that the Controller should contact Transport Canada (and the Health and Safety 'rep') and his insistence that he is 'not refusing duty'.

Because Transport Canada, like almost all regulatory bodies, does not get involved in day to day operational decisions, it is very unclear who exactly would have taken such an unusual call from the Chief Controller, if it had been made. There might have been someone who could have clarified the regulations (although they would have been very surprised that a Chief Controller needed any clarification). But they almost certainly wouldn't have been prepared to make any judgement or decision about a particular train until a complaint had been brought or an inspection had uncovered rule violations, and they would only have done this many days later.

There are two possibilities. Either the conductor knows this and he is making the request knowing that it is not realistic, or he is genuinely unaware of the role and functioning of Transport Canada. As he is an experienced conductor and he is recording the conversation to pass to the Union, the likelihood is that he has some other motive and that this is not just a straightforward request. What then is the point of this request? What is he trying to do?

Similar questions arise in trying to understand the conductor's emphatic claim that he is 'not refusing duty'. Clearly the controller doesn't take this claim at face value. If the conductor had subsequently moved the train we might see this as a straightforward agreement to comply with the instruction. But the train wasn't moved. How, then, should we understand this claim? Why does he claim that he is 'not refusing duty' when he won't move the train?

Thinking about these issues will help you understand the interaction better and may help with your ability to answer parts of the questions above.

As you can see from this example, even brief communication is often complex. Theories which present communication as mainly a flow or exchange of information are highly oversimplified

and often unhelpful. Communication often involves attempts to get others to act in certain ways and contains claims that have underlying meanings and cannot simply be taken at face value. Participants in communicative interaction interpret these underlying meanings and make judgements about their validity.

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### **Important Writing Tip: Indicating Areas of Uncertainty, Partial Explanations and a Lack of Total Fit between Theory and Reality**

The application of concepts and theories to real world events is often full of uncertainty. The theories themselves are probabilistic and they often don't fit exactly to the scenario. We are often missing important information. In applying theories and concepts it is important not to 'force' the situation to fit a theory or concept by interpreting it selectively or ignoring contradictory information. It is also important, in most cases, not to be too confident in our application. We should see our analysis as a sort of 'good guess'. It is a guess that is hopefully well supported, informed by established theories and based on a careful reading of events. But it is still far from being certain or complete.

There are two writing tips that can show that you are aware of uncertainty and any potential lack of fit between a concept or theory and the situation that you are analysing.

Firstly, you are advised to make occasional but regular use of 'modifiers' such as 'probably', 'it is likely that', 'possibly', 'feasible', 'credible' and so on. Without overdoing them, these indicate that you are aware of the lack of certainty.

Secondly, if you are offering an explanation of behaviour or performance you should show that you are aware that you are not providing a total answer. You could write, for example: "One major reason why this person acted in this way is probably because...." You should avoid the implication that you have provided a complete answer. Don't write: "the reason why they acted in this way is...." There are likely to be other factors involved.

Thirdly, if you see any potential lack of exact correspondence or 'fit' between the main concept or theory and the situation, then, without taking up too much space, it is useful to point this out. For example, suppose you are applying the concept of expert power to a situation where the worker recognizes that their manager has expertise in some areas but not others, you might write: "the concept of expert power may partially apply to this situation but only for tasks where the worker recognizes the expertise of the manager".