


3 Ways to Overcome an Organizational Crisis

Take an insider's look at how a school was pulled from the brink of collapse and transformed in less than a year into one of the "Best Places to Work."

By Timothy I. Thomas



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SITUATION

Paula, owner and director of The Margaret George School & Child Care Center in King of Prussia, PA, had recently learned that one of her most productive and well-liked employees had suddenly quit. Understandably upset, it was the tipping point for Paula. “There were 60 million memos going around and things were not getting done!” The departure of her key employee underscored the need to take a hard look at organizational issues and make some major, long-overdue changes.

Out of desperation, Paula reached out to Makarios Consulting — a management consulting and training firm that specializes in helping companies identify ways to improve their overall structure and strategic plan, as well as the performance and effectiveness of each person within the organization.

ACTION STEPS

An organizational assessment was implemented to uncover the issues that were impacting both effectiveness and morale at The Margaret George School. After developing a questionnaire in collaboration with Paula, Makarios interviewed every employee individually and confidentially, giving them each a chance to be heard.

The assessment uncovered a problematic communication system consisting of numerous memos but limited face-to-face dialogue, inconsistency in Paula’s leadership style and level of involvement in the day-to-day operations, and a reactive environment ripe with crisis. Waves of stress emanated throughout the organization.

To resolve these issues, Makarios provided Paula with:

- **Leadership coaching.** One-on-one coaching helped Paula communicate with her employees on a day-to-day basis and directly impacted how she managed the center.
- **Employee communications skills.** By establishing regular one-on-one meetings with employees and staff meetings, Paula was able to improve the quality of communication between individuals and groups while keeping employees actively involved in day-to-day operations.
- **Conflict resolution training.** Paula learned concrete ways to resolve conflict in a more positive, productive manner and to provide her employees with consistent, constructive feedback and coaching.

RESULTS

Paula says she began to see results immediately when she implemented Makarios’ recommendations. Within three months, her leadership skills had increased tremendously and there was a noticeable difference in the way she interacted and communicated with her staff. There was also a marked improvement in communications among her staff members.

Over time, Paula transformed from an inconsistent director to a proactive and visionary leader. Through coaching, she developed self-awareness, acquired new behaviors, and ultimately created a positive change that rippled throughout the center.

According to Paula, there are “far less conflicts in the organization” and she is able to apply her newfound skills to resolve most before they escalate to crises.

In fact, things improved so dramatically that in February 2006, The Margaret George School & Child Care Center received the “Best Place to Work” Award from the Delaware Valley Association for Education of Young Children. This award is based on a wide variety of factors impacting the work environment including systems, policies and processes (e.g., wages, benefits, performance evaluations, and professional development), leadership and interpersonal aspects (e.g., communication, teamwork, staff meetings, decision making and problem solving).

Staff perception factored heavily into the award process, and five staff members submitted letters of recommendation highlighting the improvements in communication achieved through one-on-one and staff meetings. One such letter went so far as to describe teamwork as extending beyond the “room level” in the school: teachers now view themselves and function as part of several teams. They team with the children, with the parents, with Paula, and ultimately, they view themselves as part of a family within the center.

Looking back, Paula recognizes that although it took courage to allow an outside firm to analyze her organization — and specifically the impact of her leadership style — she received important feedback in a non-threatening way and was encouraged to believe that she could effect real and lasting change.



CONCLUSION

The changes brought about in The Margaret George School exemplify the core goals of Makarios Consulting: to bring about transformation in people and in business. By helping people become great leaders, effective communicators, and proactive team players, Makarios improves not only the business’ efficiency and bottom line numbers, but also brings satisfaction and fulfillment to each and every person within the organization.

Contact Us

Makarios’ solutions are inspired by the needs of our clients, including their demand for operational excellence and a competitive edge without incurring the overhead of large consulting firms. To talk with the principals of Makarios and to transform your organization, call us at 610-380-8735, or email Timothy Thomas at thomast@mc-llc.com or Rip Tilden at riptilden@mc-llc.com.

About Makarios

Makarios Consulting is a full-service management consulting firm. We work with business owners and entrepreneurs who want to grow their companies and execute more effectively every day. Our unique set of management disciplines and tools helps clients refine their business strategy, improve their operating performance, and build healthy leadership teams. Clarity and accountability provide our clients with the traction to outperform their competitors – every week, every month, every quarter. To find out more, please visit www.MakariosConsulting.com.