A New Era of Leadership: The Case of the Windsor Spitfires

The Windsor Spitfires Hockey Team’s Journey to the Memorial Cup:
A New Era of Leadership

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

This research is presented in case form and looks at the Windsor Spitfires hockey organization (a Junior A Hockey organization) over the past three years. The case is presented as follows:

As Peter glanced out his window he reflected on the current season and the talented team the Spitfires had built. He wondered what the next steps to further entrench this leadership culture in the roots of the organization and make this change ‘stick’. They had performed well so far but there was a long way to go to meet the goals of the organization. He realized there were many challenges although he was confident in the individuals and leaders the organization has in place. But as a businessman he always looked for ways to get better. Peter wondered whether a blockbuster trade for a new ‘star’ player would make them a better team or have a negative affect on team chemistry. How would the team leadership be affected by the ‘star’ player’s well-known arrogance? Peter would have to bring a recommendation to his partners within the next few weeks, so they could make a decision before the trade deadline.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

Francine Schlosser from the University of Windsor provided a detailed discussion of the creation of a positive leadership environment in the Windsor Spitfires hockey over the past three years. The researcher presents this research in case form, for students to analyze and learn from.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

The researcher was able to make many findings about the Windsor Spitfires in order to write this compelling case. Schlosser found that following a hazing scandal in 2005, the organization went through a difficult period. There were numerous issues surrounding the involvement of different players and coaches and trust concerns followed. By the end of the season key players had been traded, coaches fired and a new ownership group was announced. The new ownership group hoped it would be able to create an environment that would get the team back on track and make Windsor a place where players wanted to play. They took steps to rebuild trust in the organization and establish an atmosphere that recognized and valued authentic leadership.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This research can primarily be used in undergraduate and graduate level business classes. It is especially relevant for classes in leadership and change management, and the researcher recommends its use within a capstone leadership or strategy course.
Students can use this research to examine a real-life situation to be used as a learning opportunity. Readers should focus their attention on the steps that were taken to rebuild trust in the organization and establish an atmosphere that recognized and valued leadership characteristics. They should also think of possible recommendations that will establish a sustainable culture of authentic leadership and trust.

CITATION


KEYWORDS

Leadership, Servant Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Team Cohesion, Sports Management, Implementing And Managing Change

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Leaders must build and communicate a strong mission and strategy that will encourage positive change in organizational culture. As the change occurs, it is important to understand how to make this change ‘stick’.