Implementation and Effect Evaluation of Situational Leadership II Training in the Sales Department of ZDTQ Pharmaceutical Group

Ying Li¹, Liu Du¹, Lang Cheng²*, and John T. Delaney³

¹Business School, Sichuan University, Wangjiang Road No. 29, Chengdu 610064, People’s Republic of China
²Zhengda Tianqing Pharmaceutical Group, Fu Ying Road 1099, Nanjing, 210000, Jiangsu, People’s Republic of China
³Saint Vincent College, 300 Fraser Purchase Road Latrobe, PA 15650

Abstract. As a leading enterprise in the industry, ZDTQ Pharmaceutical Group should maintain its continuous competitiveness. Therefore, the University of group enterprises has carried out a series of training contents around this position, aiming to improve this level’s core position ability. This paper evaluates and analyzes the effectiveness of the “Situational Leadership II” course training for front-line managers in the marketing department of ZDTQ Pharmaceutical Group to provide a reference and basis for subsequent training. Based on the situation of the 96 managers who participated in the training in 2020, combined with the theory of Situational Leadership, this paper uses the research methods of questionnaire survey and In-depth interview to analyze the data before and after the training, analyze the effect of the training, and put forward suggestions for the follow-up development of the training. The results show that the “Situational Leadership II” course training can effectively improve the leadership and management ability of the front-line marketing managers in the marketing department, promote the development of direct subordinate ability, and improve the team’s work efficiency. Keywords: Situational leadership theory, Human resource management, Managers, Personnel training, Pharmaceutical industry.

1 Introduction

The pharmaceutical industry has always been the lifeblood of the country. Since 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 has also put higher requirements on the operation of the pharmaceutical industry [1]. Although the epidemic has affected the industry since 2020, it still maintains a continuous and stable growth rate.

Because of the policy push, pharmaceutical companies face a changing market landscape where traditional business models are no longer applicable, product bonuses are substantially reduced, and competition is increasingly fierce. This background requires pharmaceutical companies to achieve more efficient academic marketing and improve the management effectiveness of their marketing departments [2].
ZDTQ Pharmaceutical Group (especially ZDTQ Pharmaceutical Group Co., LTD.) is an innovative pharmaceutical group covering R&D, manufacturing and marketing, and it is currently the leading pharmaceutical company in China. After years of operation, ZDTQ Pharmaceutical Group has built a professional academic promotion system, professional service system and marketing network. At the same time, to better undertake the market development work, the scale of the marketing team will be further expanded in ZDTQ Pharmaceutical Group, a representative enterprise in this industry. In order to promote the talent development of the enterprise marketing department, the enterprise University began to introduce the “Situational Leadership” course training in 2018. Therefore, training evaluation around the application of the course is a necessary reference basis for deciding how to continuously optimize the course in the future and expand its value. This study is also of value to enterprise practice and related research promotion.

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of implementing the Situational Leadership II course in the marketing departments and provide the following contributions.

1. It is hoped that this study will evaluate its effectiveness in pharmaceutical marketing management, demonstrate the value and significance of the theory and its curriculum for the marketing team, and provide a reference and basis for the ongoing application of the idea in the company.

2. By analyzing the research questionnaires and interviews for the situational leadership course, this paper aims to explore the practical application scenarios of situational leadership theory in enterprises and improve the training content for the subsequent practice of situational leadership theory.

The study mainly comprises the following parts, and the research routine is shown in figure 1. The first chapter is Introduction, which precisely describes the research background; the second chapter is the theoretical foundation and conducts an overview of existing research; the third chapter composes the job competency and critical behaviors of front-line marketing managers; the fourth chapter analyzes the reasons for behavioral changes through questionnaire research and interview assessment; the fifth chapter is the research conclusion,
this part summarizes assessment results, and gives suggestions for the subsequent application and implementation.

2 Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Overview of Situational Leadership II Theory

Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard in 1969 proposed situational Leader Theory. It is a theory that refers to a business or organizational leader’s ability to determine the developmental stage of team members based on different task situations and then adjust his or her leadership style and management approach in a timely and flexible manner [3].

The application of Situational Leadership II theory aims to help each individual in the team have the opportunity and willingness to develop himself while accomplishing specific tasks, so that he can achieve a state of continuous optimal performance for a particular goal or mission [4].

2.2 Researches Related to Situational Leadership Theory

Some scholars mentioned in their research that using the situational leadership model helps performance managers understand the difference between leadership and management, and achieve differentiated performance management of employees [5].

Based on Situational Leadership Theory, Rodic and Maric proposed that Leadership efficiency is determined by the degree of compatibility between the dominant style of leadership and the level of readiness of employees [6], scholars have also explored the education and training courses guided by this theory [7, 8], and the application of this theory in human resource management and team management [9, 10].

Studies have shown a positive correlation between the degree of situational leadership and the level of motivation for achievement [11], in summary, promoting the situational leadership model can help managers understand the matching relationship between leadership models and people situations, adjust their leadership styles promptly, and help advance corporate performance goals [12].

In addition, research by practitioners in the healthcare industry points out that using situational leadership theory to deeply analyze departmental personnel states and purposefully apply different leadership styles to management practices is vital to coordinate the use of resources and contribute to the formation of organizational behavior patterns toward higher performance.

We have seen that although situational leadership theory and the Situational Leadership II course have been widely recognized in many countries and many industries, the timeliness of application in pharmaceutical companies, especially in the marketing departments of pharmaceutical companies, has yet to be verified. Therefore, we initiated this study with the expectation that this study will provide a reference for applying and practicing situational leadership theory in the marketing departments of pharmaceutical companies.

3 Analysis of the Core Tasks of Front-line Marketing Managers

To ensure the completeness and objectivity of the DACUM workshops, the following variables were considered: gender, age, divisional age, region, management range, stage performance level, and interpersonal style (PDP behavioral style test) [13, 14]. To sort out the core job responsibilities of front-line marketing managers, the corporate university conducted 4 DACUM job task workshops, covering 48 front-line marketing managers.
Table 1. Six core job competencies and the corresponding weights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance Analysis and Resolution</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Performance tracking and follow-up</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and execution of marketing strategies</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Action plan development and execution</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering Team Personnel</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Deliver corporate systems, processes, and culture</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Situational Leadership II training research questionnaire collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid research questionnaires collected for the Office Manager’s Situational Leadership II (in units)</th>
<th>Pre-training</th>
<th>End of training</th>
<th>One month after training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office Manager</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Manager</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Specialist</td>
<td>1104</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DACUM workshops based on job-critical tasks to sort out the following six core job competencies and the corresponding weights as shown in table 1.

In the above six core job competencies, the weights are calculated by quantitative scoring, which represents the job’s importance in front-line marketing managers’ perception of their job responsibilities.

4 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Training

4.1 Results and Analysis of the Training’s Assessment of Participants’ Behavior Change

At the end of the four sessions of the “Situational Leadership II” course conducted in 2020, we evaluated 96 participants in the four sessions to provide training feedback.

1) Collection of behavior change survey questionnaire

In the research questionnaire, to ensure the research data’s validity and authenticity, we designed discriminatory questions for calibration and eliminated invalid inconsistent questionnaires. The valid research questionnaires collected were as shown in table 2.

2) Results and analysis of the office manager’s research questionnaire on behavior change

The average office size of the 92 office managers covered by the research questionnaire is 17.07, slightly higher than the average enterprise management range of 16.59.

We have sorted out office managers’ six core job responsibilities through the DACUM workshop in figure 2. By rating the office manager’s completion of their key responsibilities, we can see that the other five scores have improved by more than 30%, except for performance analysis and resolution.

Performance analysis and resolution is the most critical job responsibility for the marketing team. However, performance analysis and resolution are independent of front-line marketing managers and are influenced by the market environment and other factors.

3) Regional managers on behavior change research questionnaire results and analysis

The regional managers are the direct leaders of the office managers, and their evaluation of the office managers can also give feedback on the effectiveness of the training of the Situational Leadership II course. This study was conducted on 21 regional managers across China, and all obtained valid research data. The questionnaires were distributed twice, once before the training began and once a month after the movement ended.

As shown in figure 3, the average score given by the 21 regional managers was only 5.24. Still, one month after the training, 14 of 21 regional managers had improved their scores compared with the pre-training scores, accounting for 66.7%.
Figure 2. Changes in the office managers’ ratings of the completion of their key responsibilities

Figure 3. Changes in overall team ratings by regional managers
(4) Results and analysis of academic commissioners’ questionnaire on behavior change

The research was conducted for 1104 academic commissioners in the office, 1104 valid questionnaires were collected before the training, and we collected 1017 questionnaires one month after the training.

In the Academic Specialist’s ratings of office managers’ leadership behaviors, we can observe an increase in ratings across eight key dimensions. As figure 4 shown, the most significant improvement was in “Asking for ideas”, with a 53.23% increase. Using situational leadership theory, office managers can ask for insights during the leadership process, which helps improve people’s engagement in the task and complete the job efficiently.

“Timely follow-up and follow-up after communication” was rated lower than the other seven items. Situational leadership is more about two-way leadership’s observed behavior rather than managing processes and shaping culture.

4.2 First-line Marketing Managers Training Content Interviews

(1) Basic information about the interview

Interview implementer: ZDTQ Pharmaceutical Group Corporate University Marketing Training Institute training manager.

Interview scope: First-line marketing managers who received training in the “Situational Leadership II” course in June 2020.

Several interviewees: Based on variables such as gender, geographical distribution, age distribution, product line distribution, and range of team size, in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 people.

(2) Analysis of the interview reports

By analyzing the interview reports of the 12 interviewees, we extracted the following critical information.

There are more scenarios for using S1 type leadership profile and S2 type leadership profile. Newly promoted marketing managers’ teams are generally freshly established or have undergone significant structural adjustments, with a high proportion of new employees within one year. As a result, many employees are in the developmental stages of D1 (i.e., high willingness and low competence) and D2 (i.e., frustrated and reduced willingness and low
competence) in reaching mission-critical goals. Therefore, front-line marketing managers are more often adjusted to the corresponding S1-type leadership pattern (i.e., inadequate support, high guidance) and S2-type leadership pattern (i.e., increased support, high guidance) in their work.

The S4 leadership pattern is not used much but is commonly used for coaching core team members and significantly impacts the team’s overall performance. All 12 interviewees indicated that the team, in accomplishing performance goals, had 1-2 employees in the D4 developmental stage, i.e., high ability and willingness. Therefore, although the number of employees in the D4 developmental stage in the team is less than 10%, it is the most valued.

Regarding the external environment for applying situational leadership theory, the interviewees gave feedback that they must establish a top-to-bottom team coaching process and culture. Specifically, they need to practice using situational leadership theory in the management of office managers by regional managers. On the one hand, give sufficient guidance to office managers when they need it; on the other hand, provide high support when they can fully delegate and trust, rather than managing and monitoring everything.

4.3 Conclusions of the Course Effectiveness Evaluation

From the results of the effectiveness assessment and the content analysis of the in-depth interviews, it is clear that after attending the course, office managers actively apply and practice what they have learned in their work, bringing the following values to the company.

(1) First-line marketing managers’ job leadership skills are improved. After training, front-line marketing managers can adjust their leadership style by targeting academic specialists in different task scenarios, which can promote high performance in achieving task goals, ultimately achieving the role of enhancing the team.

(2) The academic specialists of the first-line marketing managers’ team can get more attention in being led and more opportunities to express their ideas, demands, and thoughts.

(3) While motivation and initiative increase, academic specialists receive more timely and better guidance in being led. Because situational leadership theory encourages front-line marketing managers to stimulate each other’s ideas, it can promote personal development and improvement in benign coaching.

5 Research Conclusions and Outlook

5.1 Research Findings

After implementing the Situational Leadership II course in ZDTQ Pharmaceuticals Group, 96 front-line marketing managers were evaluated on their job behaviors and competencies based on situational leadership theory. The following suggestions were made for the marketing department to better realize this theory’s effectiveness.

1. Expand the coverage and depth of the “Situational Leadership II” course in the company’s marketing department. Currently, the course is aimed at first-line marketing managers, with the subsequent need to expand the course’s coverage.

2. Strengthen basic skills training, and lay a solid foundation for the practice of “Situational Leadership II”. The core of situational leadership lies in the management and coaching of people. Still, because of the rapid development of companies in recent years, some managers have been promoted quickly, but their primary job skills still need to be improved.
5.2 Research Outlook

The study still has some limitations due to multiple factors.

First, our training evaluation for the Situational Leadership course is still limited to Level 3, which cannot directly correlate training effectiveness with performance results. Subsequently, studies can raise the evaluation to Level 4.

Second, the study has only observed short-term changes in competencies and behaviors. To objectively present the sustained value to the marketing department, we need to extend the study period to assess better and quantify the effectiveness of the training.

Third, the enterprise’s application of Contextual Leadership II is highly dependent on the internal and external environment.

This paper is funding supported by China Scholarship Council of China.

References