Applied Leadership and Motivation Consulting Brief

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Executive Summary

Northside Shared Services is adjusting to a new case-management system while also handling higher service volume. Taylor's priority meetings, decision log, and coaching check-ins have helped bring back some structure, but the case still shows problems with unclear priorities, limited employee voice, and unclear access to visible development opportunities. The main recommendations are to clarify who sets priorities, make the champion role more transparent, and use coaching differently based on employee needs. Progress should be reviewed through both performance results and employee experience measures.

Case Overview and Main Issue

Area	Consulting Summary
Brief case overview	Northside introduced a new case-management system during a 9 percent volume increase, and performance declined before partially improving after Taylor added more structure.
Main leadership and motivation issue	Taylor restored some structure, but the team still lacks a clear and fair system for priorities, employee voice, and visible development opportunities.

Leadership Analysis

Taylor first responded to the rollout with daily directive emails and by selecting three experienced employees as system champions. Early in the rollout, this more directive approach was reasonable because the team was learning a new system, service volume had increased, and performance indicators were moving in the wrong direction. This supports the idea that

leadership behavior should be evaluated in relation to the situation, including work demands and employee needs at that time (Vroom & Jago, 2007).

The concern is that the same structure may not fit the team as well as the transition continues. Ben is newer and benefits from priority meetings and check-ins, while Aisha has seven years of experience and says the daily instructions make it harder to use her judgment. Taylor's later changes are worth keeping because priority clarity, leadership explanation, and feedback usefulness improved after adding the Monday meetings, decision log, and coaching check-ins. The next step is to make that structure more useful by clarifying authority, protecting experienced employees' voice, and making opportunity decisions easier to understand.

Motivation Diagnosis

Self-Determination Theory and Expectancy Theory explain different parts of the same pattern. Self-Determination Theory explains how Taylor's structure may support newer employees' competence while limiting autonomy and voice for experienced employees. Expectancy Theory explains why motivation may weaken when employees are unsure which priorities matter most or whether strong performance leads to valued opportunities.

Theory	Core Idea	Case Application	Evidence	Leadership Implication
Self-Determination Theory	Motivation is stronger when employees experience autonomy, competence, and connection (Deci & Ryan, 2000).	Taylor's structure supports Ben's competence but may reduce autonomy and voice for Aisha and Carla.	Aisha says daily instructions limit her judgment, Ben benefits from check-ins, and Carla volunteers less.	Keep structure while adding autonomy, voice, and clearer access to development.

Expectancy Theory	Motivation depends partly on whether effort leads to performance and valued outcomes (Van Eerde & Thierry, 1996).	Competing priorities and unclear opportunity pathways may weaken the effort-performanc e-outcome link.	Ben reports shifting manager requests, missed deadlines remain above baseline, and Carla had no clear path to the champion role.	Clarify priority authority and explain how employees can access valued assignments.

Together, these theories suggest that Northside's motivation issue is not simply about employee effort. The case points to leadership conditions that shape motivation: autonomy, competence support, clear priorities, fair process, and a believable connection between contribution and opportunity.

Individual Differences and Follower Needs

The employee examples show why the same leadership approach doesn't work the same way for everyone. Aisha is experienced, confident, and values autonomy, so she likely needs fewer daily instructions and more room to use her judgment. Ben is still learning the software and service rules, so structure, feedback, and clear priorities are useful for him. Carla is a strong performer who wants a supervisory role, which makes the champion role more important because it appears tied to development and visibility.

These are job-relevant differences, not personality labels. Self-efficacy should be understood as confidence with a specific task or work demand rather than a general trait (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). A fair response would keep expectations consistent while adjusting support: more voice and autonomy for Aisha, clearer priority rules and continued coaching for Ben, and a transparent development path for Carla.

Decision Making, Fairness, and Employee Attitudes

The champion selection decision is the main fairness concern. Taylor's decision to choose employees with prior software experience was reasonable given the urgency of the rollout. The problem was the lack of a visible process: employees were not told the criteria, invited to express interest, or given a review date for the role. Because champions received schedule flexibility, visible recognition, and direct access to the department director, the role functioned as both system support and a development opportunity.

From an organizational justice perspective, this raises procedural and informational justice concerns because employees did not clearly understand how the decision was made or how they could be considered later (Colquitt et al., 2001). The case does not prove that Taylor caused Aisha to stop offering ideas or Carla to apply elsewhere, since workload and the system change also matter. Still, those reactions are important signals. Employees may read leadership decisions as signals about competence, care, and consistency (Mayer et al., 1995), so unclear opportunity decisions can weaken voice and trust even when employees continue meeting basic expectations.

Leadership Effectiveness Measures

No single measure would show whether leadership is improving. Northside should use a small set of measures that combines performance outcomes with employee experience, because the case includes both operational problems and motivation-related interpretations.

Measure and Type	What It Would Show	How It Connects to the Case	One Limitation
Rework, missed deadlines, and response time: objective	Shows whether quality, priority execution, and service timeliness are improving.	These are the main performance indicators affected during the rollout.	Results may also reflect software issues, workload, staffing, or competing manager requests.
Priority clarity, leadership explanation, and feedback usefulness: perceptual	Shows whether employees experience communication and coaching as clear and useful.	These scores improved after meetings, the decision log, and coaching were added.	Survey results may reflect nonresponse, confidentiality concerns, or temporary frustration.
Fairness, voice, and development access pulse items: perceptual/behavioral	Shows whether employees view opportunity processes and input channels as fair and usable.	This connects to the champion decision, Aisha offering fewer ideas, and Carla volunteering less.	Perceptions do not prove unfairness, but they show how employees interpret leadership decisions.

Rework, missed deadlines, and response time show whether the work is improving. The perceptual measures help explain whether employees are experiencing leadership as clear, fair, and useful. This matters because leadership effectiveness includes organizational outcomes and the conditions that support employee cooperation and motivation (Kaiser et al., 2008; Singh et al., 2016).

Practical Recommendations

First, Taylor should strengthen priority authority by using the Monday meetings and decision log to name the week's top priorities, who can change them, and how employees should handle conflicting manager requests. This addresses the expectancy concern by helping employees see which effort leads to successful performance. Northside could review progress

after 60 days through missed priority deadlines, response time, priority-clarity ratings, and comments about conflicting requests.

Second, Northside should make the champion role a transparent, time-limited development opportunity. Employees should know the job-related criteria, have a chance to express interest, and understand when the role will be reviewed. This addresses fairness and trust concerns while preserving the practical value of system champions, and progress could be reviewed after one quarter through fairness/voice pulse items, process-improvement participation, and retention risk among strong performers.

Third, Taylor should use coaching check-ins to match support to job-relevant needs while keeping standards consistent. Aisha may need more autonomy and voice, Ben may need continued priority support, and Carla may need a clearer development path. Progress could be reviewed through feedback-usefulness ratings, rework trends, and pulse questions about whether employees have the support needed to meet current priorities.

Integrated Conclusion

Northside's issue is not only the new system or only Taylor's leadership; it is how workload, technology, leadership behavior, fairness, and motivation are interacting during the transition. The recommendations could improve workplace functioning by clarifying priorities, making access to opportunities fairer, and matching support to employee needs. Tracking both performance outcomes and employee experience would help leadership see whether the changes are improving the work while rebuilding voice, trust, and motivation.

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