Chapter 7

Bartiméus

7.1 The organization

Bartiméus is a big health care institution in Doorn and Zeist in the centre of the Netherlands with over 7000 clients/patients in its care. Bartiméus receives about 70 million euro’s from the government and they receive additional revenues of about ten million euro’s. Almost three quarters of this total amount of 80 million euro’s goes to the 2000 employees.

Inspired by a Christian philosophy Bartiméus was founded in 1915. Its main aim is to support visually impaired children, young people and adults. Bartiméus realizes this aim in providing education, care and services to blind people and visually impaired people; it is not uncommon that impaired sight is combined with learning difficulties. An important part of Bartiméus’ philosophy is that it encourages independence and self-reliance on the part of visually impaired people in their own, familiar environment. Bartiméus has expertise in many different aspects of visually impairment; therefore, it also functions as a research center and an expertise center providing advice to third parties. The organization chart [see figure 7.1] shows the four focus points of Bartiméus, namely to live life, to live, to learn, and to work.

Bartiméus supports visually impaired people to live their life to the fullest. For example, Davey is a 10-year-old boy who lives in a hostel for multiply disabled children who get 24-hour care. Davey is blind and has difficulty with many things, such as eating. He cannot walk or talk and it is difficult for him to keep his head up straight. Both Davey and the employees of the hostel get support from Bartiméus. Bartiméus does research and gives advice about the supervision of the children. Bartiméus also supports people to live on their own.

Then, Bartiméus helps children and young people with school matters. For example, Willemijn is 19 years old. She is the only one at her school who has a walking stick for the blind. She has bad sight since her birth, but the last few years her disability has become worse. One eye is totally blind and the other eye can see for about ten percent. At school she gets help from the ‘Ambulante
Onderwijskundige Begeleiding [ambulant pedagogical supervision] of Bartiméus. Together with her mentor she reviews the adjustments that need to be made, for example for when she has to sit for exams. Bartiméus also specializes in supporting people in their jobs.

In 2006 Bartiméus merged with Sonneheerdt, which is now mainly covered by the Proson-division [see figure 7.1]. Proson offers a working environment ranging from a printing office for offset or Braille to making furniture. The main focus is to create an environment in which visually disabled people can function as normal as possible.

Figure 7.1: The organization chart of Bartiméus
7.2 Planning at Bartiméus: A situation for innovation

7.2.1 General vision on planning

Bartiméus considers planning a strategic aspect of its organization. The quality of planning influences the organization on multiple levels; this includes the use of capacity and in line of this employing new people, but also the practical efficiency of duty rosters. Essentially, the quality of the planning is reflected in the quality of the provided care; this implies attuning clients and professionals, with care and recourses. One of the ways to secure this is through a constant quality in the service provided by the professionals. The duty roster is the key element to ensure this.

7.2.2 Situation at Bartiméus before ZKR

Before the implementation of ZKR there was no clear planning policy. That is, all the separate units had one or two planners who all had their own way of planning. Implicitly, making the duty roster was considered to be an autonomous task per unit. Little was known among different units about their planning and the management had no insight into the uniformity of planning. As a consequence, there was little insight in the use of the personnel capacity. That is, planning at the unit level was based on the vision of the planner and the unit, but there was no integrated vision or policy at the level of the organization. Thus, the organization neither imposed a general policy on planning nor did it formulate a general guideline or methodology for how to deal in general with the planning in practice. The planning greatly relied on the expertise of the planner.

A great advantage to this approach is the freedom that planners have to use their expertise with great nuance. However, the flip side to this exercising of sophistications is a - potential - great difference between the planning of the different units. Furthermore, in streaming the data flow in terms of budgeting and allocating resources the freedom of the planners to exercise their expertise was greatly impaired. The different ways of planning did not enable a general overview on the planning at Bartiméus, nor did they enable efficiency in data processing.

7.2.3 Planners at Bartiméus

Bartiméus underlines the central position of the client in the services that they offer. Therefore, they emphasize patience as an important cultural characteristic and working at Bartiméus one should be able to prioritize the interests of the
The Knowledge Dynamics of Organizational Innovation

client/patient. This includes understanding ‘that undesired behavior is a way of communicating’ [site]. The support plan forms the central starting point to provide the care. The care is explicitly considered to be the result of teamwork. The planners who participated in our study all worked in the above described environment.

Let us look at an example of a planner at Bartiméus making the duty roster. Planner Laan works at a unit of Bartiméus, which provides care for visually disabled people. At this unit the clients live during the day and at night. The unit has on average twelve caretakers, which is average. These twelve caretakers help clients in their daily routine of living.

Laan has been a planner for about ten years now, so she gained much experience over the years. Making a duty roster now takes about three hours for her, although when there are not enough people available it takes much longer. Especially to find the right people in the recruitment pool then takes up much of her time.

The duty roster ideally has a three-month range. However, Laan never seems to manage this as too many changes occur over this period of time. She therefore plans for a period of five weeks. Laan starts with making the new duty roster about three weeks in advance, gathering information and checking the available capacity. She then starts with the actual planning. First come the weekends, these are the hardest to plan as it is important to her to grant as many wishes as possible. Sometimes it is not possible to grant any wishes. Now, with ten years of experience saying ‘no’ to her colleagues is much easier then in the beginning when she tried not to upset her colleagues with the duty roster choices that she made. Checking all the balances, horizontally for the employees as well as vertically for the days, takes up much of her time. There are many different codes, rules and exceptions, and mistakes in adding up the numbers are easily made. Laan hardly takes notice of the rules and regulations on planning. This is not doable, she says. These regulations were not made for us. People who are used to a certain pattern of working are not easily put in a different schedule just because someone says it is better. They do not see it that way. So, an important part of making the duty roster is also to know your colleagues, to know what they feel is important. That way you can make a qualitatively good duty roster while keeping your colleagues happy at the same time.

The introduction of ZKR would be a great help in the time consuming adding up of the numbers, which easily elicits mistakes. Laan is anxious to try the new
software, and curious what it can do. She is especially curious about the constraints in the rules and regulations. She wonders how many constraints she normally ‘breaks’ in making the duty roster.

7.2.4 Why innovate

As the above shows, before the implementation of ZKR Bartiméus did not have a strategic aim in planning. The management of Bartiméus sought for an integrated system, which enabled both simplification for the planners as well as enhancement of data processing, the planning from the units to the administration both personnel and financial. Introducing planning support software would create an overview in the use and allocation of resources and would secure a stable quality of provided care and good use of resources.

7.2.5 Other people involved in planning at Bartiméus

The first group of people to be involved in the planning are of course the planners themselves, but indirectly more people are involved as we have showed in the chapter on organizational innovation. These groups involve firstly the employees who are to be scheduled. As the above job description shows, the care provided by Bartiméus is considered to be teamwork. This implies that the duty roster is very important in achieving this goal and the employees directly experience the changes in the making of the duty roster.