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ABSTRACT

Penn State/Sandusky scandal was one of the most controversial and publicized cases of 2011 and 2012. A high profile university football coach sexually abused 10 boys over period of 16 years. A problematic part of this case is that the university administration knew about coach’s behavior but did nothing to stop it.

Sandusky was sexually abusing minors predominantly on the premises of The Penn State University over a period of 16 years. On June 22, 2012 Sandusky was found guilty of 45 of 48 counts of sex abuse of 10 boys while on October 9 he was sentenced to 30-60 years in prison. Penn State has been facing crisis, not only because their high profile employee sexually abused a number of children, but also because it the Penn State administration attempted to cover up the problem.

By the year 1998 Penn State University police were aware about Sandusky’s child sexual abuse. Furthermore, a detective from the university police began his investigation into the case, which later he was told to close. This incident was the first major warning sign which called for preventative action from the institution. Yet, the organization (Penn State) did nothing to protect the children from the harm or itself as an organization from the developing crisis. Charges were not pressed and Sandusky continued his predation of young boys. By the time the second major warning sign came into light (2002 incident), Penn State’s three main administrators, including the president and vice-president, knew about the incidents. Furthermore, campus police were also aware of the problem, as well as the legendary and powerful football head coach Joe Paterno. By 2002 three of Penn State administrators, the head football coach, football graduate assistant and his father, campus police, two janitors and their supervisor, as well as The Second Mile’s CEO, all knew about the incidents leading up to the crisis. By 2006 or 2007 also Clinton County High School wrestling coach and eventually vice-principal in that high school all became aware of one or more incidents.

The main focus of this case study is to point out major problems that the organization has made allowing the evolution of Sandusky’s child abuse to the 45 counts of child sexual abuse. This study looks at how the crisis developed and warning signs that, if timely and ethically approached, could have prevented a major crisis development.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Ania Izabela Rynarzewska received her PhD from The Florida State University in August 2012. Her degree is in Communication with emphasis in Marketing and Quantitative tools. Her research focuses on stakeholder relations (employees, customers and suppliers) and means of
increasing organization’s effectiveness. Additional topics include organizational crisis and sports marketing.