

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION IN HUMAN RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
MCP 2134 – ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR
FINAL EXAMINATION – AUGUST 2011



DURATION : THREE (03) HOURS

Date : 21.08.2011

Time : 1.30p.m. – 4.30p.m.

No. of Questions :05

No. of Pages : 04

INSTRUCTIONS: ANSWER **FOUR (04)** QUESTIONS **INCLUDING QUESTION No. 01**, WHICH IS COMPULSORY.

ALL ANSWERS SHOULD BE WRITTEN NEATLY AND FOCUSED.

1. Read the following case study and answer the questions given at the end.

BILL MICHAELS

Bill Michaels is the project manager of a group of engineers at XYZ Engineering Services Company. As a result of the current financial slowdown of the New England economy, Bill is in the process of downsizing his project. Luckily there is room for excesses engineering personnel in another department within the company. Obviously, Bill wants to retain the best and the most competent engineers as well as to continue a long history of team work and cooperation within the project. His dilemma is what to do about Ann Thomas, a relatively new and extremely capable engineer.

The Company

XYZ Engineering Company was founded and sponsored by 17 large corporations in 1962 for the purpose of providing them with engineering services. A group of engineering and support personnel with valuable knowledge and experience was assembled. All the engineers were males with a limited support staff of female secretaries and male technicians.

The company grew to include six engineering projects, each overseen by a project manager and four lead engineers who managed specific engineering functions. The engineers reported to the lead who reported to the project manager.

Bill Michaels

Bill Michaels joined the company in 1975 as an engineer. He worked on several different projects with many engineers and has risen in the company to the position of lead mechanical engineer and then to project manager. Bill puts a high value on technical competence and is also very much aware of the needs for a close and cooperative relationship among engineers in order to produce the highest level of service to the customer. Over the years, Bill has put together a great group of male engineers who understand each other and the needs of the company. A close working relationship has developed among the men. Bill takes great pride in the integrated approach that he and his engineers provide to the customer.

Corporate Culture

At XYZ Engineering Services Company, the subject of sexual harassment has been dealt with on a relatively superficial level by the Human Resource Department. The problem has never really come up for Bill Michaels and his group, since they are all the male and they have a limited amount of contact with the female secretaries. Bill's group is made up of highly technical men who have developed a camaraderie with each other. They spend a great deal of their day in each other's offices working together on a proposal for a customer or developing the best engineering approach to a problem. They have grown to know each other very well, and they trust each other as engineers as well as friends. This close-knit group is very loyal to the company and to each other. When they are not discussing business, they generally talk about the Boston Red Sox, the New England Patriots, the new model of Mazda RX 7 sport car, or the latest high tech toy on the market. Sometimes they engage in off-color joke telling or they use language that might be considered crude by the general population, but they confine it to their own inner circle of fellow engineers. There is no harm intended, and it is all in the spirit of fun and serves as a way to relieve stress.

In October of 1991, the talk of the office turned to the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearing. Anita Hill had made some shocking accusations of sexual harassment against the Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas. Every day the conversation at XYZ Engineering Services Company turned to the hearing and the extreme discomfort the men in Bill's group felt at the possibility of ever having to defend themselves against a sexual harassment allegation. Lurking behind the engineer's lunchroom debates about sexual harassment was mass confusion over how they should conduct themselves. The consensus among Bill's group of engineers was that they were lucky not to have to worry about the problem, since they were all men.

Ann Thomas

In January of 1992, Bill Michaels had an opening for a new engineer. He posted the job internally and had seven qualified applications: six men and one woman. Ann Thomas was by far the most technically capable of the applicants. She had excellent recommendations from her previous manager. Bill felt that Ann was the best choice for the job, and the lead engineer agreed that she should be selected to fill the opening.

Ann Thomas had worked as a systems engineer for another project in XYZ Engineering Services Company for the past three years. She was the only woman in the project, but seemed to get along well with the other engineers. Her manager had only good reports from the customers as well as from her associates. All of her evaluations were outstanding.

Ann felt that very often the men acted inappropriately in her presence. She didn't appreciate the joke telling and she felt that some of her fellow engineers made comments that were degrading to women. Ann kept the feelings to herself, thinking that she had to avoid making waves in order to get along in a male dominated profession. Ann was disappointed in herself for compromising her strongly held belief about appropriate behavior at the work place. She was eager for the opportunity to start a new position, and she vowed to herself that she would never again let a single questionable act or remark go unchallenged.

The New Job

The engineers working in Bill Michaels' group welcomed Ann Thomas warmly. They knew from talking with her former colleagues that Ann was a good engineer and that she "fit-in" well. Ann jumped into her new job with enthusiasm and high spirits until she saw the pictures of the bikini-clad woman on the desk of one of the engineers. She immediately marched in to Bill

Michaels' office and complained about the pictures. Bill saw to it that the pictures were promptly removed. Three days later, Ann overheard a group of engineers joking around their customary crude manner, and she reported to Bill that she was offended. Before Bill could address this complaint, Ann was in his office again. She was extremely upset by a comment by her lead engineer. "You did a great job getting those prints from Joe", he said. "I never had such luck. It must be because you are a woman. You can just show a little leg and get what you want." Bill Michaels had to address this serious problem.

Tense environment

Bill handled the situation with the individuals who were involved, but it was clear from the tension in the office that the word had spread to the rest of the group. The engineers' attitude towards Ann was noticeably different. Their warm and friendly welcome had turned into an attitude of caution. During the next several months, there were no more complaints from Ann; however Bill noticed that the male engineers were avoiding Ann and excluding her from their inner circle. Ann continued to perform her technical responsibilities, and she never let her office suffer, but Bill was concerned about the effect that this new "walking on egg shells" environment would have on the integrated engineering approach.

When the time came for Bill to decide which engineers would be transferred to the other project, he was faced with a difficult decision regarding Ann Thomas.

Source: Cohen, A.R., Fink, S.L., Gadon, H., and Willits, R.D., (2001). Effective Behaviour in Organizations; Cases, Concepts, and Student Experiences. McGraw Hill Companies Inc., New York.

Questions:

- I. What are the major issue(s) you have identified in this case? Analyze those issue(s) using relevant concepts and theories. (20 marks)
 - II. What would you suggest as a remedial course of action to the difficult situation which was faced by Bill Michaels regarding Ann Thomas? Justify your answer. (20 marks)
2. I. "At present, business organizations are experiencing rapid changes due to the globalization process, economic growth, advancement, demographic changes, and increasing diversity of the workforce. To be able to change processes and business performance well, managers are needed to have a knowledge of the subject 'Organizational Behaviour'".
Do you agree with this statement? Elaborate your answer with your theoretical knowledge of Organizational Behaviour and with practical examples where necessary (20 marks)

3. I. Describe the 'process of motivation'. (08marks)
- II. Discuss the key differences between approaches adopted by Content Theories and Process Theories in explaining of work motivation.. (12 Marks)
4. I. Discuss why most behavioural scientists are no longer greatly interested in Trait Theory of Leadership. Elaborate your answer with practical examples. (08 marks)
- II. Discuss the main points of Fiedler's Contingency Model and Robert House's Path Goal Model for Leadership. (12 Marks)
5. I. Explain the concept of 'Personality'. (08 marks)
- II. Discuss using relevant examples, why an understanding of personality differences is important in managing people at work. (12 marks)

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