

3. Case “Complex transitions”

Tony Stark had just finished his first week at Reece Enterprises and decided to go upstate to a small lake house for some fishing and relaxation. Tony had worked for the previous ten years at O'Grady, but O'Grady had fallen on hard times recently and had closed several of its operating groups, including Tony's, to cut costs. Fortunately, Tony's experience and recommendations made it fairly easy to find another position. As he drove down the interstate, he reflected on the last ten years and the apparent situation at Reece Enterprises.

Tony has been part of the team from day one. The work was completely in line with his personal goals and expectations, and Tony felt that he had grown a lot as a person. His work was appreciated and recognized; he received three promotions and many more salary increases.

Tony also liked the company itself. The firm was decentralized, giving its managers considerable autonomy and freedom. The corporate culture was calm. Communication was open. It seemed like everyone always knew what was going on, and if you didn't know something, it was easy to find out.

The people were another plus. Tony and the three other managers went out to lunch often and played golf every Saturday. They got along well both personally and professionally and truly worked together as a team. Their boss was very supportive, giving them the help, they needed without getting in their way and allowing them to work.

When the news of the layoff came, Tony was devastated. He was sure that nothing could replace O'Grady. After the permanent closure was announced, he spent only a few weeks searching before finding a comparable position at Reece Enterprises.

As Tony drove, he reflected that "comparable" was probably the wrong word. Indeed, Reece and O'Grady were about as different as they come. Reece's top managers apparently weren't too concerned about who did a good job and who didn't. They seemed to encourage and reward people based on how long they were there and how well they played the never-ending games of politics.

Perhaps it had something to do with the organization itself, Tony thought. Reece was a larger organization than O'Grady and had a much more bureaucratic structure. It seemed that no one was allowed to make any decision without getting three signatures from the top. However, these signatures were difficult to obtain. All the top managers were usually too busy to meet with anyone, and memos were obviously a very low priority.

Tony also had problems adapting. His peers treated him with polite indifference. He sensed that some of them resented him, an outsider, being on their level after they had to climb the stairs. On Tuesday, he asked two colleagues about golf. They politely declined, saying they didn't play often. But later that week he heard them agreeing to play that very Saturday.

It was at this moment that Tony decided to go fishing. As he pulled off the interstate to get gas, he wondered if he had made a mistake by accepting Reece's offer without learning more about what he was getting into.

Questions

1. Identify several concepts and characteristics from the field of organizational behavior that this case illustrates.
2. What advice can you give Tony? How will this advice be supported or moderated by behavioral concepts and processes?
3. Is it possible to find the “ideal” job? Explain it.