

- Case Discussion: Emotional Intelligence

Jerry was a well-regarded operations manager at a New York City office of Merrill Lynch. Several years ago, he supervised the move of some in his group from their offices in the city across the river to an office park in Jersey City. The move was seemingly welcomed by the staff, most of who lived on the other side of the river. The move would dramatically cut down their commuting time and reduce their tax bills. Jerry handled this project with his usual meticulousness and concern. He worked with the designers and the architects, as well as building management, to ensure a smooth transition. Jerry never expected perfection, and perfection was not to be realized. Soon after the move, he fielded a phone call at his downtown office from Eddie Fontaine, the group manager at the Jersey City location. Eddie reported that his group had become concerned that they were working in a “sick” building, because a number of employees were suffering from respiratory problems. Although Eddie made light of their concerns, Jerry perceived concern in the group and began to investigate the situation. He called in a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) team, and it, along with environmental engineers, were dispatched to the site. They inventoried the physical plant, and shortly thereafter, filed their report.

Jerry and Eddie reviewed the report together: The HVAC team could not detect any problem with the building. Jerry appreciated that Eddie and the group might be feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the move, as well as somewhat isolated and cut-off from the rest of the team’s work. Given the context, Jerry supported his group leader, complimented him on his general expertise, and let the matter drop. For the time being, Jerry was handling the emotions of his team effectively. Shortly thereafter, however, a second situation arose concerning parking problems. Ever the problem-solver, Jerry personally intervened with the building management to resolve the situation to his staff’s satisfaction. As with the building ventilation problem, this was a time-consuming issue that detracted from the primary mission of both Jerry and his group. Jerry’s supervisor began to become concerned about the group’s apparent lack of focus and lowered productivity. When the supervisor asked Jerry if intervening in such problems was a good use of his time, Jerry replied, “That’s my job. I solve problems.” Yet another such problem arose a few days later, however, and Jerry’s patience began to wear thin.

Case Questions:

Q #1: Ask what Jerry did right and what Jerry could have done differently?

Q #2: What kind of steps did Jerry go through in his effort to analyze the situation?

- Case Discussion: Cloud Computing, Leavitt's Diamond

When cloud computing hype escalated to a fever pitch in 2009, some technology industry pundits were forecasting widespread layoffs inside IT organizations. Moving applications and infrastructure to the cloud, where both would be hosted and managed by the cloud provider, was the next step in the commoditization of corporate IT, they argued, and would eliminate the need for certain IT professionals that had previously overseen those infrastructure components.

Four years later, those predictions don't appear to have been borne out. IT leaders at Enterasys Networks, Aricent Group, and the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF), who are deploying cloud applications, have yet to lay off swathes of their IT departments. Only about two IT professionals across those three IT organizations have lost their jobs because of the cloud.

In fact, IT leaders at Enterasys, Aricent, and UCSF say business demand for their services is increasing, and the move to cloud computing is allowing their IT organizations to focus on "value-added" activities like high-end software development, business analytics, enterprise architecture, and strategic vendor relationship management.

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At Aricent Group, a global technology business, CIO Raj Datt has moved 14 percent of his application portfolio into the cloud, and he plans additional cloud deployments. "We have a cloud-first approach and take every opportunity to move applications to the cloud to leverage its benefits," he says. "If I could do everything in the cloud, I would have done it yesterday."

The transition from on-premise to cloud applications has led Datt to move some members of his IT staff into business analyst and architect roles. "They're creating the blueprints and workflows required to enhance business processes and operations," he says.

Datt adds that he wants to grow his IT professionals' knowledge of the business so that they can do more with big data and predictive analytics. With a clearer understanding of Aricent's business, IT staff will be better positioned to mine insights from corporate data, he maintains.

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