David Healy (s4108563)

RSA, The Security Division of EMC

RSA is one of the world's leading brands in security software. They provide a number of products ranging from cryptographic toolkits to large enterprise deployments used to secure government, military and financial institutions.

Over the past 18 months the Brisbane office has seen 2 new product teams created and 1 product moved from India to Brisbane. These changes, along with downsizing driven by EMC, RSA's parent company, have resulted in almost constant restructure within the office.

As a result of the constant churn, morale has decreased. Projects have been delivered on time; however, there are lingering questions over the quality of the deliveries. Due to the reallocation of staff, other projects often fall behind deadlines, resulting in further reallocation, compounding the issue.

I believe that the approach taken by the company to meet the challenges described above is the cause of the drop in product quality and morale. I contend that alternate approaches could be used to address these challenges and that these approaches would benefit the staff morale, whilst still ensuring high quality on time delivery of projects.

Structural:

- All staff decisions are made by the General Manager and Engineering Managers. There is very little consultation with the individual engineers, regardless of whether it involves them or not.

- Communication between products within engineering and other functional groups is almost entirely through product management. This results in a single point of failure.

Human Resources

- Due to the movement of staff, people may be less invested in their work. There is a feeling that the next change is around the corner, so don't get too attached. As a result intrinsic motivation is suffering.

- At the same time staff are very unhappy with the extrinsic motivation (ie., salary) provided by RSA. A recent staff survey reported that less than 40% off staff felt they were compensated fairly.

Political

- Much of the power in RSA resides outside of the Brisbane office. In particular, there is apparent pressure from RSA's parent company, EMC, to ensure profitability.

- The drive for profitability ensures that large customers have a lot of power to influence the organisation.

- Product Management is the main point of contact for the customers. They are also responsible for setting the priorities for the engineering development. This combination means that certain customers have enormous ability to drive the engineering schedule.

- There are a number of well respected and extremely experienced technical leaders. However, these are limited and their ability to influence direction and change within the company is minimal. Whilst they do a lot of interesting and advanced work, the political input is similar to that of a figurehead.

Cultural

- Ongoing dealings with products developed outside of the Brisbane office have led to the opinion that the staff in Brisbane have a better knowledge of security and generally better development practices. An elitist mindset that is somewhat encourage.

- At the same time, the changes in leadership along with their decisions regarding constant team restructuring creates the perception that management has no clear direction or understanding of the work being done.

- This is compacted by what is seen as a constant focus on shareholder value and return on investment. This focus comes at the cost of quality engineering which often requires longer term thinking.