

MN 4063: Organizational Behaviour & Management

In20/S7

Group Assessment

Case Study:

The Personality Problem

Jasmine Patel, Director of Human Resource Management at Vertical Horizon, sat at her desk feeling completely perplexed. She was at a loss about how to handle a high-performing but socially disruptive employee, Rhett Stark.

Vertical Horizon was a software company in the Kitchener-Waterloo high-tech corridor. They had originally been known for their programming tools; tools that helped large teams of software developers work together effectively. Now, however, they were moving into other areas such as web content management. Since the company was in the midst of changing their focus and their product lines, it was critically important to have experienced, high-performing sales representatives supporting the transition. If their new product line failed, it might well take the entire company down with it.

The sales team comprised 12 outside (field) sales representatives and 6 inside representatives who supported the outside reps. Each inside rep was responsible for lead generation and otherwise supporting the two outside sales reps assigned to them. In addition, there was a sales manager who could be consulted on a day-to-day basis for advice and a VP Sales who was responsible for strategic initiatives. Most of the sales reps had been with the company for less than two years. In fact, even the Sales Manager and the VP Sales were relatively new to the organization, and as a result, they frequently consulted with Rhett to access his tacit knowledge about their products, customers, and strategies.

Rhett was an outside sales rep who had been with the company for over eight years, an extremely long time in the software world. He was the undisputed master of the sale. His natural charisma combined with strong product knowledge and excellent customer references helped him exceed his quota quarter after quarter. Unfortunately, Rhett's success came with

a significant downside. He was charming, brash, and confident, a natural leader who drew people to him like a magnet. People felt special around him, and would frequently comment that “when he talks to you, he makes you feel like you are the most important and interesting person in the world.” What he did with those people afterwards was the problem.

Rhett was the ringleader of a group of sales reps who would frequently work late, and then go out drinking and partying together. This behaviour was supported and at times even funded by the VP Sales, who felt that this kind of behaviour made for a strong team. The nights spent clubbing and bar hopping together did seem to create a lot of cohesion within the work group, but it also had some negative effects.

Jasmine had overheard two male members of the sales team talking in the cafeteria. They were discussing stressful marital difficulties that had arisen as a result of their late nights out drinking. “What kind of bothered me,” one said to the other, “is that when I told Rhett this was causing problems at home he just laughed. He was the one who kept convincing me to stay out late! I know it is my own responsibility but you would think he would be more sympathetic.” In addition, a high-performing sales rep named Malcolm had come to talk with Jasmine. “It is pretty clear that Rhett has a lot of informal power around here,” he said, “everyone, even management, listens to him and does what he says. I’m worried because I’m not part of his ‘pack.’ I don’t drink or go out with everyone; my church doesn’t believe in that sort of thing. Besides, I’d rather be home with my family. But Rhett makes fun of me behind my back all the time for being lame. Some other employees have told me how he gets everyone to laugh at me. The teasing and insults I could live with, what really bothers me is something else. Given his informal power in this department, how can I ever expect a fair chance at promotion?”

Most worrisome, however, was Rhett’s behaviour with female staff. Jasmine could not verify all the reports, but rumour had it that Rhett had slept with more than a dozen women in the office over the past eight years. Jasmine could verify two affairs, both with inside sales reps; one of them reported directly to Rhett. However, neither woman was interested in submitting a complaint. Jasmine had found out about the situation in another way. She had gone into the women’s washroom one day to find the two women crying together. It seems that they had just discovered that (1) Rhett was married with one child and his wife was pregnant with their second and (2) both of them had been dating him without knowing

about the wife (Rhett kept his marriage quiet and had no family pictures on his desk and no wedding ring), or about each other. Making matters worse, one of the women was now pregnant with Rhett's child. She was in extreme distress; she was a Catholic and already raising two children alone, and could not conceive of either aborting or raising three kids by herself. The second woman was more annoyed and angry than distressed, but, like Malcolm, she was extremely anxious about Rhett's influence over her later career progression. Nothing Rhett had done was illegal, and in the absence of formal complaints and evidence he could not be effectively disciplined for having personal relationships with direct reports. Jasmine had no authority to tell Rhett how to live his personal life, but it was clear that he was causing a lot of damage to the department. He also appeared to be completely unconcerned, even amused, by the swath of destruction left in his wake. Jasmine suspected he was a narcissist, perhaps even highly Machiavellian. But he was their best sales rep by far. How could she manage this difficult personality and still maintain a healthy working environment?

Task: As a team of 6 members, you are required to answer the following questions after referring to the above case study. Support your answers with academically credible sources, including at least 10 references to published journal articles, magazine articles (e.g., Harvard Business Review), and books. Focus on literature that specifically addresses topics such as Personality, the Dark Triad, Attitudes, Values, Person-Job Fit, Emotional Intelligence, Job Satisfaction, and Job Attitudes.

Questions:

1. Do you agree with Jasmine's assessment that Rhett is Machiavellian and a narcissist? Why or why not? **(10 Marks)**
2. Assuming that Rhett is Machiavellian and a narcissist, what is the most effective way to minimize the damage he can do to other employees? **(10 Marks)**
3. Assuming that you knew ahead of time that Rhett's personality included the Dark Triad. Would you still hire him for a sales role? Why or why not? **(10 Marks)**

4. Based on the above scenario, what is your idea about the level of job satisfaction experienced by Rhett Stark at Vertical Horizon?
(10 Marks)

Instructions:

- Use- Font (Times New Roman)/ Font size (Text -12 /Headings-14)/Paragraph space (1.5 justified)
- Maximum No. of pages- **10 pages**
- Use APA referencing guidelines for both in-text and end-text referencing.
- A list of references should be clearly stated at the end of the assignment.
- Please adhere to the plagiarism guidelines stated on Moodle.
- Appendices, cover page and the list of references are not considered for the page count.
- Group leaders of each group should submit the finalized assignment electronically on the stipulated date below.
- Please submit your finalized assignments to Moodle on or before **7th October 2024**.
- Weightage of the marks awarded from the total module marks: **20%**

If you need more clarifications, please contact:

Ms. Nadeesha Perera

Module Lecturer

Faculty of Engineering

University of Moratuwa

nadeeshap@uom.lk / 0703577637