**Case Analysis Essay**

By my signature below, I certify that I have not received improper help nor given it to others in writing this assignment nor have I used any method that would give me an unfair advantage over others in the class. This assignment represents my own work only and I had no assistance from another person or any other source unless it is referenced at the bottom of each appropriate page.

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(Full Typed Signature and Date)

This case is about FireArt, Inc., a family-owned regional glass manufacturer in Indiana city. The company makes wine goblets, beer steins, ashtrays, and other glass novelties. Known for its high quality, high price goods for nearly 80 years now, the company has a successful track record of serving hundreds of Midwestern clients. Traditionally, the company did big business every footballing season by selling commemorative trinkets to the fans. Spring season witnessed a rise in demand for senior prom items like champagne goblets engraved with a school name or beer mugs with a school crest. Fraternities and sororities were once steady customers which propelled FireArt onto a respectable growth trajectory, posting $86 million in revenues and $3 million in earnings, three years prior to Eric’s arrival. However, sales had flattened in the last 18 months and according to CEO Jack Derry, it was due to advancement in the new technologies in the glassmaking industry that allowed large national companies to enter FireArt’s niche. This prompted him to hire Eric Holt as the new director of strategy whose goal was to put together a team of top-level people from each division and come up with a comprehensive strategic realignment plan that would be up, running and winning within six months. The challenge here is to build a team of individuals from different areas of expertise and skills working in different verticals under the company, ensure that they collaborate effectively and efficiently, and through their combined inputs to develop a plan to strategically reorganise the company in a way that enables them to deal with the new competition and get back on the trajectory of growth by increasing sales and maximizing profits. There are, however, some major impediments along the path. While Eric as head of strategy has the task to bring together a team of people working in different silos, he displays a lack of management skills, authority and strong leadership needed to bring together people who are not comfortable in team environments or in new spaces. There is a lack of rules and regulations with regards to the leadership group meetings. The team meetings are dominated by one member with undue influence and there are no measures to keep him in check, nor any norms regarding how the meeting should be conducted or the penalty for violating them. Some members of the team seem to be committed to turning the ship around for the company and are willing to come together to express their ideas as well as concerns so that a common ground can be achieved and a path laid out for each vertical namely design, manufacturing, distribution, and sales. But Randy Louderback, the charismatic head of sales, seems to lack the motivation to do the same. Despite the fact that he wants what is best for the company and has invaluable experience and knowledge in this domain he is unwilling to be cooperative in the team meetings. Moreover, his past exploits and close relationship with CEO Jack Derry make him a man whose ideas and insights are hard to ignore.

The case seems to look at the situation with a greater focus on Eric Holt who has moved here from New York, from a very different Manhattan environment where all-nighters involved working with a cadre of highly committed colleagues and intense work. His transition to the new role as director of strategy is not as smooth and some of this can be attributed to his own shortcomings. In the excerpt, we can observe that during the team meetings he is found lacking in some rational as well as interpersonal skills required to develop effective solutions. His inability to manage the team and lack of authority gives Randy the license to intervene when someone is presenting their ideas or airing their grievances and undermine them without repercussions. The third meeting that started well with Pierre, and Maureen presenting their cost-cutting proposals and Carl following up was cut short by Randy’s mocking remark and Eric being a silent spectator and observing this did not help. He failed to support the other team members while they were presenting their points which resulted in a lack of consensus and no effective outputs from the team meetings. The absence of a structure, norms, and regulations, and a clearly defined and enforced agenda for the team meetings did not help either. The first couple of meetings should have been enough for Eric to get an understanding of the behaviour of each and every team member and come up with a framework for how the meetings should’ve been conducted. He should have laid down some ground rules to avoid any conflicts and clearly communicated it each and every team member. Clearly defining the agenda and reminding every team member of the same as the meeting went along could prevent any digressions and ensured that each meeting would have yielded some output along with the positives and negatives.

Randy’s lack of commitment to the team was another major issue which might’ve single-handedly pulled down the motivation of the rest of the team in coming together and turning the company around from its path towards stagnation. The author clearly identifies him as the invaluable team member who refuses to work cohesively with the team. He appears to be the one who is uninterested in the team activities and meetings and takes every opportunity to find faults with the plans and ideas of the others. The vague replies he gave in response to questions put forward by the rest of the team were no more satisfying than his mockery of the plans put forth by others. It is not clear if this was due to his personality in general or some past experience that he had, but his failure to let go of his ego made it impossible for him to collaborate with other members of the team get involved in any team build and team bonding activity that could have resulted in a better understanding of each other and further translated into greater output for company.

Different solutions can be explored in order to come out of this deadlock situation that Eric find the team in. To begin with he can needs to clearly define the agenda of every meeting in advance. Setting the agenda for successive follow up meetings can be an effective tool to come up with a plan or a general direction towards which the company is headed in the next six months. However, only defining the agenda is not enough as the team may digress towards other discussions or arguments that might have a bearing on the efficiency and the eventual outcomes that were intended. To avoid this, the agenda needs to be circulated well in advance so each member may have the chance to prepare accordingly. Eric needs to drive the meetings and be aware of the situation at all times. If he finds that the meeting has digressed from the point of discussion or there is a conflict that has the potential to derail the progress made thus far, he needs to take prompt and appropriate action. He must jot down the important points, summarize and reiterate them at the end of the meeting to avoid any confusion and circulate it to everyone. It is imperative that each meeting end with a clearly defined outcome and everyone in the leadership team has well defined follow up actions which can be discussed in the next meet. Accountability is of the utmost regard here and each member must be able to take responsibility for the tasks that need to be followed.

It is also quite evident that given his nature and past record, that the case of Randy Louderback needs special attention. Naysayers and “Puppy Shooters” are an important part of the team and need to be given due consideration and to reject someone as insightful as Randy would be a clear mistake which is something that is identified both by Eric as well as CEO Jack Derry. However, Randy’s attitude in team meetings is a cause of concern and his remarks are often brash to the point that it derails the entire conversation. Eric needs to have a one-on-one discussion with Randy about this ask him to maintain a certain level of restraint. In case a harder hand is needed, he should exercise his power as director of strategy to take appropriate action and the same needs to be communicated to Jack as well. At the same time, he needs to discuss with the other team members about Randy and ensure that no one takes his remarks personally. All the other team members must learn to become comfortable with conflict. Any issue must be clearly communicated and resolved with emotional intelligence. A code of conduct can be defined if necessity demands it so there is little scope of infighting.

If the matter is still not resolved another solution would have Randy work separately. The company is looking to reposition itself strategically and this involves exploring new ideas and avenues. The company could look expand its markets to glass-based crockery. They could look to expand their business beyond the local market by selling products online and expanding their distribution network or partnering with delivery agencies. The brand’s 80 yearlong name is bound have some say in swaying customers. Randy with his domain knowledge and past experiences of his company will be a perfect candidate to perform a market research and analysis of the viability of some of these options through small pilot projects. He can lead a small team with members from each division to execute these tasks in a time bound manner and come up with a plan of action. Meanwhile, the rest of the team can work on the existing product and come up with plans to improve it. Maureen’s suggestions on the design aspect of the products along with Ray’s ideas on cutting throughput time and raw material costs can be implemented to compete better in the market.

For effective strategic repositioning that has a significant impact on revenue, it is essential that the senior management of the company be incorporated seamlessly into the changing teams and environment. To do so, Eric needs to have interviews with all the potential members before the team is finalized so that he may identify individuals that would help him achieve maximum efficiency. This could be a potential third way to deal with the problem even though some important members of the senior management might be left out. However, Jack’s relationship with and the high regard in which he holds Randy might become an undesirable influence in the formation of this team.

While all the above solutions can be a potentially good way to solve the problem, it would be best if Eric tries to take matters into his own hands and define a path for the strategic realignment. Defining a plan of action, setting the agenda, taking control of the situation in case of conflicts, and taking account of the follow up tasks and responsibilities will establish Eric as the leader that a team looks forward to. Maybe a hard hand once or twice from the director of strategy might even force Randy to rethink about his conduct in the meetings. The other two options, while viable, seem to be more on the side of trying to avoid conflict rather than resolve it. To give someone a new task to take up alone because they don’t work well with a team indicates that the senior management is afraid to tackle the problem rather than face it. The company cannot bend to the will of one individual no matter how important he is. It is a poor reflection on policies and ideology of a very old and well-established organisation. There is also the option to fire Randy, but it seems to be too drastic of a measure to be taken at this point, not to mention his relationship with CEO Jack Derry will make this task much more difficult than it is supposed to be. And to miss out on some of the insightful ideas that Randy presents during some of the meetings would be a waste of a useful resource is something that both Eric and Jack agree upon. Hence, it would be desirable for the company to take the first course of action and try to bring Randy on board with a plan of execution that he agrees with rather than side-lining him from a process where he could prove to be the most influential candidate.