

MBA (FT) – November/December 2020

Paper Title - Organization Behaviour (New course)

Paper No. MBAFT -6101

Unique Paper Code – 410901101

Time: 3 hours

Total Marks: 70

Instructions

There are two parts in this question paper, each carrying 35 marks. Both the parts are compulsory.

Part – 1 (35 Marks)

Case – A

(12 Marks)

The Landau Construction Company recently contracted to erect the frames of houses as part of a federal housing project. Loren Franks is the supervisor for the company on this project, and the twelve people working for him were hired from the local union hall. Loren receives bonuses that are based on how rapidly projects are completed. The faster the project is completed, the more money he will get. Because of rain he is falling a little behind his schedule.

Loren has supervised most of the workers in the past and, on the whole, he considers them good, skilled carpenters. One of the men, a young and relatively new carpenter named Brian Baxter, has not worked for Loren before. Soon after work began on the project, Loren became aware of Brian and his popularity with the other workers. In the beginning, during coffee and lunch breaks, Brian was constantly asking the more experienced workers questions about the carpentry field. Because of his easygoing manner and his desire to learn, Brian soon became popular with all the workers.

After a few weeks, Loren noticed that Brian began to ask fewer questions about carpentry, and instead began to tell many humorous stories and jokes for the workers' entertainment, which presented to problem in itself. Loren became increasingly aware, however, that the workers were taking longer lunch hours and coffee breaks to listen to Brian. It seemed that Brian always had a story to finish or one last joke to tell before going back to work.

Loren counseled Brian twice about the problem, but this failed to produce results. During the two counseling conversations Loren got the impression that Brian was enjoying both his

popularity and the situation, which worsened. Usually after an extended break, Loren would find many workers grouped around a single operation for which only one worker was needed, such as sweeping shavings. Loren found that the center of the group cluster would invariably be Brian. On these occasions, when Loren was forced to remind the carpenters that their work was not getting done, Brian would always laugh it off and have one last comment to make, which the men would wait to hear.

From all appearances, Brian has assumed informal control of the group. If you were Loren, how would you go about correcting the situation that exists?

Answer all the questions. All question carry equal marks.

1. Do you continue to counsel Brian or do you now go to the workers?
2. If you talk with the other carpenters, what do you say to them?
3. Are there other alternatives?
4. Would you "blacklist" Brian – that is, tell other supervisors not to hire him because he doesn't work hard enough?

Case – B

23 Marks

Please read the case carefully and answer the questions given at the end of the case.

Bob Knowlton was sitting alone in the conference room of the laboratory. The rest of the group had gone. One of the secretaries had stopped and talked for a while about her husband's coming enrollment in graduate school and had finally left. Bob, alone in the laboratory, slid a little farther down in his chair, looking with satisfaction at the results of the first test run of the new photon unit.

He liked to stay after the others had gone. His appointment as project head was still new enough to give him a deep sense of pleasure. His eyes were on the graphs before him, but in his mind, he could hear Dr. Jerrold, the project head, saying again, "There's one thing about this place you can bank on. The sky is the limit for a man who can produce!" Knowlton felt again the tingle of happiness and embarrassment. Well, damn it, he said to himself, he had produced. He wasn't kidding anybody. He had come to the Simmons Laboratories two years ago. During a routine testing of some rejected Clanson components, he had stumbled on the idea of the photon correlator, and the rest just happened. Jerrold had been enthusiastic: A separate

project had been set up for further research and development of the device, and he had gotten the job of running it. The whole sequence of events still seemed a little miraculous to Knowlton.

He shrugged out of the reverie and bent determinedly over the sheets when he heard someone come into the room behind him. He looked up expectantly; Jerrold often stayed late himself and now and then dropped in for a chat. This always made the day's end especially pleasant for Bob. It wasn't Jerrold. The man who had come in was a stranger. He was tall, thin, and rather dark. He wore steel-rimmed glasses and had a very wide leather belt with a large brass buckle. Lucy remarked later that it was the kind of belt the Pilgrims must have worn.

The stranger smiled and introduced himself. "I'm Simon Fester. Are you Bob Knowlton?" Bob said yes, and they shook hands.

"Doctor Jerrold said I might find you in. We were talking about your work, and I'm very much interested in what you are doing." Bob waved to a chair.

Fester didn't seem to belong in any of the standard categories of visitors: customer, visiting fireman, stockholder. Bob pointed to the sheets on the table. "These are the preliminary results of a test we're running. We have a new gadget by the tail and we're trying to understand it. It's not finished, but I can show you the section we're testing."

He stood up, but Fester was deep in the graphs. After a moment, he looked up with an odd grin. "These look like plots of a Jennings surface. I've been playing around with some autocorrelation functions of surfaces -- you know that stuff." Bob, who had no idea what he was referring to, grinned back and nodded, and immediately felt uncomfortable, "Let me show you the monster," he said, and led the way to the workroom.

After Fester left, Knowlton slowly put the graphs away, feeling vaguely annoyed. Then, as if he had made a decision, he quickly locked up and took the long way out so that he would pass Jerrold's office. But the office was locked. Knowlton wondered whether Jerrold and Fester had left together.

The next morning, Knowlton dropped into Jerrold's office, mentioned that he had talked with Fester, and asked who he was.

"Sit down for a minute," Jerrold said. "I want to talk to you about him. What do you think of him?" Knowlton replied truthfully that he thought Fester was very bright and probably very competent. Jerrold looked pleased.

"We're taking him on," he said. "He's had a very good background in a number of laboratories, and he seems to have ideas about the problems we're tackling here." Knowlton nodded in agreement, instantly wishing that Fester would not be placed with him.

"I don't know yet where he will finally land," Jerrold continued, "but he seems interested in what you are doing. I thought he might spend a little time with you by way of getting started." Knowlton nodded thoughtfully. "If his interest in your work continues, you can add him to your group."

"Well, he seemed to have some good ideas even without knowing exactly what we are doing," Knowlton answered. "I hope he stays; we'd be glad to have him."

Knowlton walked back to the lab with mixed feelings. He told himself that Fester would be good for the group. He was no dunce; he'd produce. Knowlton thought again of Jerrold's promise when he had promoted him -- "the man who produces gets ahead in this outfit." The words seemed to carry the overtones of a threat now.

That day Fester didn't appear until mid afternoon. He explained that he had had a long lunch with Jerrold, discussing his place in the lab. "Yes," said Knowlton, "I talked with Jerry this morning about it, and we both thought you might work with us for a while."

Fester smiled in the same knowing way that he had smiled when he mentioned the Jennings surfaces. "I'd like to," he said.

Knowlton introduced Fester to the other members of the lab. Fester and Link, the group's mathematician, hit it off well and spent the rest of the afternoon discussing a method for analyzing patterns that Link had been worrying over the last month.

It was 6:30 when Knowlton finally left the lab that night. He had waited almost eagerly for the end of the day to come -- when they would all be gone and he could sit in the quiet rooms, relax, and think it over. "Think what over?" he asked himself. He didn't know. Shortly after 5 p.m., they had almost all gone except Fester, and what followed was almost a duel. Knowlton was annoyed that he was being cheated out of his quiet period and finally resentfully determined that Fester should leave first.

Fester was sitting at the conference table reading, and Knowlton was sitting at his desk in the little glass-enclosed cubby he used during the day when he needed to be undisturbed. Fester had gotten the last year's progress reports out and was studying them carefully. The time dragged. Knowlton doodled on a pad, the tension growing inside him. What the hell did Fester think he was going to find in the reports?

Knowlton finally gave up and they left the lab together. Fester took several of the reports with him to study in the evening. Knowlton asked him if he thought the reports gave a clear picture of the lab's activities.

"They're excellent," Fester answered with obvious sincerity. "They're not only good reports; what they report is damn good, too!"

Knowlton was surprised at the relief he felt and grew almost jovial as he said good-night.

Driving home, Knowlton felt more optimistic about Fester's presence in the lab. He had never fully understood the analysis that Link was attempting. If there was anything wrong with Link's approach, Fester would probably spot it. "And if I'm any judge," he murmured, "he won't be especially diplomatic about it."

He described Fester to his wife, who was amused by the broad leather belt and brass buckle.

"It's the kind of belt that Pilgrims must have worn," she laughed.

"I'm not worried about how he holds his pants up," he laughed with her. "I'm afraid that he's the kind that just has to make like a genius twice each day. And that can be pretty rough on the group."

Knowlton had been asleep for several hours when he was jerked awake by the telephone. He realized it had rung several times.

He swung off the bed muttering about damn fools and telephones. It was Fester. Without any excuses, apparently oblivious of the time, he plunged into an excited recital of how Link's patterning problem could be solved.

Knowlton covered the mouthpiece to answer his wife's stage-whispered "Who is it?" "It's the genius," replied Knowlton.

Fester, completely ignoring the fact that it was 2:00 in the morning, went on in a very excited way to start in the middle of an explanation of a completely new approach to certain of the photon lab problems that he had stumbled on while analyzing past experiments. Knowlton managed to put some enthusiasm in his own voice and stood there, half-dazed and very uncomfortable, listening to Fester talk endlessly about what he had discovered. It was probably not only a new approach but also an analysis that showed the inherent weakness of the previous experiment and how experimentation along that line would certainly have been inconclusive. The following day Knowlton spent the entire morning with Fester and Link, the mathematician, the customary morning meeting of Bob's group having been called off so that Fester's work of the previous night could be gone over intensively.

Fester was very anxious that this be done, and Knowlton was not too unhappy to call the meeting off for reasons of his own.

For the next several days Fester sat in the back office that had been turned over to him and did nothing but read the progress reports of the work that had been done in the last six months. Knowlton caught himself feeling apprehensive about the reaction that Fester might have to some of his work. He was a little surprised at his own feelings. He had always been proud -- although he had put on a convincingly modest face -- of the way in which new ground in the study of photon measuring devices had been broken in his group. Now he wasn't sure, and it seemed to him that Fester might easily show that the line of research they had been following was unsound or even unimaginative.

The next morning (as was the custom) the members of the lab, including the secretaries, sat around a conference table. Bob always prided himself on the fact that the work of the lab was guided and evaluated by the group as a whole, and he was fond of repeating that it was not a waste of time to include secretaries in such meetings. Often, what started out as a boring recital of fundamental assumptions to a naive listener, uncovered new ways of regarding these assumptions that would not have occurred to the researcher who had long ago accepted them as a necessary basis for his work?

These group meetings also served Bob in another sense. He admitted to himself that he would have felt far less secure if he had had to direct the work out of his own mind, so to speak. With the group meeting as the principle of leadership, it was always possible to justify the exploration of blind alleys because of the general educative effect on the team. Fester was there; Lucy and Martha were there; Link was sitting next to Fester, their conversation concerning Link's mathematical study apparently continuing from yesterday. The other members, Bob Davenport, Georgia Thurlow, and Arthur Oliver, were waiting quietly.

Knowlton, for reasons that he didn't quite understand, proposed for discussion this morning a problem that all of them had spent a great deal of time on previously with the conclusion that a solution was impossible, that there was no feasible way of treating it in an experimental fashion. When Knowlton proposed the problem, Davenport remarked that there was hardly any use of going over it again, that he was satisfied that there was no way of approaching the problem with the equipment and the physical capacities of the lab.

This statement had the effect of a shot of adrenaline on Fester. He said he would like to know what the problem was in detail and, walking to the blackboard, began setting down the "factors" as various members of the group began discussing the problem and simultaneously listing the reasons why it had been abandoned.

Very early in the description of the problem it was evident that Fester was going to disagree about the impossibility of attacking it. The group realized this, and finally the descriptive materials and their recounting of the reasoning that had led to its abandonment dwindled

away. Fester began his statement, which, as it proceeded, might well have been prepared the previous night, although Knowlton knew this was impossible. He couldn't help being impressed with the organized and logical way that Fester was presenting ideas that must have occurred to him only a few minutes before.

Fester had some things to say, however, which left Knowlton with a mixture of annoyance, irritation, and at the same time, a rather smug feeling of superiority over Fester in at least one area. Fester held the opinion that the way that the problem had been analyzed was very typical of group thinking. With an air of sophistication that made it difficult for a listener to dissent, he proceeded to comment on the American emphasis on team ideas, satirically describing the ways in which they led to a "high level of mediocrity."

During this time Knowlton observed that Link stared studiously at the floor, and he was very conscious of Georgia Thurlow's and Bob Davenport's glances toward him at several points of Fester's little speech. Inwardly, Knowlton couldn't help feeling that this was one point at least in which Fester was off on the wrong foot. The whole lab, following Jerry's lead, talked if not practiced the theory of small research teams as the basic organization for effective research. Fester insisted that the problem could be approached and that he would like to study it for a while himself.

Knowlton ended the morning session by remarking that the meetings would continue and that the very fact that a supposedly insoluble experimental problem was now going to get another chance was another indication of the value of such meetings. Fester immediately remarked that he was not at all averse to meetings to inform the group about the progress of its members. The point he wanted to make was that creative advances were seldom accomplished in such meetings, that they were made by an individual "living with" a problem closely and continuously, in a rather personal relationship to it.

Knowlton went on to say to Fester that he was very glad that Fester had raised these points and that he was sure the group would profit by reexamining the basis on which they had been operating. Knowlton agreed that individual effort was probably the basis for making major advances. He considered the group meetings useful primarily because they kept the group together and they helped the weaker members of the group keep up with the ones who were able to advance more easily and quickly in the analysis of problems.

It was clear as days went by and meetings continued that Fester came to enjoy them because of the pattern that the meetings assumed. It became typical for Fester to hold forth, and it was unquestionably clear that he was more brilliant, better prepared on the various subjects that were germane to the problem being studied, and more capable of going ahead than anyone there.

Knowlton grew increasingly disturbed as he realized that his leadership of the group had been, in fact, taken over.

Whenever the subject of Fester was mentioned in occasional meetings with Dr. Jerrold, Knowlton would comment only on the ability and obvious capacity for work that Fester had. Somehow he never felt that he could mention his own discomforts, not only because they revealed a weakness on his part but also because it was quite clear that Jerrold himself was considerably impressed with Fester's work and with the contacts he had with him outside the photon laboratory.

Knowlton now began to feel that perhaps the intellectual advantages that Fester had brought to the group did not quite compensate for what he felt were evidences of a breakdown in the cooperative spirit he had seen in the group before Fester's coming. More and more of the morning meetings were skipped. Fester's opinion concerning the abilities of others of the group, except for Link, was obviously low. At times during morning meetings or in smaller discussions he had been on the point of rudeness, refusing to pursue an argument when he claimed it was based on another person's ignorance of the facts involved. His impatience of others led him to also make similar remarks to Dr. Jerrold. Knowlton inferred this from a conversation with Jerrold in which Jerrold asked whether Davenport and Oliver were going to be continued on; and his failure to mention Link, the mathematician, led Knowlton to feel that this was the result of private conversations between Fester and Jerrold.

It was not difficult for Knowlton to make a quite convincing case on whether the brilliance of Fester was sufficient recompense for the beginning of this breaking up of the group. He spoke privately with Davenport and with Oliver, and it was quite clear that both of them were uncomfortable because of Fester. Knowlton didn't press the discussion beyond the point of hearing them say that they did feel awkward and that it was sometimes difficult to understand the arguments Fester advanced, but often embarrassing to ask him to fill in the basis for his arguments. Knowlton did not interview Link in this manner.

About six months after Fester's coming into the photon lab, a meeting was scheduled in which the sponsors of the research were coming to get some idea of the work and its progress. It was customary at these meetings for project heads to present the research being conducted in their groups. The members of each group were invited to other meetings that were held later in the day and open to all, but the special meetings were usually made up only of project heads, the head of the laboratory, and the sponsors.

As the time for the special meeting approached, it seemed to Knowlton that he must avoid the presentation at all cost. His reasons for this were that he could not trust himself to present the ideas and work that Fester had advanced because of his apprehension about whether he could

present them in sufficient detail and answer such questions about them as might be asked. On the other hand, he did not feel he could ignore these newer lines of work and present only the material that he had done or that had been started before Fester's arrival. He felt also that it would not be beyond Fester at all, in his blunt and undiplomatic way -- if he were at the meeting, that is -- to comment on his [Knowlton's] presentation and reveal Knowlton's inadequacy. It also seemed quite clear that it would not be easy to keep Fester from attending the meeting, even though he was not on the administrative level of those invited.

Knowlton found an opportunity to speak to Jerrold and raised the question. He told Jerrold that, with the meetings coming up and with the interest in the work and with Fester's contributions to the work, Fester would probably like to come to the meetings; but there was a question of how the others in the group would feel if only Fester were invited. Jerrold passed this over very lightly by saying that he didn't think the group would fail to understand Fester's rather different position and that Fester certainly should be invited.

Knowlton immediately said he agreed: Fester should present the work because much of it was work he had done, and this would be a nice way to recognize Fester's contributions and to reward him, because he was eager to be recognized as a productive member of the lab. Jerrold agreed, and so the matter was decided.

Fester's presentation was very successful and in some ways dominated the meeting. He attracted the interest and attention of many of those who had come, and a long discussion followed his presentation. Later in the evening -- with the entire laboratory staff present -- in the cocktail period before the dinner, a little circle of people formed about Fester. One of them was Jerrold himself, and a lively discussion took place concerning the application of Fester's theory. All of this disturbed Knowlton, and his reaction and behavior were characteristic. He joined the circle, praised Fester to Jerrold and to others, and remarked on the brilliance of the work.

Knowlton, without consulting anyone, began at this time to take some interest in the possibility of a job elsewhere. After a few weeks he found that a new laboratory of considerable size was being organized in a nearby city and that the kind of training he had would enable him to get a project-head job equivalent to the one he had at the lab with slightly more money.

He immediately accepted it and notified Jerrold by letter, which he mailed on a Friday night to Jerrold's home. The letter was quite brief, and Jerrold was stunned. The letter merely said that he had found a better position, that he didn't want to appear at the lab any more for personal reasons; that he would be glad to come back at a later time to assist if there was any mix-up in the past work; that he felt sure Fester could supply any leadership that the group required; and that his decision to leave so suddenly was based on personal problems -- he hinted at problems

of health in his family, his mother and father. All of this was fictitious, of course. Jerrold took it at face value but still felt that this was very strange behavior and quite unaccountable, for he had always felt his relationship with Knowlton had been warm and that Knowlton was satisfied and, in fact, quite happy and productive.

Jerrold was considerably disturbed, because he had already decided to place Fester in charge of another project that was going to be set up very soon. He had been wondering how to explain this to Knowlton, in view of the obvious help Knowlton was getting from Fester and the high regard in which he held him. Jerrold had, indeed, considered the possibility that Knowlton could add to his staff another person with the kind of background and training that had been unique in Fester and had proved so valuable.

Jerrold did not make any attempt to meet Knowlton. In a way, he felt aggrieved about the whole thing. Fester, too, was surprised at the suddenness of Knowlton's departure. When Jerrold asked Fester whether he preferred to stay with the photon group instead of the new project for the Air Force, he chose the Air Force project and went on to that job the following week. The photon lab was hard hit. The leadership of the lab was given to Link with the understanding that this would be temporary until someone could come in to take over.

(Revised from a case originally written by Alex Bavelas.)

Answer all the questions.

1. Who was responsible for the situation Bob Knowlton landed up in at the end of the case? (5 marks)
2. Could anyone have done anything differently to avoid/prevent this outcome? (3 Marks)
3. How do you perceive Jerrold as a leader? What impact did his leadership styles had on Photon Lab? (7 Marks)
4. Based on your understanding of different motivation theories what are the motivation related issues involved and how Jerrold should have tackled? (8 Marks)

PART B (35 Marks)

1. a. Read the following and answer the questions that follow: (8 Marks)

What lures 40 million customers to visit Starbucks each week? Customers will pay higher price for a cup of coffee, compared to that in other local establishments, because Starbucks delivers consistent product and service quality to give customers a “Starbucks experience” that is inimitable in the industry. The ability to set a new benchmarking product quality and customer service has been the cornerstone of its business.

Starbucks excellent global reputation developed from management's belief in human capital and in treating the employees in the company as greatest assets. Jim Donald, CEO and President of Starbucks, believes that human resource should attend every strategic discussion concerning the company. By aligning the employees with the strategic decisions, the organization developed a corporate culture that focused on delivering world-class customer service to the customers. Employees at Starbucks are expected to cooperate and work together to meet the demands of their customers. Starbucks attracts and retains the best and the brightest in the country due to high level of satisfaction that the employees receive while on the job. To enhance the employees' passion to deliver high levels of customer service, Starbucks offers a multitude of training options to employees so they may become coffee masters. Starbucks has created a competitive advantage by creating a workforce that is very knowledgeable and passionate about what it does.

- (i) What makes Starbucks more desirable to work for than other coffee shops? Would you prefer to work at Starbucks? Why or why not?
- (ii) Create a list of most successful companies that you can think of. What do these companies have that others don't? What are some of the distinguishing features of these organizations which differentiate them from others?

1. b. Read the following and answer the questions that follow: (8 Marks)

The job market for college students is strong, but one of the hottest recruiters is Teach for India (TFI). This organization seems like an unlikely candidate for job seeker, because TFI offers a low salary and promises a strenuous work schedule. So why is this job appealing to college graduates? High achieving college graduates appreciate the program for the challenges it represents. TFI, a creative program intended to help solve the teacher shortage epidemic in the country, recruits the best and the brightest college students to share their expertise in some of the most challenging schools across the country. Teacher who complete the program then use their experience to make positive social change in their lifetime. What qualification does a candidate need to be accepted in this program? A stringent screening process evaluates the personalities and capabilities of each candidate. Students accepted in this program must have shown their ability to success in the classroom and the leadership roles in campus organizations. The alumni of Teach for India make positive impact in the society, whether it be in education or government offices.

- (i) If you were recruiting college students to enter the Teach for India program, what personality type would you choose from the Myer Brigg's Type Indicator model?
- (ii) What are the different types of perceptual distortions like to occur during the process of selection?

2. Read the following and answer the question that follows: (8 Marks)

Stress is a problem that occurs on daily basis, no matter where you work. Capital One has been in a state of constant change during past several years, trying to keep up with its rapid growth. Employees within the company are accustomed to change but their morale has been decreasing slowly. The human resource managers at the company conducted a 'stress audit' recently to establish the cost of the stress to company in terms of productivity and attrition. In the audit, it was found that the employees are under tremendous pressure which is affecting their personal and professional life.

According to you, what could be the possible reasons of stress for the employees of Capital One? How can you help the human resource department to mitigate the level of stress of employees?

3. a. Do you consider yourself to be a 'rational' decision maker? Give example of a rational decision made by you and its impact on your life. (4 Marks)
- b. Think of a team you worked in that performed poorly. Were any of the causes of the poor performance related to the forces that tend to create process loops? If so, which force was most particularly problematic? What steps, did your group take to deal with the problem? (7 Marks)