

Holding out on work skills

[Business](#), [Work](#)



Blackmer/Dover Resources wanted to remain competitive but employees like Bill Fowler felt threatened. When top management began a review of plant processes and decided to change their traditional way of doing things, it was met with resistance by some employees, mostly the older ones. In the old system, those like Fowler were used to earning extra for their output that exceeded the average. While management's intent was for the company to survive the fierce competition, the employees were suspicious that sooner or later they may be out of work.

Bill Fowler had 4 years to go before retirement and will have added 4 years more to his long service of 24 years to Blackmer. In those years, Fowler had been acknowledged as an excellent worker known for his speed and accuracy, where precision was highly required by the job. Fowler was an expert in his job. It became a simple and routine daily task for Fowler. Needless to say, Blackmer was his comfort zone. Such condition made him resistant to change. He believed that change in any form is a threat to his job security.

His reluctance to share his expertise, brought by his familiarity and skills in his work, was because he did not realize the wisdom in rotating people in the shop floor. He did not see the long-term effect of a multi-skilled workforce on the viability of the company. Fowler would not gain anything by keeping the knowledge and skills of the job for himself. He would not guarantee for himself and others continuous employment in the next 4 years and beyond. Fowler stood to retire at age 60 with or without Blackmer still in operation.

If Blackmer did not grow to be a robust organization that was flexible and adaptive to change, it would not be able to meet the new challenges of the

business. If Blackmer would not be able to rise above the fiercest of competition, it would go the way of other businesses that ceased operations. If Fowler cooperated and supported management's initiatives on developing new means to cut costs and increase production, Blackmer would be able to bring employment up instead of down because it would become economically viable and profitable for stakeholders.

It could make jobs easier and wages would be skills-based. Companies would be paying for skills and workers would be benefited if they are multi-skilled. By allowing himself to be moved around the shop floor, Fowler would gain for himself additional skills and competitive edge in the job market. If he would continue to resist change and refuse to meet new challenges, there is more to lose than gain for himself. Employment is driven by the financial interests of both capital and labor.

The needs of both must be met and satisfied for the business to survive. The business must be profitable for the capitalist and it must be sustainable for labor. Management will always innovate to stay competitive. Employees must realize that change is inherent in life as in business. There will always be new ways of doing things that add value to the process. Management and the worker must work hand in hand for the good of the business that will ultimately benefit the both of them.

In sharing his expertise, Fowler is rendering a valuable service in the partnership. He is helping sustain the business. He will pass on to the next generation of workers a company that has withstood the highs and lows of business. If he does not share his knowledge and skills, Blackmer may be doomed. When he does not help the company to evolve by sharing his

expertise, he gains nothing positive at all for himself, the company, and the present and future workforce. References Case I, p. 496.