

Case study on bobs meltdown

[Business](#), [Company](#)



Facts and Background

This case is about the internal circumstances at Concord Machines, a manufacturer whose product lines has fallen short of being lucrative and is now being saved by the company's services department. The case is fundamentally about three critical people in the company, the company President CEO Jay Nguyen, the senior vice president and general manager for the services department, Robert " Bob" Dunn, and Vice President for Knowledge Management Annette Innella. Here are short descriptions of the three:

- Jay Nguyen - is the president and CEO of Concord Machines. His long-term vision for the company centers on finding a way to recover its dwindling viability while his short-term vision is to find a source for cash to keep the company floating. The services group, headed by Bob Dunn seems to be doing just that. For some time now, Jay has been leaning on the services group while trying to clamp down on the company's costs. Jay realizes that there is a need to modify the company's business model and he has done so by trying to access the company's other resource - its knowledge, as an asset it can leverage on in the future. This realization I suspect, was validated by the success of Bob and his department, having great success by providing services to Concord's clients instead of just products. Jay's concrete action is to bring in Annette and has given her the reins on shaking up the corporation, hopefully resulting in the discovery of a new business model for the company.

- Bob Dunn - is the senior vice president of Concord Machines. Bob is a hard-nosed veteran, a consistent worker, a manager who is not afraid to get his

hands dirty and does not make excuses. Bob is highly regarded by those who understand him and while he lacks the sexiness of newer managers whose credentials from gleaming business schools are thought to approximate years of hard toil similar to what Bob proudly sports, Bob makes up for it by being effective and producing results. The work he carries however, is straining Bob to breaking point.

- Annette Innella - is a young, driven management professional who believes that Concord should focus on the future and not the past. Annette is one part correct and one part incorrect but she is focusing on the part that is correct by obtaining support from third party experts.

These three people are at the middle of a situation where Bob loses his composure and vents out on Annette, who in turn thinks that Bob and his tactics are arcane and ultimately are not needed for Concord to map out its future. Jay has failed to see that this potential conflict may happen and now has to react to the incident between the two at the company's cafeteria.

The case touches topics from general organizational management and development, to micro management, to employee psychological issues such as developing self-awareness, improving the tolerance to ambiguity, understanding environment driven stress, the need for closer personnel management and counselling, and managing person-centred conflict. All these are shown in the case at one point and the three main characters and the supporting characters each lend a different perspective about the incident.

Solutions/recommendations

Of the four opinions that were expressed as explanatory analyses of the case of Concord Machines, I tend to agree most with the opinions expressed by Nicole Gardner (who is a vice president and the chief human resources officer at Mercer Management Consulting in Boston). Nicole points out that it's not Bob or Annette that is the problem; it ultimately is Jay who is the problem at Concord Machines. I agree with this statement complete. The company's situation is a reflection of the company's leadership. The online resource Business Dictionary (2013) defines the word "Leadership" as those individuals in an organization that lead a group of people. Leaders exhibit clear and defined visions, share that vision to their followers in an effective and willing manner through the provision of appropriate information and acceptable methods while balancing the interest of all stakeholders of the organization. Leaders are important because the decisions they make have profound effects on the lives of other people and very often they do create histories by affecting world-impacting events.

If Jay is a better leader, he would have done the following:

- Manage Bob and Annette's expectations - Concord as an organization has an embedded power distribution. Currently, power resides with Jay and Bob is getting a lot of the power because of his success. The entry of Annette into the management picture disrupts the power balance (temporarily, as expected due to her role). Annette's expectations should have been managed and she should have been better informed about the company and its management processes before she began her work. This is because the power factor complicates the issues. Annette does not yet have a firm

understanding of the organizational culture and the power balance and thus appears to figure herself into situations that seem to be disrespectful (for instance mandating the assignment of personnel, and worse thru email!).

The same goes for Bob who is pushed to his managerial limit but has not been given the proper orientation on how Annette's work should in fact be driven by his work. Jay has to solve these issues between his managers to ensure that their perception does not affect the organization negatively.

- Communicate the new mission and vision of the company and the new strategies and tactics - Strategic Planning and Tactical Planning are two concepts that are closely related because both refer to business practices. Strategic planning is a business terminology that is defined as the process in which an objective is planned or organized, indicating the ways the organization would be achieving these objectives (More Business, 2009). Strategic planning is often long-term in nature and may include series of plans and objectives that may also include tactical planning. On the other hand, tactical planning provides the necessary substance for the strategy to work and is, in lay man's terms, are the actions needed for the strategic plan to happen. If the strategic plan requires " thinking" and " planning", tactical planning requires " planning operations" or real-life actions and day-to-day work agenda. In strategic planning, the leaders of the organization are thinking of how its personnel should behave and act and will often include a number of tactical actions that would lead to the organization reaching its strategic objectives. That being said, strategic planning is a higher-management function whereas tactical planning is implemented by the entire organization.

Knowledge management is an essential area to be developed by Concord now that it is in fact stepping into a new economic era. This is not a new concept but it is certainly new to people working on their jobs for so long that they lose sight of the company's immediate and long term vision. This includes Bob who thinks that Knowledge Management, or the need for it, is some ambiguous idea floated by Annette and will not be useful in any way to the company. The disconnection of Bob to the goals of the organization stems from Jay not being able to communicate the changes he sees fit and thus this should be a concern that he should address immediately.

- Manage the Change in the Organization - An organisation such as Concord Machines is in a period of change and therefore appropriate leadership is needed to reduce conflict and motivate employees to accept and support the change process. Leadership is very situational. A leader truly emerges when circumstances require an individual to outperform himself and stand up to the challenges and needs of the time. One such time that a leader emerges is during the process of change. Leaders emerge, according to Brounstein (2013) based on their individual strengths and based on the needs of their teams. In managing change, not all leadership types are applicable. The usable management styles are:

- The pace-setter - this type of leader needs quick results and gets them since his team is already highly motivated.

- The affiliate - this type of leader sets the emotional bonds that make the team work. This type works best when trust is needed to be rebuilt in a team.

- The coach - this type of leader sets the personal goals and objectives of his

team for them to perform in the future. This type works best when continuity is needed in an organization.

- The coercive - this type of leader requires immediate compliance with his plans and goals. This type is best suited for times when the organization is in crisis (for instance bankruptcy or a takeover) because of its problem-solving nature.

- The democratic - this type of leader builds consensus through participative management. This type is suited for the build-up phase of an organization, where ideas and commitment from everyone is necessary.

Depending on the situation, either an authoritative, coach, affiliate or coercive leader is needed since they produce immediate results and are faced with fast, continuously evolving situations. Jay must understand these leadership approaches to manage the change within the organization.

The other opinions expressed by the other management experts make sense as well. These include Victor Newman's opinion that the headquarters' initiative is very dangerous if not in consideration to what on-the-ground people are doing, or Kathleen Ligoki's insight on the organization working on improving its "thinking diversity" and Robert Kramer's desire for Concord's managers to have a broader sense of capability. All four experts however, state that it is up to the organization's leaders, Jay Nguyen in particular to manage the situation and ensure that the movement of the organization is towards something positive, instead of detrimental cases of food throwing at the company's cafeteria.

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