

# Mt everest case study essay



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On May 10, 1996 five climbers died on Mt. Everest, the deadliest day in the mountain's history. That day, twenty three climbers reached the summit. Five climbers, however, did not survive the descent. Two out of the dead, Rob Hall and Scott Fischer, were skilled team leaders with prior experience on the Everest. The others were clients who paid \$60, 000 to climb the mountain.

The climbers died at 25, 000 feet above sea level, possible causes included numbing of the brain due to thinner air, solar radiation, hypothermia, altitude sickness and lack of oxygen.

In my opinion this tragedy had several causes which team leaders ignored. It's all about decision making and choice between different alternatives. The Everest analysis suggests that leaders must pay close attention to team combinations in their organizations, and how their words and actions shape the thinking and beliefs of organization members.

### Problem Analysis

Mount Everest with the height of 8848m is the highest summit and considered the roof of the world and has been the greatest challenge to achieve. When Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay successfully reached the summit and became instant legends throughout the world. As many ambitious people throughout world wanted to be the part of this elite group it is important to know the possible causes behind the Adventure consultant and Mountain Madness failures during the expeditions. As per Krakauer school of thoughts climbing Everest will always be a risky endeavor and the failures are inevitable. He also says that analyzing what went wrong on

Everest is a useful enough to prevent some deaths down the road. Besides this others believed that human error caused the tragedy, and therefore, these deaths could have been prevented.

Also analyzing the mistakes committed by both the groups and forming an ideal way of mountain climbing group development (from forming to Adjourning) is of prime importance.

Let's see few determinants which affect the success of an Everest expedition:

- \* Knowing the size of the challenge
- \* Correct decision making
- \* Climbers focus
- \* Trust among members

#### Alternative Analysis

Possible arguments for the tragedy:

- \* Human error caused the tragedy: The serious mistakes committed by group members during the expedition resulted in tragedy. " The events of May 10 were not an accident, nor an act of God. They were the end result of people who were making decisions about how and whether to proceed." Proper leadership, optimal decision making and better group dynamics could have avoided the disaster.

- \* Environmental factors had a major contribution in tragedy: Climbing Everest will always be a risky and dangerous endeavor. Though Hall and Fisher committed a string of stupid errors but taking every calculated step wouldn't have escaped the tragedy.

Where key decisions went wrong: \* Group Formation: \* Recruitment of the team was not done properly with many unfit people present in the team. \* Qualification test could have been organized to select the group members (to check mental and medical stability of the candidates). \* Group Storming: \* There was no common value among the team members. \* Should have created shared values by bringing the team together earlier. \* Should have allowed guides and team members to have one on one communication to avoid cognitive biasing. \* Group Norming stage: \* Leader should have set rules on turnaround time. \* Leaders or guides should have identified and mitigate environmental and psychological stressors. \* Group performing stage \* Decisions made based on overconfidence and past weather records. \* Leaders failed to follow their own rules (turnaround time in case of Hall) \* No proper guidance at the time of crucial performance.

Please check the strengths and weakness of both the teams based on above analysis in Exhibit 1.

Conclusion, recommendation and justification

In my opinion the tragedy could have been avoided or minimized with the proper leadership, optimal decision making and better group dynamics. Major take home and learning for this case is that group should be developed properly as per the stated principals of Organizational Behavior. Moreover decision making shouldn't be biased on cost and overconfidence.