

Monica ashley essay



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Monica Ashley's Case Analysis Monica Ashley's case is a very conclusive example of how the correct use of power and influence in management is as important as, and sometimes even more important than, having all the right answers and being able to back them up with data.

Monica Ashley is a brilliant employee, and a very good Project Manager. She deserves a lot of credit for being able to complete the project, even though she has been removed towards the end. Her ability to concentrate on her work in a hostile environment is admirable. She is very well organized, passionate about her work and able to put the company's well being above her own personal interests.

She seems to understand better than everybody else in the company the need to complete the project in time in order to meet the customers' changing expectations. She has irrefutable arguments to prove everything that she says. However, the fact that she completely ignores or misuses the sources of power available to her annihilates, in a way, the advantages obtained from her dedication and hard work. The project could have been completed in a much shorter time and with better consequences for her career if she had understood organizational politics and had taken advantage of all the sources of power available to her. Monica thinks that because Gary Dorr has personally endorsed her to lead Project Hippocrates, she has legitimate power to do everything necessary to complete the project. The fact that she is unwilling to push back a deadline that she has set, although at that moment there was uncertainty about the project's future, shows how focused Monica is on doing what she knows is right, regardless of how people around her feel.

However, she lacks the expert power – because she is not a technical expert, her opinions do not have the same weight as Parker’s. The fact that she has another important source of power – information power, the result of her understanding of complex data and anticipation of future conditions – cannot entirely compensate for her lack of expert power. On the other hand, the top management sees Parker as the technical authority in the company. Even though known to be inflexible and politically aggressive, he was responsible for the majority of the company’s past technical accomplishments. He has the expert power in the organization, and uses it to refute any attempts to change.

Parker has authority and makes extensive use of coercive power as well. Monica’s project, no matter how successful on paper, is still an idea, therefore we can say the Parker’s group has also the power of nonsubstitutability – in other words, they are indispensable to the company. Because of their high degree of centrality within the organization, Parker has the support of top management. Overall, Parker has tremendous power within the organization, and from the beginning Monica sees him as an adversary and underestimates his capacity of fighting back.

In everything she does, Monica makes extensive use of rational persuasion as her principal influence tactic. Her presentations are very convincing and almost always seem to gain the approval of top management. By counting on Dorr and Dan Stella to handle her problems with Parker and Kane, we can say that she also uses upward appeals. Her tactics are effective only to a limited extent, her capacity of pushing the project forward. However, she lets

other sources of power to pass by unexploited, and she faces the consequences later.

For example, because of her good past relationships with Dorr and Stella, she assumes that they will automatically back her up. She fails though to work on improving these relationships from the new perspective of a more senior executive, and accuses them of abandoning her instead of trying to better understand the message they were trying to convey. On the other hand, Parker and Kane make extensive use of coercive power and pressure, which Monica could have interpreted as symbols of powerlessness – the two were afraid to lose control. They display political behavior, influencing the top executives to abandon Monica's project. Sometimes they make use of clear destructive political behavior, for example by spreading rumors about Monica having an affair with Dan Stella. Probably the biggest mistake that Monica did was to assume from the beginning that Parker would be an enemy.

She should have tried to put herself in his shoes. Because of the central role played by Parker and his organization up to that point, Monica could have easily inferred that he will not be comfortable giving up that power easily. As the head of the technical design team, Parker had also a responsibility to defend the “social status” of his employees within the company. They were all brilliant people, and they felt that Monica had neither the expertise nor the authority to tell them that their product was obsolete. Monica should have openly communicated with Parker in the beginning of the project, and try to share her power with him, although it is not sure that she could have influenced him to the extent that he would have approved the purchase of

the outside signal processor. There is a change though that Parker would have been a lot more helpful had Monica showed him that she respected everything he had done for the company, by asking for his opinion early in the process.

She should have understood also that top management needed Parker's approval of the project as a confirmation of this being the right thing to do, despite the fact that Gary Dorr had strategically given the lead of the project to Monica only (instead of maybe formally sharing it between her and Parker). Another error was that Monica failed to acknowledge the existence of organizational politics and in consequence failed to develop relationships with important people in the organization. She also failed to maintain or update her existing relationships, to adjust them to her new status as a more senior executive. One of the most important relationships that she failed to maintain was with Gary Dorr. Her reaction of surprise at the first senior management meeting proves that she did not discuss her actions with Dorr until then, and he was upset with her. She had disturbed the company's culture of maximum freedom and creative chaos by introducing a process, and recommended the purchase of a digital signal processor from the outside against Parker's will.

Moreover, by confronting Parker, Monica forced Dorr to take the latter's side and to publicly condemn her. Monica failed to understand all the signals that her boss, Dan Stella, had been sending her. She should have recognized that he had more experience fighting political battles than her, and that his warnings to "slow down" were to be taken seriously. She accuses Dan of being too conflict adverse, when in fact she tends to avoid conflict as much

as possible when she can not back up her position with data. Conflict should not be avoided when it is inevitable.

For example, she avoided conflict by deciding not to talk to Parker at the beginning of the project, and the consequences are harsh for both Monica and her project. When Kane spreads rumors about her having an affair with Stella, she decides to do nothing thinking that her close friends know the truth. She does not think about the effect of these rumors on other, potentially very influential, members of the organization. The fact that Stella removed her shortly before the completion of the project was the ultimate signal, meant to show Monica that although she had done a great job and had been right all the way, she failed to prove that she had become the high executive Dorr hoped she would become. Monica should have tried to influence as many people in the organization as possible, in order to gain support for her project in senior management meetings.

It is only normal that, in the eyes of the senior managers, Parker's opinion weighted more than hers. After all, Parker's product was the one producing revenue for the company, not Monica's great presentations. She should have worked hard at building relationships in private, and make other people more influential fight her battles in public. It is clear from the case that some of Parker's employee felt that the purchase of a digital processor from the outside was highly adequate for future needs. Even the most respected technical person in the company, Phil Edison, shared this opinion. However, when confronted in public, they could not have possibly taken a different position than their colleagues, some of whom might have genuinely believed that their analog processor was better.

Monica should have used these people to try and indirectly influence the other technical people, especially since she had very good data to support her argument, and technical people are usually sensitive to data. If a strong current of opinion about the need of an external purchase had risen from within Parker's organization, it could have influenced Parker himself. In conclusion, Monica Ashley should have paid more attention to organizational politics, and should have been more opened to learning from her bosses about what it means to be in a senior position. There is no doubt that, once she will add these qualities to her intelligence and dedication, she will become an excellent top executive. References: 1. Cohen, A.

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