The Dilemma

*Dr. R. Krishnaveni **R. Deepa

ABSTRACT

Team based work culture is becoming predominant in today's work environment, especially IT organizations. The work environment is characterized by tight deadlines, work pressures and tough competition. Career progression is ensured only through sustained performance. This case describes a team based work environment in an organization. Specifically, it brings out the response of a male and female employee of the organization towards a work place issue. The case ends up by provoking the readers to analyze the differences in response.

Background

Rajiv and Radha are good friends and were neighbors from their birth. They lived in Coimbatore, an important metropolitan city in Tamilnadu. They had their schooling in SGHS matriculation school near their house. They had a circle of common friends, who loved to be in their company. They were known among their friends as very outgoing, cheerful and hardworking students. Both of them were good in academics and extracurricular activities and the first and second rank was normally shared between them. Both of their fathers worked in a nearby textile machine manufacturing unit and their mothers were home makers. The uniformity in thoughts and nature had woven a strong bond between both families and they enjoyed being neighbors. As Rajiv and Radha were the only children for their parents, the friendship between Rajiv and Radha became very strong. They graduated from high school with good marks and took up Computer Science at KSG College of Technology. They graduated with flying colors. In the campus placement, they were selected by "Technosys technologies".

Technosys technologies Inc (TT) is a leading software company with clients all over the world. It deals with networking, security and database related projects. It has 150 software engineers, who are spread across 10 teams. Each team has a strategic project according to the skill sets of its members. TT had good prospects and had meticulously planned job schedules, which kept all the teams busy. There was a hierarchical reporting structure at TT and the performance appraisals were done once in six months. When a new order or project is received, it is directed to the team having the specific skill sets required

*   Professor, PSG Institute of Management, Post Box #: 1668, Avinashi Road, Peelamedu, Coimbatore 641004 Telefax : 0422-4304444 Phone : 0422-2577252 krishnaveni@psgim.ac.in

** Assistant Professor, PSG Institute of Management, Post Box #: 1668, Avinashi Road, Peelamedu, Coimbatore 641004. deepa@psgim.ac.in

by the client. The team lead should discuss with his/her team and formulate a time schedule for completion of the project. Once the time schedule is fixed, it is very critical for the teams to stick to the same. If deadlines are missed, it will result in adverse consequences for TT. Rajiv and Radha were placed in the networking team as software and hardware leads respectively. They reported to Mr.Shyam, the team head and Program Manager. The networking team comprised of 15 engineers and Anand was one among them. He is a close friend of Shyam.

Technosys technologies received an important order from Orange computers, USA for a networking requirement. This was directed to Shyam and he called upon his team for a discussion regarding the project scheduling and work allocation. When the project schedule and workloads were announced, Rajiv and Radha understood that the deadline was tight and that they were allocated a heavy work load when compared to the others in the team. Radha felt that if she talks about the heavy work allocation, she will come across as an incapable person. So she accepted the work load and decided that if she can work overtime she can finish the job. Rajiv voiced his concern in the meeting about the tight deadline and the work load and said he will need additional resources for executing the project on time. Shyam convinced Rajiv that he believes in Rajiv's capacity and thus pacified him.

The networking team started off with the planned schedule. As days went, Radha was unable to cope up with the work pressure and she started to face health problems. She was taking off from work for a day or two due to health issues. But she managed herself and put her sincere efforts to accomplish the targets as given by Shyam. At this juncture, the performance appraisal

process was over and Rajiv and Radha were eager to know their results. The day of results came and during the appraisal meeting, both of them were shocked to know that they were not appraised properly for their contribution. Though the appraisal process is a one-to-one meeting between the team lead and the concerned employee, the employees do share their appraisal details soon after the meeting. Rajiv and Radha came to know that Anand had received a good appraisal when compared to them.

Radha felt very bad. She thought of the hard work she had put despite her health issues and was so dejected. She knew that Shyam's appraisal was biased and not correct. She thought "I should have told Shyam right away in the meeting that his deadlines are unrealistic and that he has allotted me more work. I think Shyam is not convinced with my hard work. I feel guilty that I took off for two days due to sickness. Moreover, it is quite natural for him to have a soft corner for his best friend. So I should not speak against Shyam. He will feel offensive if a girl criticizes his decision and this might affect my work relation with him. Mom and Dad are having plans for my marriage, which will definitely alter my career course. In the meantime, I should not spoil my name and records by speaking against Shyam and his unethical appraisal. Let me wait patiently till the next appraisal". After arriving at this decision, she left office for the day.

Though she arrived at a decision in the office, she felt disturbed that night and was pondering over the incidents at the organization. She thought "Am I doing the right thing? I worked very hard and was not appraised according to my contribution. Should I voice my concern strongly or should I be patient?" She was confused and was not able to sleep. Then she recollected the repeated advice given by her parents during her

childhood and teenage days regarding how she should behave and present herself especially before elders and men. She also remembered elders saying that girls are going to be home makers in future and so they should be patient, tolerant and flexible. She thought "I acted according to the advice given by my parents and elders and so my decision is right. Let me discuss with my parents and Rajiv about this tomorrow". With this justification, she went to sleep.

Rajiv was also disturbed by Shyam's biased appraisal. He decided "I should voice my concern to Shyam regarding his unfair appraisal. I should also tell him to change his favoritism towards Anand as it is sending a wrong message to the team. I am confident that Shyam respects my technical skills and hence would listen to my views. In case Shyam reacts negatively, then I will look for a new job. I am sure to find one soon with my excellent career records".

Questions

1. Critique the responses of Radha and Rajiv

2. Does the difference in response have any relation to gender? Justify

3. If yes, what should be the part played by individuals, family, and society to remove the differential responses?