

The Case Of The Ace Employee

BY DR POORNIMA GUPTA



Unmesh was flying back to Delhi after a meeting with the CEO, Mr Vimal Anand Nirmal (Vimal Bhai), at the company's head office in Vadodara. This was the first physical meeting after nearly a year of zoom meetings, and although it felt good to travel and meet people in the head office, the bottom line was that the revenues were on a decline.

Rising transportation and import costs and a general increase in the cost of raw materials with the COVID-19 pandemic creating a slump in demand was affecting the bottom line. All the regional heads were in attendance at the meeting to discuss strategies to combat this downfall. With Delhi being one of the major markets, Unmesh felt that the pressure on him was the greatest.

While reflecting on the changes that he could suggest in their strategy in their Monday Managers' meeting, he was also dreading going to the office as he was clueless as to what fires to

douse in his office when he reached Delhi.

Lately, the main conflict had apparently revolved around one person, Manoj Jain.

Unmesh Rawal was the Regional Head for Van Glow Lighting Systems (VGLS), a state-of-the-art LED lighting company. They had been in the lighting business since 2000 with only a small factory near Vadodara, and in only two decades had grown to emerge as a pan-Indian company with offices in all the metros. They primarily dealt with B2B clients consisting of private as well as public industries. Though they had also opened a retail store a few years ago, it was shut down after they suffered some losses.

Unmesh had joined VGLS as a Sales Executive in 2002 and had risen the ranks to head the office in Delhi in 2019. He had hired Manoj 8 months ago as the marketing manager in Delhi. During his meeting with Manoj, he had got positive vibes and felt that Manoj was young with a fire in his belly, and was also well-experienced of working in a variety of industries. He had a good pedigree as he had completed his B.Tech and MBA from premium institutes in India.

Manoj had worked as the Deputy Marketing Manager in a food processing company that had not been doing very well during the pandemic. He was keen to join a different industry to expand his

horizons. He was given charge of the marketing department and was tasked with increasing the business. Manoj had a knack for convincing clients and was able to get some new orders. He soon got a reputation as a go-getter, but his interaction with the internal departments was not ideal.

Last month, the supply chain department had complained to Unmesh that Manoj had taken an order without consulting them. Due to this, they were forced to go over the cost since the trucks had to be outsourced.

Further, Manoj had shouted at one of his subordinates for not sharing some past figures in a client meeting in front of everyone, making her cry. She had gone to Unmesh saying that he had never told her to put the figures in the presentation in the first place, and when Manoj was questioned, he had stated that it was her job and she should have known.

Others in his team had also complained about Manoj not sharing information during weekly meetings, but, expected them to be abreast of the client dealings, creating a lot of misunderstandings and red faces.

A couple of months ago, he had approved an order at a discounted rate without consulting Unmesh. When he was summoned after the financial controller came with the PO to Unmesh, Manoj stated that it was dead stock costing money in storing inventory. Unmesh had to tell Manoj that he was still the boss and no




such actions could be taken without prior approval from him. Unmesh approved the order but made a policy that any discount of more than 10% had to be approved by him.

Manoj did not work well in a team and had mentioned that the team is for execution, but getting the business is an individual's effort. He felt that once he got the orders, others should be grateful and execute them irrespective of the hurdles. He was often heard saying, *"It's a jungle out there. You can survive only if you are a lion."*

Unmesh feared that if this went on for long, the resentment among the other employees will increase and some may even leave or become demotivated. He had tried talking to Manoj about working with others, to which the latter would reply, *"I am getting the business, aren't I?"*

Vimal Bhai had also noticed that Manoj was doing very well. During the meeting in Vadodara, when Unmesh had hinted about problems caused by Manoj, Vimal Bhai had said, *"Manoj is a bright lad. Maybe others are jealous. Handle them. That's your job."*

Unmesh is now in a Dilemma over handling Manoj. If he lets Manoj continue as he is, other employees may not like it, but if he tries to ask Manoj to change his ways, he fears alienating him as his expertise is important to the organisation. 

About the Author

Dr Poornima Gupta is an Associate Professor in Organisational Behaviour and Human Resource Management. She has more than sixteen years of experience in industry and academics and has worked in NIIT, Lucknow, Himalaya Exports Delhi, Permo Marketers and Ask Consultancy. Dr Poornima holds a PhD in Management and is Post Graduate in Management.