CONFRONTATION OR COMPROMISE

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Abstract
The case discusses about the interpersonal conflict between two project managers in a software company and emerging issues, thereafter. It is about how the competitiveness between them has escalated into a workplace conflict and resulting in disruptive behaviour. Sahil, a project was upset on the award of project to a competing project manager, Rakesh and felt that it was a biased decision. He believed that Rakesh was awarded the project because of his closeness to the delivery manager. Even after months after the incident, Sahil was holding his grievance against Rakesh. However, the issue flared up when he showed his restraint in transferring a new recruit Ravi who was staying in his team without a project. Meanwhile, Ravi felt that he had been victimized for the issue in which he was not a part. He was dejected to find himself benched and facing uncertainty on his first job.

Keywords: Interpersonal Dynamics, Conflict, Project Teams, Confrontation, Software Organization.

Sunder, the HR manager was disturbed by the issue between Sahil and Rakesh. The cause of the issue was known to him. Sunder was well aware that Sahil's grievance about the outcome of the issue. While it was prevailing for a past few months; however, it had never become dysfunctional. Sunder had personally approached Sahil and requested him to transfer Ravi. However, Sahil, keeping his personal issue in mind with Rakesh, was adamant in retaining Ravi and gave a reason that he would need Ravi for an upcoming project. He was unyielding to Sunder's request for Ravi's transfer to Rakesh's project.

After the logjam on a decision, Sunder realised that the conflict at their interpersonal level had escalated to a professional level and its dynamics appears to disturb other stakeholders. Due to their conflict, Ravi, a young employee and a fresh recruit to the organization was made to sit in the bench. The organization had invested in Ravi's training and development and he had to start working on the projects. Sunder realized that holding Ravi without a project could demoralize Ravi.

About E2E Consulting
The E2E consulting provided a complete spectrum of tailor made software development and resources outsourcing to various leading companies in India, middle east, Europe and North America. They focussed on custom made solutions to address the client's need.

Their strength was their human resources which provided high quality services to provide much benefit in terms of clients' savings during the life cycle of the products. They outsourced software professionals for the clients' requirement. They catered to various domains including, healthcare, retail, manufacturing and banking. The employees were largely between the age group of 23 to 40 years. The company focussed on tier II and III colleges for recruitment. It recruited good candidates and trained them for their requirement.

In E2E consulting, the project manager decides on projects to be allotted based on a candidate's expertise of the resources. Later, the resources were outsourced to a client's organization either within country or offshore.

About Ravi
Ravi, an electronics engineer from a premier institute from Chennai. He preferred to join IT industry with a vision of creating a prospective future for himself. He was a self-motivated and devoted individual with high aspirations. Coming from a humble background, he was willing to put any effort to climb the corporate ladder. He believed himself that he was innovative and technology savvy. He joined a leading E2E software development firm of the country which outsources resources persons to other organization. Ravi underwent a seven-month long technical training at the company's expense. He cleared the training programme with exceptional grades and was very excited about what the future had in store for him in the company. At the end of the soft skills part of the training module, Ravi was expecting to get assigned under a project manager.

Meanwhile the government change in North America and Mr. Trump as a new president, the project managers were concerned about the new policies and its impact on their business. Ravi was worried about his prospects of getting new project assignments. However, he waited optimistically for an assignment and was eager to make the best out of his first project and was keen to prove himself to his superiors. Finally, he received a confirmation from the HR about his placement in Sahil's project team.

About Sahil
Sahil was working with the organization for nearly seven years and had become a project manager before two years. He had a total 15 years of experience in IT industry. He was one of the prospective executives who was identified for the next level of

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leadership responsibilities in the organization. Sahil had spent his initial years in retail domain and later developed his expertise in healthcare domain too. With this diverse expertise and management degree from a premier institution, he gained trust and respect from his colleagues. Sahil managed a team of 18 members who were engaged with both retail and healthcare clients.

New Opportunity
After joining his team, Ravi faced his nightmare of not getting a project allotment relevant to his skills. He discovered that there was a scarcity in those projects and there were couple of projects without a need for any further resources. Sahil suggested Ravi to enrol for additional training sessions to hone his skills relevant to projects that may be allotted to his team. During the subsequent months, Ravi diligently attended the training sessions and reported to Sahil on a regular basis. However, Ravi was fatigued with his second training session and felt desperate to test his learning in a live project.

Meanwhile Ravi's friend indicated that there was a resource requirement in his unit and Ravi fitted the role perfectly. It was a common practice in E2E Consulting to look for opportunities outside one's unit if no work had been allocated in the parent unit. To be on the right side, Ravi informed Sahil, who appreciated his effort and even encouraged Ravi to look for opportunities in other units.

Ravi set up an appointment with Rakesh who was a project manager in the Manufacturing vertical domain. Ravi had a detailed discussion with him about the project requirements and his responsibilities as a software developer in the team. Rakesh found him to be competent for the role and offered the position to him after a brief interview.

The project was in line with Ravi's expectations and provided ample learning opportunities. It had appeared to Ravi that that project would promise a steady growth for his growth in the organisation.

As per the company policy, Ravi was required to get relieving approval (sign-off) from his current manager for getting transferred to a different project team. Since he was not allocated to any project, Ravi believed that getting Sahil's approval for the unit transfer would not be a problem. Confident and happy with the progress, Ravi approached his manager for the approval but to his surprise Sahil rejected the transfer on hearing Rakesh's name. While rejecting the case, Sahil mentioned that a big project was in the pipeline and hence he could not let a talented resource like Ravi to leave the team.

Ravi was surprised finding Sahil rejecting his transfer. He was also completely surprised when he came to know about the reason behind the rejection.

A Precursor Story
Rakesh and Sahil's professional relationship started when they joined the company as team leaders around seven years ago. Both were talented and hardworking employees who steadily climbed the hierarchical levels of the company. Around a year back a new project with immense growth opportunities presented itself before the company. Rakesh and Sahil were the top contenders for a particular project. The deal seemed to be tipping towards Sahil because of his superior technical skills and all seemed to be set. But at the final deciding moment, the delivery manager decided to award Rakesh with the new responsibility. Most of the senior staff, including Sahil, believed that Rakesh had scored the project because of his good relationship with the Delivery manager. Since that day Sahil had developed a huge animosity against Rakesh and looked for opportunities to create a difficult situation for him.

Ravi's Struggle
Ravi was puzzled at the hurdle that was created by an interpersonal conflict of two project managers. For a fresher from an academic campus, the interpersonal dynamics in the corporate office appeared very complex and confusing. He never imagined that a personal issue between two individuals could make him sit idle in his first assignment. All he had expected was a place in a team and a work in a project. He got tired of repeated trainings to improve the skills without being offered a place in a project. He felt that Sahil lacked empathy and couldn't differential between personal and professional conflict.Ravi found himself sandwiched between the two Project Managers and their interpersonal conflicts. This project presented a huge opportunity for Ravi and however, it could not find any solution for his entry into the project.

Sunder's Predicament
Later, Ravi discussed with Sunder the HR manager of his team about his plight. Sunder, patiently listened and assured him that he will find ways to resolve the issues. However, Sunder at the back of his mind, doubted whether Sahil will yield to his request. He was worried about the damage caused by the interpersonal conflict between two individuals in leadership roles. Sunder acknowledged conflicts as they were important for innovations; however, confrontations in the conflict could become dysfunctional to the organizations.

Acknowledgement