holding down a part-time job. After the group worked together for weeks analyzing the problem and devising a marketing plan, Paul assigned a section of the final paper to each member. With the pressure of all those end-of-the-semester deadlines bearing down on them, everyone was delighted when Paul volunteered to write the company and industry background, the section that typically took the most time to produce. Paul gathered in everyone's contributions, assembled them into a paper, and handed out the final draft to the other members. They each gave it a quick read. They liked what they saw and thought they had a good chance for an A.

Unfortunately, as Paul readily admitted when Professor Zierden confronted them, he had pulled the section he'd contributed directly off the Internet. Pointing out the written policy he had distributed at the beginning of the semester stating that each group member was equally responsible for the final product, the professor gave all four students a zero for the project. The group project and presentation counted for 30 percent of the course grade.

Joe, Brad, and Lisa maintained they were completely unaware that Paul had cheated. "It just never occurred to us Paul would ever need to cheat," Brad said. They were innocent bystanders, the students argued. Why should they be penalized? Besides, the consequences weren't going to fall on each of them equally. Although Paul was suffering the embarrassment of public exposure, the failing group project grade would only put a dent in his solid GPA. Joe, on the other hand, was already on academic probation. A zero probably meant he wouldn't make the 2.5 GPA he needed to stay in the business program.

At least one of the faculty members of the judiciary committee supported Professor Zierden's actions. "We're assigning more and more group projects because increasingly that's the way these students are going to find themselves working when they get real jobs in the real world," he said. "And the fact of the matter is that if someone obtains information illegally while on the job, it's going to put the whole corporation at risk for being sued, or worse."

Even though she could see merit to both sides, Melinda was going to have to choose. If you were Melinda, how would you vote?

What Would You Do?

1. Vote to exonerate the three group project members who didn't cheat. You're convinced they had no reason to suspect Paul Colgan of dishonesty. Exonerating them is the right thing to do.
2. Vote in support of Hank Zierden's decision to hold each individual member accountable for the entire project. The professor clearly stated his policy at the beginning of the semester, and the students should have been more vigilant. The committee should not undercut a professor's explicit policy.
3. Vote to reduce each of the three students' penalties. Instead of a zero, each student will receive only half of the possible total points for the project, which would be an F. You're still holding students responsible for the group project, but not imposing catastrophic punishment. This compromise both undercuts the professor's policy and punishes "innocent" team members to some extent, but not as severely.

SOURCE: Based on Ellen R. Stapleton, "College to Expand Policy on Plagiarism," *The Ithacan Online* (April 12, 2001), www.ithaca.edu/ithacan/articles/0104/12/news/0college_to_e.htm.

ch17 CASE FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Calgary Oil Shale Technologies, Inc.

When Martin Bouchard took over as president and CEO of Calgary Oil Shale Technologies, Inc. (COST), one of his top goals was to introduce teams as a way of solving the morale and productivity problems at the company's Alberta field operations site. COST is a subsidiary of an international oilfield services company. The subsidiary specializes in supplying technology and data management to optimize the recovery of oil from oil shale formations in Alberta, Colorado, and Utah. Oil shale is sedimentary rock containing a high proportion of organic matter that can be converted into crude oil or natural gas. With the price of crude oil skyrocketing and world supplies limited, energy companies in Canada and the United States were making a big push to recover hydrocarbons trapped in oil shale and slow-forming oil formations. Through its proprietary logging technology, COST could distinguish oil-bearing rock layers and help energy companies gain higher productivity from oil shale production.

COST used highly trained professionals, such as geologists, geophysicists, and engineers, to handle the sophisticated technology. They also used skilled

and semiskilled labor to run the company's field operations. The two groups regularly clashed, and when one engineer's prank sent a couple of operations workers to the emergency room, the local press had a field day publishing articles about the conflict. The company hired Algoma Howard, a First Nations descendant, to develop a teamwork program to improve productivity and morale at the Calgary facility. Howard previously had great success using teams as a way to bring people together, enable them to understand one another's problems and challenges, and coordinate their efforts toward a common goal. The idea was to implement the program at other COST locations after the pilot project.

In Alberta, Howard had a stroke of luck in the form of Carlos Debrito, a long-time COST employee who was highly respected at the Alberta office and was looking for one final challenging project before he retired. Debrito had served in just about every possible line and staff position at COST over his 26-year career, and he understood the problems workers faced on both the technical and field sides of the business. Howard was pleased when Debrito agreed to serve as leader for the Alberta pilot program.

The three functional groups at the Alberta site included operations, made up primarily of hourly workers who operated and maintained the logging equipment; the "below ground" group, consisting of engineers, geologists, and geophysicists who determined where and how to dig or drill; and a group of equipment maintenance people who were on call. Howard and Debrito decided the first step was to get these different groups talking to one another and sharing ideas. They instituted monthly "fireside chats," optional meetings to which all employees were invited. The chats were held in the cafeteria during late afternoon, and people could have free coffee or tea and snacks brought by Howard and Debrito. The idea was to give employees a chance to discuss difficult issues and unresolved problems in a relaxed, informal setting. The only people who showed up at the first meeting were a couple of engineers who happened to wander by the cafeteria and see the snack table. Debrito opened the meeting by folding out a cardboard "fireplace" and pulling four chairs around it for the small group to talk. Word quickly spread of the silly "fireplace" incident (and the free food), and more and more people gradually began to attend the meetings. Early sessions focused primarily on talking about what the various participants saw as "their" group's needs, as well as the problems they experienced in working with the "other" groups. One session almost came to fisticuffs until Debrito loudly announced that someone needed to go out and get another log for the fire, breaking the tension and moving things along. During the next session, Debrito and Howard worked with the group to come up with "rules of engagement," including such guidelines as "focus on the issue, not the person," "lose the words *us* and *them*," and "if you bring it up, you have to help solve it."

Within about six months, the fireside chats had evolved into lively problem-solving discussions focused on issues that all three groups found important. For example, a maintenance worker complained that a standard piece of equipment failed repeatedly due to cold weather and sand contamination. Debrito listened carefully and then drew a maintenance engineer into the discussion. The engineer came up with a new configuration better suited to the conditions, and downtime virtually disappeared.

The next step for Howard and Debrito was to introduce official "problem busting" teams. These temporary teams included members from each of the three functional areas and from various hierarchical levels, and each was assigned a team leader, which was typically a respected first-line supervisor. Team leaders were carefully trained in team-building, shared-leadership, and creative problem-solving techniques. The teams were asked to evaluate a specific problem identified in a fireside chat and then craft and implement a solution. The teams were disbanded when the problem was solved. CEO Martin Bouchard authorized the teams to address problems within certain cost guidelines without seeking management approval.

Despite the camaraderie that had developed during the fireside chats, some delicate moments occurred when engineers resented working with field personnel and vice versa. In addition, some managers felt disempowered by the introduction of problem-busting teams. They had seen their role as that of problem solver. Now, they were asked to share responsibility and support decisions that might come from the lowest-level workers in the company. Building commitment and trust among lower-level employees wasn't easy either. Howard suggested to DeBrito that they use a "connection ladder" that she had observed used in a hospital nursing team. The idea is for the leader to identify where each team member is in terms of connection/disconnection with the process to determine what approach can help move the person from indifference toward commitment. Over time, and with Debrito's and Howard's continuing guidance, the problem-busting teams eventually began to come together and focus on a number of chronic problems that had long been ignored.

About a year and a half into the team-building program, the entire workforce in Alberta was organized into permanent cross-functional teams that were empowered to make their own decisions and elect their own leaders. By this time, just about everyone was feeling comfortable working cross-functionally, and within a few months, things were really humming. The professional and hourly workers

got along so well that they decided to continue the fireside chat sessions after work, either in the cafeteria with snacks provided by volunteers or at a local bar. Some tensions between the groups remained, of course, and at one of the chats an operations worker jokingly suggested that the team members should duke it out once a week to get rid of the tensions so they could focus all their energy on their jobs. Several others joined in the joking, and eventually, the group decided to square off in a weekly hockey game. For the opening game, Howard served as goalie on one side and Debrito as goalie on the other. Implementation of teams at the Alberta facility was deemed by management to be a clear success. Productivity and morale were soaring and costs continued to decline.

The company identified the Colorado office as the next facility where Algoma Howard and her leadership team needed to introduce the cross-functional teams that had proven so successful in Alberta. Howard's team felt immense pressure from top management to get the team-based productivity project up and running smoothly and quickly in Colorado. Top executives believed the lessons learned in Alberta would make implementing the program at other sites less costly and time-consuming. However, when Howard and her team attempted to implement the program at the Colorado facility, things did not go well. Because people were not showing up for the fireside chats, Howard's team, feeling pressed for time, made attendance mandatory. Ground rules were set by the leadership team at the beginning, based on the guidelines developed in Alberta, and the team introduced specific issues for discussion, again using the information they had gleaned from the early freewheeling Alberta sessions as a basis. However, the meetings still produced few valuable ideas or suggestions.

When it came time to form problem-busting teams, Howard thought it might be a good idea to let the groups select their own leaders, as a way to encourage greater involvement and commitment among the Colorado workers. The leaders were given the same training that had been provided in Alberta. However, although a few of the problem-busting teams solved important problems, none of them showed the kind of commitment and enthusiasm Howard had seen in Alberta. In addition, the Colorado workers refused to participate in softball games and other team-building exercises that her team developed for them. Howard finally convinced some workers to join in a softball game by bribing them with free food and beer, but the first game ended with a fight between two operations workers and a group of engineers.

"If I just had a Carlos Debrito in Colorado, things would go a lot more smoothly," Howard thought. "These workers don't trust us the way workers in Alberta trusted him." It seemed that no matter how hard Howard and her team tried to make the project work in Colorado, morale continued to decline and conflicts between the different groups of workers actually seemed to increase.

Questions

1. Algoma Howard and Carlos Debrito phased in permanent cross-functional teams in Alberta. What types of teams are the "fireside chats" and "problem-busting teams"? Through what stage or stages of team development did these groups evolve?
2. What role did Carlos Debrito play in the success of the Alberta team-based productivity project? What leadership approach did he employ to help reduce conflict between labor and the professionals? Do you agree with Algoma Howard that if she just had a Carlos Debrito in Colorado, the project would succeed? Explain your answer.
3. What advice would you give Algoma Howard and her team for improving the employee-involvement climate, containing costs, and meeting production goals at the Colorado facility?

SOURCES: Based on Michael C. Beers, "The Strategy That Wouldn't Travel," *Harvard Business Review* (November–December 1996): 18–31; Cathy Olofson, "Can We Talk? Put Another Log on the Fire," *Fast Company* (December 19, 2007), http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/28/minm.html (accessed September 3, 2008); Karen Blount, "How to Build Teams in the Midst of Change," *Nursing Management* (August 1998): 27–29; and Erin White, "How a Company Made Everyone a Team Player," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 2007.

ch17

Evo: Teamwork

Evo had supported a sports team of hard-core athletes for years, but it only recently attempted the experiment of launching a formal workplace team. Like many companies, the online retailer of snowboard, ski, skate, and wake gear had been in the habit of sloppily throwing around team metaphors to describe anything involving random groups of employees. Evo finally got serious about the team concept when the company formed a creative services team.