



an organizational behavior moment

The New Quota

"One club." Jack closed his hand and, almost imperceptibly, leaned forward a little. To most people, such a movement would have gone unnoticed. But all three of the others knew that Jack's opening bid was a little weak.

"Pass."

"Three no trump." Bill was gleeful. He had 16 points, and this would be the first hand he had played this lunch hour. He watched as Jack spread his hand and noted that the play would be uneventful.

"Bid three, making four," Dennis said as he penciled down the score. "Got time for another?"

"Not really. Gotta get back to the grind," Steve grimaced as he spoke. "Listen, what do you guys think about the new quota?"

"It's ridiculous!" Bill was anxious to find out how his co-workers felt, and he also wanted to express his own opinion. "When I came here five years ago, we were supposed to wire three assemblies an hour. Now we're supposed to do eight. They aren't paying me that much more. I think it stinks."

"I do, too." Dennis was usually pretty low key. But as he spoke, his eye began to twitch, revealing his anxiety. "I'm not sure that I could meet it even if I tried, and I'm sure as hell not going to try. They can have my stinking job if they want. Only reason I stick around here, anyway, is because you guys are such lousy bridge players."

They all laughed. Then Jack, seeing that Steve was waiting, said, "Eight's possible, but I think some of us are going to be laid

off if we all do it. I was talking to this guy over in engineering the other day, and he explained how to make a jig that lets you just lay those wires in real easy. I tried it and it really works. It saved me about six minutes on the first assembly. Of course, I went back and told him it didn't work. I just don't want to do eight—won't help any of us if we do."

Steve looked curiously at Jack. "So that's what you were up to! I saw you really pushing a couple of days ago and thought you'd lost your screws. Anyway, I'm glad you guys feel the same as me. It makes me feel a lot better. Don't figure the boss will do much to us if he thinks an old pro like Jack can't do eight."

It was several days later when Dave, the shop supervisor, was called to the manager's office. Dave knew that it was going to be about the quota, and he didn't know exactly what he was going to say. Mr. Martin was on the phone but motioned for him to sit down.

When he hung up, he faced Dave and said, "That was Pacific Electronics. They want to know if we can meet the shipping schedule or not. What do I tell them when I call back?"

"I don't know, honestly. The guys have picked their speed up some, but I don't think we're going to do better than six-and-a-half, maybe seven."

"That won't cut it, Dave. This new business is important. If we can't handle it, we'll have to cut back some workers. We have too many budget problems without it. Are you sure they're really trying?"

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"Yes!" Dave responded. "Jack even tried a new jig that engineering thought up, but it didn't seem to help. Maybe if we added some more incentive bonus it would help. I don't know."

"We can't do that. Costs are already too high. We're being hurt on scrap rate, too. You just go back there and really push them. I'm going to tell Pacific that we can meet the schedule. Now you get that crew of yours to do it!"

team exercise

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Discussion Questions

1. What factors seem to be influencing team performance here?
2. Identify the team norms and goals. Are they compatible with organizational objectives?
3. How does the team function to meet individual needs? If you were Dave, which team concepts would you apply? Why those?