

TRB 2:1A (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 2, Activity 2:6)

A Cut above the Rest (A)

General Background

Book Magic Ltd (BML) imports highly priced illustrated glossy books (mostly of the reference type) from UK & USA, and sells them through a large number of travelling sales executives (37 at present). They go from house to house to sell the books. They focus on upper class families. They go to schools and colleges also.

For a monthly salary of Rs 2,000 (+ Rs 500 travelling allowance) each sales executive has to sell books worth Rs 40,000 a month. For sales beyond Rs 40,000, there is a 7.5% commission. Sales executives have to wear BML's uniform and display its identity card. They are prohibited from selling anything other than BML's books.

You are Kamini Desai, Sales Executive, BML You have been working with BML for a little over two years. Among the thirty-seven sales executives with BML, you are undoubtedly the star. As against the monthly minimum target of Rs 40,000, your average monthly figure this year is Rs 72,300. In February you touched Rs 98,800, an all time record for BML's sales executives.

The last four months have been hell for you. Your father died three months ago. He left behind a huge debt. When he was alive neither you nor your mother had any idea of the debt trap he was in. In fact it is his debts that broke his spirit. Now you have to pay back the debts. Your mother depends on you.

You desperately need extra money: at least Rs 4000 extra per month for two years to pay off the debt. With the flat 7.5% commission on extra sales you will need to sell books worth about Rs 130,000 every month to raise the extra Rs 4000. That is nearly impossible – even for you. The company never offered you any loan. Even if they offered it, you wouldn't take it. Loans are evil. They ultimately smother you.

So since last month you have been quietly selling imported perfumes to your book customers. The perfume dealer gives you 20 percent commission on every bottle you sell. You know it is against BML's rules to sell other products. But you can't help it. Moreover, you plan to stop it once you pay off the debt. In any case your book sales haven't been affected. You mention perfumes only after the book business is over.

If BML gave higher rates of commission for higher slabs of sales, it would solve your problem nicely. Meet your boss and suggest it. If that is done, you can quietly stop your perfume sales before anyone notices it. You love the job at BML; you don't want to lose it. But, you can't go on with the present commission rate at BML. Plan with your friends your strategy for getting a new slab system approved.

In the meanwhile your boss quite unexpectedly calls for you. Go meet him. ■■

TRB 2:1B (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 2, Activity 2:6)

Reining in Kamini Desai (B)

General Background

Book Magic Ltd (BML) imports highly priced illustrated glossy books (mostly of the reference type) from UK & USA and sells them through a large number of travelling sales executives (37 at present). They go from house to house to sell the books. They focus on upper class families. They go to schools and colleges also.

For a monthly salary of Rs 2,000 (+ Rs 500 travelling allowance) each sales executive has to sell books worth Rs 40,000 a month. For sales beyond Rs 40,000, there is a 7.5% commission. Sales executives have to wear BML's uniform and display its identity card. They are prohibited from selling anything other than BML's books. This is made very clear to all sales executives when they are recruited.

You are Senior Manager, BML. Of the thirty-seven sales executives working for you Ms Kamini Desai is undoubtedly the star. Her average monthly sales figure this year is Rs 72,300. In February last she touched Rs 98,800, an all time record. She is streets ahead of even Kavita Rangamurty, who had held the record for the last three years.

There is, however, something that is worrying you about Kamini. Success seems to have gone to her head. She has started flouting the company rule against selling products other than BML's books. You have just come to know (from a customer who telephoned you this morning) that she is selling foreign perfumes along with BML's books. The caller in fact complimented her on her sales skills. But you were thoroughly embarrassed because you didn't know that she, of all people, was doing it.

Call Kamini in and impress on her that indiscipline will not be tolerated no matter how fantastic she is. She may have started selling perfumes to make a little extra money. You know that her father had been ill for some time and that he died a few weeks ago. She was perhaps too proud to approach you for financial help. Naturally you didn't offer her anything other than words of condolence. Perhaps a low interest loan from the company will pull her away from the side business. But she must stop moonlighting.

Plan your strategy for stopping Kamini from selling other products. You don't want to lose her. If she leaves, your target (and bonus) will be affected. But she must toe the company line. If you turn a blind eye, others also will follow her example and ruin BML. ■■

TRB 2:2A (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 2, Activity 2:7)

Gone with the Wind (A)

Background

Muthangi Srinivas has been in the US for about five years now. Currently he is a Project Leader with the CAD software giant, Obelix Corp in California. His dashing looks, BTech from IIT Madras, MS from the US, and now job with Obelix Corp have made him hot property on the Andhra marriage market. Several rich, intelligent, and beautiful girls have been identified by his family for him to choose from and marry. But he has been telling them repeatedly during the last year or so that he didn't want to get married yet.

Muthangi is a highly conservative and well respected Brahmin family at Ongole, Andhra Pradesh. Educating Srinivas and sending him to the US has set them back by about Rs one million. Father hopes to get not less than Rs five million by way of dowry so that he can pay back the massive debts and marry off his three daughters.

Srinivas has been sending home about \$ 500 every two months for a year now. (But of late he has been a bit irregular.) He is coming to India soon on a month's holiday.

You are Muthangi Srinivas. You want to marry Carolyn, a Black American divorcee. A sales assistant at a department store in California, she came into your life a few months before you joined Obelix Corp. She pulled you out of deep depression and suicide. She gave you a second life. You love each other deeply. Six months ago you proposed to her. She accepted. You spend most evenings together, but don't live together.

You know you are going to disappoint your family, especially Father. But you can't help it. Of course you could have told him about these developments when he was constantly pestering you on the phone with marriage proposals. But you couldn't muster enough courage to tell him. You thought you'd explain everything when you met him. But to reduce the shock, you telephoned Father just before you left the US and told him that you were bringing along your American fiancée. All you got was a stunned silence in reply.

You've arrived at Ongole. Walk into your home and talk to your father. Now he will be alone. Your objective is to get him to accept your plan to marry Carolyn before your return to the US in four weeks. She also has come along with you to India. She is waiting in the hotel. She would like a traditional Indian wedding. She is willing to convert to Hinduism if necessary. The only thing she will not agree to is delaying the marriage beyond two or three months. She feels she has waited enough.

You will not abandon Carolyn under any circumstances. You want to marry her with your parents' blessings and cooperation if possible. They've sacrificed so much for you. Talk to your father. Get him to agree to your marriage with Carolyn.

Time limit for the meeting with Father: 10 minutes. ■■

TRB 2:2B (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 2, Activity 2:7)

Gone with the Wind (B)

Background

Muthangi Srinivas has been in the US for about five years now. Currently he is a Project Leader with the CAD software giant, Obelix Corp in California. His dashing looks, BTech from IIT Madras, MS from the US, and now job with Obelix Corp have made him hot property on the Andhra marriage market. Several rich, intelligent, and beautiful girls have been identified by his family for him to choose from and marry. But he has been telling them repeatedly during the last year or so that he didn't want to get married yet.

Muthangi is a highly conservative and well respected Brahmin family at Ongole, Andhra Pradesh. Educating Srinivas and sending him to the US has set them back by about Rs one million. Father hopes to get not less than five million by way of dowry so that he can pay back the massive debts and marry off his three daughters. Srinivas has been sending home about \$ 500 every two months for a year now. (But of late he has been a bit irregular.) He is coming to India today on a month's holiday.

You are Muthangi Satyanarayana, Srinivas's father.

What wonderful dreams you had woven around your son Srinivas! And he is coming home today after a gap of five long years. But he has let you down. He shocked you yesterday morning, just before he left the US, with the news that he was bringing along his American fiancée.

First you didn't believe it. You were too stunned to say anything. But on reflection it made sense. Sreenu hasn't been regular either with phone calls or sending money during the last few months. Now he has no time for the family that sacrificed so much for him. The money might stop completely. Now how will you pay back the huge debts you've run up on account of his studies and trip abroad?

It is not just the money. How about the family's image in the community? Who will marry the girls now? In the long history of Muthangi family there has not been a single case of inter-caste marriage or even of love marriage. You don't want a dirty, beef-eating foreign daughter-in-law. She will violate the Muthangi tradition. You'd rather commit suicide than take her into the family. You will be a laughing stock in town. Many girls and their parents – all from your own community, but offering Rs three to seven million as dowry – are waiting. What would they think of you and the word you gave them? How could Srinivas do this to you and his loving sisters?

Srinivas is arriving shortly. Talk to him when he comes. You don't want to lose him. Without his continued support you can neither repay the huge loan nor marry off the girls. Besides, he is your only son. Persuade him to see at least a couple of really pretty and intelligent girls (one a BTech from IIT Kanpur) on your short list. Then he will change his mind. Use whatever strategy you think fit. It doesn't matter even if he gives up his job and returns to India for good.

Time limit for the meeting with Srinivas: 10 minutes. The other members of the family have gone to the temple. You haven't told them yet about the bomb that Srinivas had dropped yesterday. ■

TRB 2:2C (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 2, Activity 2:7)

Gone with the Wind (C)

Background

Muthangi Srinivas has been in the US for about five years now. Currently he is a Project Leader with the CAD software giant, Obelix Corp in California. His dashing looks, BTech from IIT Madras, MS from the US, and now job with Obelix Corp have made him hot property on the Andhra marriage market. Several rich, intelligent, and beautiful girls have been identified by his family for him to choose from and marry. But he has been telling them repeatedly during the last year or so that he didn't want to get married yet.

Muthangi is a highly conservative and well respected Brahmin family at Ongole, Andhra Pradesh. Educating Srinivas and sending him to the US has set them back by about Rs one million. Father hopes to get not less than Rs five million by way of dowry so that he can pay back the massive debts and marry off his three daughters.

Srinivas has been sending home about \$ 500 every two months for a year now. (But of late he has been a bit irregular.) He is coming to India today on a month's holiday.

Observers

You are about to observe an interaction between Muthangi Satyanarayana and his son Muthangi Srinivas.

When you observe the conversation, do not talk or intervene in any way. Look out especially for the following.

1. Does either the father or the son make an attempt to see the issue from the other's perspective?
2. Has the discussion led to a win-lose or lose-lose or win-win result? Why?
3. Does either side listen enough before presenting their view? How intensive is the listening?
4. What external signs of intensive listening do you notice? (E.g. sustained eye contact, intense look on the face, silence while the other is talking, etc)
5. If you were one of the two parties, how would you go about the job?

Time limit for the meeting between Satyanarayana and Srinivas: 10 minutes.

TRB 2:3A (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 2, Activity 2:8)

Yes Boss! (A)

Background

Eksel Technologies (India) Ltd is a 100 per cent export-oriented subsidiary of Eksel Technologies, Seattle, USA. It accepts financial software projects from the parent company and executes them.

There are about a hundred young professionals working with Eksel Technologies in India. They report to one of eight managers who in turn report to their American bosses in Seattle.

The deadlines are typically tight at Eksel. With e-commerce booming, the situation is hot for all. Recruitment isn't keeping pace with the requirements. Although the company is small, there is very little interaction between different functional areas. In fact, people are so busy that there is little time for anything other than work.

You are Viswanath Wagle. You are one of the eight managers at Eksel Technologies India. You oversee three project teams consisting of seventeen professionals in all.

Ravikanth, one of the professionals reporting to you has been with you for about eight months. Recruited through campus interview he joined you with excellent academic qualifications. He is definitely capable but he appears to be unwilling or unable to focus on work. He loiters around quite a bit. He doesn't take the deadlines seriously. His team members complain about him. But they appreciate his ability to put in intense and high quality work when he is under pressure, that is, after the first deadline passes. So he hasn't really let his team or project leader down.

You have been planning to call him and talk to him about the trouble he is causing himself and others. If he doesn't change, he may ruin his career. But yesterday he himself asked for a meeting with you. You have agreed to meet you Friday morning.

Plan your meeting. You would like to give him about ten minutes. If you can get him to change his ways, you will have achieved something fantastic.■■■

(Time limit for the role play: 10 minutes.)

TRB 2:3B (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 2, Activity 2:8)

Yes Boss! (B)

Background

Eksel Technologies (India) Ltd is a 100 per cent export-oriented subsidiary of Eksel Technologies, Seattle, USA. It accepts financial software projects from the parent company and executes them.

There are about a hundred young professionals working with Eksel Technologies in India. They report to one of eight managers who in turn report to their American bosses in Seattle.

The deadlines are typically tight at Eksel. With e-commerce booming, the situation is hot for all. Recruitment isn't keeping pace with the requirements. Although the company is small, there is really very little interaction between different functional areas. In fact, people are so busy that there is little time for anything other than work.

You are Ravikanth Mishra. You had a brilliant academic career. You joined Eksel Technologies India about eight months ago. You were recruited through campus interview. This is your first job.

You are not very happy with the rather impersonal way the professionals are treated. You are given deadlines imposed from Seattle and nothing but work matters. Your life at work seems to be restricted to the six members of your team. There is little interaction with other teams. You don't even know what is going on around you. You know details of only your project. That restricts your learning opportunities too.

You get so bugged with the situation that you often don't feel like working. You loiter a bit. You miss deadlines and have annoyed your team members. But you are sure they don't really mind it because you have always risen to the occasion when it really mattered - around deadlines. There may have been some delay because of you; but your contribution has been excellent.

You are planning to quit Eksel and join an Indian company. You have an offer. But you haven't said yes or no to them. You expect the Indian company to be more humane.

You wanted to talk these things over with your manager, Mr Viswanath Wagle. You asked him for an appointment and he has given you time Friday morning. Prepare yourself for the meeting.

(Time limit for the role play: 10 minutes.)