

TRB 7:1A (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:2)

Stallion Softek

Background

Stallion Softek is a prosperous, progressive, multinational, multi-product software company. Its Asia operations are controlled from its regional office at Hitec City, Hyderabad.

Last week Sabita Pillai, a bright young Systems Analyst, was caught shoplifting at *The Bookworm*, a large books and stationery shop at Hyderabad. The shop handed her over to the police in spite of her protestations that she meant to pay but happened to walk out absent-mindedly. After the intervention by Stallion Softek's GM - Personnel she was released with a warning by the police. No case was registered.

The management in Hyderabad has to take a decision on what to do about this incident and its impact on the company's image. Now hardly a dozen people at Stallion know about it. But the news could go to a lot of people, even the press, through the bookshop or someone who may have been around when it happened.

The GM-Personnel has convened a meeting of the following: the Vice President (Peter Frankel, an American, Chief of Asia Operations), GM-New Business, Manager-HR, and Ms Indira Pathi (Project Manager to whom Sabita reports). The meeting is chaired by GM-Personnel. Incidentally, Sabita is distantly related to Manager - HR.

Here is the agenda that the GM - Personnel sent out:

To: VP, GM-New Business, Manager-HR, and Indira Pathi (Project Manager)

From: GM-Personnel

There will be a meeting at 2 p.m. today in Conf Room 3 to discuss the shoplifting by Sabita Pillai of a book from *The Bookworm*. You are requested to make it convenient to attend the meeting.

Group A

You are the **Vice President**. You speak your mind out even when your views are not popular. You believe that Sabita should be fired. The company's image is foremost in your mind. Stallion is already a late entrant in India. Any dent in the image can hurt the company. You don't care whether Sabita intended to pay or not. What matters is that she was caught red-handed for shoplifting. So after her quiet dismissal everyone in the company should be clearly told why she was fired. You believe in transparency. You also believe in setting very high standards of public behaviour. Just imagine what will happen to the company if a few more of Stallion people are caught shoplifting or something equally bad!

(Time available for the meeting: 15 minutes. Contribute creatively to the meeting. Don't change your basic view, given above, unless others convince you to. As Vice President your views are of particular significance.) ■

TRB 7:1B (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:2)

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Here is the agenda that the GM - Personnel sent out:

To: VP, GM-New Business, Manager-HR, and Indira Pathi (Project Manager)

From: GM-Personnel

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Group B

You are **GM – Personnel**. Although you don't know her personally you believe Sabita's story that she intended to pay, but walked off absent-mindedly. That is most likely to be what happened. She has never stolen anything in her life, she says. Then why make a mountain out of a mole-hill? You want the company to just ignore the incident. Let her get on with her life and work. Take action only if there is a repetition of the case. Perhaps the Project Manager can throw light on Sabita's character. Is she generally absent-minded?

You've convened the meeting. You chair it.

(Time available for the meeting: 15 minutes. Conduct the meeting effectively. Arrive at a decision that is good for the company. Contribute creatively to the meeting. Don't change your basic view, given above, unless others convince you to.) ■

TRB 7:1C (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:2)

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Here is the agenda that the GM - Personnel sent out:

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From: GM-Personnel

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Group C

You are **GM – New Business**. You are worried about the harm this incident will do to Stallion's image. You are in favour of asking Sabita to resign and leave quietly. You believe that no publicity need be given to her 'resignation' and no harm will have been done to the company's image. We don't know whether she is really guilty or not. So don't punish her. However, the company's image shouldn't suffer. That is why you suggest that she be asked to leave quietly. Once she leaves no one will rake up the issue.

(Time available for the meeting: 15 minutes. Contribute creatively to the meeting. Don't change your basic view, given above, unless others convince you to.) ■

TRB 7:1D (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:2)

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Here is the agenda that the GM - Personnel sent out:

To: VP, GM-New Business, Manager-HR, and Indira Pathi (Project Manager)
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Group D

You are **Manager – HR**. You believe that Sabita is innocent. You have known her from her childhood as she grew up in Udaipur, your home town. She is also distantly related to you. The Vice President is likely to take a hard line and argue for sacking her. But you think that an alleged attempt to nick a book (a book after all!) from a bookshop shouldn't be taken so seriously at all. There is no need for exemplary punishment nor for publicity. Her career may be spoilt for no real fault of hers. Independent of this incident and without any reference to it perhaps an e-mail message can be sent to everyone stressing the need for exemplary behaviour not only at work but also off work, especially in public.

(Time available for the meeting: 15 minutes. Contribute creatively to the meeting. Don't change your basic view, given above, unless others convince you to.) ■

TRB 7:1E (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:2)

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Here is the agenda that the GM - Personnel sent out:

To: VP, GM-New Business, Manager-HR, and Indira Pathi (Project Manager)
From: GM-Personnel

There will be a meeting at 2 p.m. today in Conf Room 3 to discuss the shoplifting by Sabita Pillai of a book from The Bookworm. You are requested to make it convenient to attend the meeting.

Group E

You are the **Project Manager** Sabita reports to. You know her very well. She is not at all absent-minded. She is smart and knows exactly what she is doing. She also knows how to manipulate others to her advantage. She is no doubt capable but difficult to work with. She is too proud. She is too conscious of her beauty-with-brains image. You have had two stormy encounters already. But you have never sent up any negative report about her. You will be happy to see her fired. And here is an opportunity to get rid of her without dirtying your hands. Play your cards deftly because normally you will be expected to defend her at least as long as the project is on.

(Time available for the meeting: 15 minutes. Contribute creatively to the meeting. Don't change your basic view, given above, unless others convince you to.) ■

TRB 7:1G (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:2)

Stallion Softek

For Observers

You are going to observe the meeting of Stallion Softek's top management. Keep these questions in mind as you observe the meeting.

Is the agenda OK? Does it help the attendees prepare for the meeting? Does the convener conduct the meeting well? Is time managed well?

See how each player presents their original position. Is it reasonably well thought out? Is it supported with evidence or logical reasoning? Is it too emotionally coloured? Was their overall strategy appropriate and successful?

How do the players react to the views given by the others? Does their reaction promote further thinking? Or does it merely slow the meeting down? Does anyone's reaction help redefine the problem or put it in a better perspective? Is there too much repetition of the same ideas?

Does any part of the meeting appear to be wasteful? If you were the convener or an attendee at this meeting, would you do things differently? How? Why?

Overall, do you think the meeting was efficient? Did the issue require a meeting at all? Would they have been better off with a decision taken by the VP or GM-Personnel without a meeting?

TRB 7:2A (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:3)

To give or not to give (A)

Managing Director

You are 43. You joined Sitara Windmills Ltd as its Managing Director three years ago. The main reason why you were invited to be MD here is that your uncle is the chairman. But you have had a successful career in marketing after your MBA from Lucknow University. Your colleagues – many of them older than you – do respect you and take you seriously. Or so you believe. Well, you have no reason to believe otherwise.

Sitara has been a basically worker-friendly company. Workers get better than average pay. Nearly all of them live within two km of the factory and walk or cycle to work.

You are aware of a major problem the workers are faced with – very high prices of groceries and vegetables. They have asked for a company shop where these are sold at subsidised rates. You don't think that is wise. Subsidies can be addictive! You are in favour of a special hardship allowance or a free bus trip a week to the city where they can buy what they want. A company-run shop that sells perishable groceries and vegetables is an invitation to corruption and mismanagement.

You are open-minded. While you push your idea, you are prepared to accept any better idea that might emerge during the discussion.

Incidentally, you suspect that some senior colleagues, especially the Senior Manager - HR, resent the young Personnel Manager's popularity among workers. You want to support him if the Seniors are overcritical.

You have asked General Manager - Finance, Senior Manager - Production, Senior Manager - HR, and Personnel Manager to come to a meeting. You may send them an agenda if you think it useful. You will chair the meeting. Make sure that the meeting doesn't take more than 25 minutes.

(Time available for the meeting: 20-25 minutes. Contribute creatively to the meeting. Don't change your basic view, given above, unless others convince you to. As MD your views are of particular significance.)

TRB 7:2B (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:3)

To give or not to give (B)

General Manager - Finance

You have just turned 46. You have been with Sitara right from 1987 when it started. You are the only person in the top management with an intimate knowledge of how Sitara grew from a struggling 3-crore company to a prosperous 60-crore company today.

You can take credit for the strict control you have exercised over the way the company spends money. You have always been opposed to pampering the workers. In fact these people who live in a largely barren area would starve to death but for the job at Sitara.

You believe that the workers at Sitara are already overpaid compared to industry standards. With competition from Apex Windmills Ltd affecting your profit margin, any largesse to workers is bound to wipe out profits altogether. You are generally opposed to any measures that will cause a strain on the company's purse. You want specific productivity increase for any concession given so that it pays for itself.

You don't mind, however, the company making available to the workers a room free of charge for them to run a cooperative store on their own. In other words, you are for the workers' welfare provided it is not at the company's expense. And you don't want any cheap popularity by pampering workers as the young Personnel Manager is trying to get by staying near the factory rather than in town like the rest of the managers.

(Time available for the meeting: 20-25 minutes. Contribute creatively to the meeting. Don't change your basic view, given above, unless others convince you to.)

TRB 7:2C (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:3)

To give or not to give (C)

Senior Manager - Production

You are 40. You joined Sitara two years ago. You are generally happy with the company. The workers are simple and good-natured. What annoys you is the higher than average absenteeism and lower than average productivity at Sitara. When questioned the workers invariably complain about their problems such as distance from the city, exorbitant prices of essentials, absence of a good hospital, etc. To be fair, there is something in their complaint. You would like their problems to be solved so that absenteeism can be reduced and production streamlined.

A 'ration shop' run by the company appears to be the most practical solution to their main problem - nonavailability of groceries and vegetables at reasonable prices. An idea that has been mentioned in some quarters is a cooperative store run by the workers themselves. While it is a romantic idea you can't realistically expect the rural workers to set up and run a co-operative store on their own. If they were that enterprising they wouldn't be working at Sitara.

A company-run shop that subsidises the stuff sold there will of course be a drain on the company's finances. There is also the possibility of workers buying things cheap at the company's store and reselling them to the other villagers. But it should be possible for us to devise ways of controlling such abuse.

You feel that the young Personnel Manager is being pulled down by the Senior HR Manager because of some personality clash. You would like to support the young man if he is unfairly criticised at the meeting by the Senior HR Manager.

(Time available for the meeting: 20-25 minutes. Contribute creatively to the meeting. Don't change your basic view, given above, unless others convince you to.)

TRB 7:2D (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:3.)

To give or not to give (D)

Senior Manager - HR

You are 47. You are in charge of Sitara's Human Resource Development and Personnel. The Personnel Manager reports to you.

You have been with Sitara for eight years. You started as Assistant Manager - Personnel and rose steadily to your current position. You built up the work force.

You firmly believe that any incentives should be linked to productivity. Otherwise incentives become routine and lose their power to motivate.

You are not in favour of subsidised groceries and vegetables being supplied to workers by the company. That is the old fashioned goody-goody approach to workers' welfare. Of course you want a better life for the workers. In fact it is because of you that the Sitara workers enjoy an above average pay. But you want them to produce more and earn more. That will give them a better, more meaningful life.

You are rather unhappy about the cheap popularity the young Personnel Manager is trying to create for himself among the workers. You wonder why he should choose to stay near the factory when every other manager lives in the city. He is trying hard to upstage you. You are convinced that it is with his support and blessings that the workers have mooted the idea of a company-run shop. Of course you have no proof. But it is not unlikely because this is the first time that this idea has come up although the problem has been there all along. You must beat the proposal and teach the young guy who is in control here.

You don't want to criticize the Personnel Manager openly; but if an opportunity presents itself you would want to discourage his activities that make a dent in your authority over the work force. After all you built up the workers during the last eight years. You don't want an upstart to overshadow you. Your own position is at stake.

(Time available for the meeting: 20-25 minutes. Contribute creatively to the meeting. Don't change your basic view, given above, unless others convince you to.)

TRB 7:2E (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:3)

To give or not to give (E)

Manager - Personnel

You are a bachelor. You will be 30 in two months. You had worked in two city-based companies when you joined Sitara about seven months ago. You love villagers and want to work for their welfare. That is why you gave up the city job and joined Sitara. You are the only manager staying in the village, not far from the factory. You started literacy classes for the workers' wives a few months ago. The classes are hugely popular.

The workers adore you. They know that you take genuine interest in them and their welfare. In fact it was you who suggested to them that they approach the MD for a company-run shop where groceries and vegetables are sold at subsidized rates. (No one other than a few union leaders knows that the company-run shop is your suggestion.)

You know how poor the workers are and how much of their earnings is eaten up by the local grocers. They fatten themselves on the villagers who have no transport to go regularly to the city.

You anticipate strong opposition to the idea of subsidizing groceries and vegetables through a company-run shop. So go to the meeting with very convincing arguments in its favour. You want to help the poor workers. And a prosperous company like Sitara can afford the extra expenditure. If there is a squeeze on profits because of competition from Apex Windmills Ltd, Sitara's response should be higher productivity through greater worker motivation than penny pinching.

(Time available for the meeting: 20-25 minutes. Contribute creatively to the meeting. Don't change your basic view, given above, unless others convince you to.)

TRB 7:2F (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:3)

To give or not to give (F)

Background (To be given to all participants including the role-players)

Sitara Windmills Ltd (Sitara) manufactures windmills with Dutch technology. Last year's turnover was about Rs 600 million and the net profit Rs 36 million. The factory is in Kottoor, on the National Highway, about 40 km from the city. Sitara employs about 160 workers. They live within a radius of two km and walk or cycle to work because there is no regular public transport to the city. The managers, however, live in the city. They are brought to work by two air-conditioned vans hired by the company. Workers depend on passing trucks to go to the city.

Kottoor and the surrounding areas are rocky and barren. No food crops are grown there. So vegetables and groceries are brought there from the city by petty shopkeepers and sold at exorbitant rates: twice as much as in the city. Going to the city by truck costs a lot of money and time. So workers are forced to buy locally. They are at the mercy of the local shopkeepers.

This year Sitara's sales have been affected to some extent by the arrival in Kottoor of a competitor, Apex Windmills Ltd. Sitara's profit margin is expected to be squeezed.

The workers' union has sent the MD a charter of demands. The most prominent demand is that the company set up a shop on the premises and sell groceries and vegetables at a subsidised rate. The MD has called a meeting of the following to discuss the issue before a decision is taken.

General Manager – Finance. (About 45) Has been with Sitara since its start in 1987. Believes that the bottom line is the most important - almost the only - issue in running a company. Hates being pressured by workers. Exercises strict control over company's expenditure.

Senior Manager – Production. (About 40) Joined Sitara two years ago. Is rather unhappy with the low level of productivity and higher than normal absenteeism among the workers. Believes that welfare measures would improve the situation. Generous by nature.

Senior Manager – HR. (About 47) Overall charge of HRD & Personnel. Has been with the company for a little over eight years. Believes that incentives to workers should be linked to productivity. Otherwise incentives lose their power to motivate. (Incidentally, colleagues at times wonder if there isn't a cold war going on between him and the young Manager - Personnel.)

Manager – Personnel. (Bachelor, about 30) Joined Sitara seven months ago. Very Popular with the workers. The only manager living near the factory. Runs literacy classes in the evenings for workers' wives. It appears that he doesn't much like the style of functioning of Sr Manager – HR.

Note:

1. The MD (About 43) joined the firm three years ago. He is related to the Chairman, who owns 17 per cent of the shares. The MD is progressive; supports ideas rather than seniority.
2. The time allotted for discussing the workers' demand for a company shop and subsidized groceries and vegetables is 20 to 25 minutes. The MD chairs the meeting.

TRB 7:2G (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:3)

To give or not to give (G)

For Observers

You are going to observe the meeting of the top management of Sitara Windmills Ltd. Keep these questions in mind as you observe the meeting.

Is the agenda OK? (Has the MD sent the members an agenda?) Does it help the attendees prepare for the meeting? Does the Chairperson conduct the meeting well? Is time managed well?

See how each player presents their original position. Is it reasonably well thought out? Is it supported with evidence or logical reasoning? Is it too emotionally coloured? Was the overall strategy appropriate and successful?

How do the players react to the views given by the others? Does their reaction promote further thinking? Or does it merely slow the meeting down? Does anyone's reaction help redefine the problem or put it in a better perspective? Is there too much repetition of the same ideas?

Does any part of the meeting appear to be wasteful? If you were the convener or an attendee at this meeting, would you do things differently? How? Why?

Overall, do you think the meeting was efficient? Did the issue require a meeting at all? Would they have been better off with a decision taken by the MD or GM- Personnel without a meeting?

TRB 7:3 (Instructions at: TRB Chapter 7, Activity 7:4)

From the jaws of death

Five guests at a village marriage party suddenly faint. They are taken to the only doctor in the area. She quickly and correctly diagnoses the problem as severe food poisoning. They will all die in the next twenty-five minutes unless they are given a shot of Vita-X. Unfortunately the doctor has just four vials of this drug, enough to save four lives. The nearest town is too far to get help from.

You are the village elders. Discuss and decide in the next ten minutes which of the five should be left to die. Your Mukhya will conduct the discussion.

Here is a description of the five caught in the jaws of death.

- A Mr Premanand Bhandari**, 48 years. He is the village teacher. He has taught about half the village including your children. He suffers from cancer. The doctors have given him six to nine months to live. He has four unmarried daughters. The eldest is getting married next week.
- B Ms Pushpa Sagar**, 29 years. She's a nurse at the government hospital about 30 km away. Most patients find her rather lazy and indifferent. She has an illegitimate child – a girl who has just started school. No one knows who the girl's father is.
- C Deepa Behn**, 31 years. Has been a widow for five years. No children. Driven out by her late husband's family, she lives all by herself. She is extremely popular in the whole village because instead of indulging in self-pity, she goes around and helps everyone. She regularly visits people who are old and sick, and cheers them up.
- D Peter**. No one knows anything much about him, not even his surname. (He is a White foreigner. He had told his host that he was from the US.) He must be about 35. He is passing through the village. He has been collecting certain herbs. Some say he is doing research on herbal medicine; some say he is a spy. He certainly carries a camera around.
- E Anand Tiwari**, 52 years. He has a special herbal preparation that is very effective against snakebite. He is well known in the area because he has saved scores of lives in an around this village. He hasn't yet passed on the formula to anyone. His wife and three children left him after he raped their maid servant about ten years ago. No one likes him. The village puts up with him because of his usefulness.
- M** You are the **Mukhya** of the panchayat. You will conduct the discussion. Make sure that the discussion gets over and a clear decision is taken in ten minutes. You have no time to lose. You don't want all five to die while you go on debating who should be allowed to die.