

leading team
alpha

LEADERSHIP IN
NOVEL FORM

JOEL DIGIROLAMO

continued from front flap

The academic community has studied leadership for over half a century—yet little has leaked out to the business community. *Leading Team Alpha* is a unique book, presenting the scientifically determined fundamentals of leadership in a novel.

Sitting at his desk one spring morning, the phone rings, “Dean, did you see what BenSoft just announced? They’re saying they’re going to deliver your NU technology in July.” His gum still popping, Tony continued, “We’re toast, pal, unless you deliver soon. Hate to see what this is gonna do to the stock price. Just wanted to make sure you knew. Remember you heard it here first. Ciao, pal.” And so Dean must learn to build Team Alpha at Danda-Data in order to save the company.

Recalling his helpful discussions many years prior, Dean turns to his college psychology professor, Dr. Solomon (Sol) König, for valuable leadership lessons. As the novel unfolds, we follow Dean as he puts the five fundamentals of leadership into action:

- **Selecting team members**
- **Motivating the team**
- **Ensuring alignment with the organization**
- **Focusing on the goals**
- **Ensuring job satisfaction so that team members do not drop out**

Sol teaches the history of leadership research, the five-factor model of personality, the role of the ego, worker motivation, and more.

continued on back flap

As we journey along with Dean we experience the depths of despair in political battles lost, the clash of diverse cultures, frustration of divergent views, and vindication with just rewards.

www.leadingteamalpha.nu



Award-winning author Joel DiGirolamo has more than 30 years of staff and management experience in Fortune 500 companies. He has a BSEE, MBA, and a master's degree in psychology.

Joel has been a keynote speaker at international conferences, and is a member of the American Psychological Association (APA), the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP), and Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).



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“Leading Team Alpha narrows the gap between leadership theory and the practical everyday applications of leadership thought in the corporate world. The characters of DandaData are easy to relate to and really bring the everyday challenges of becoming an effective leader to life. A must read for new managers and leaders in all walks of life and professions.”

*—Lissa Pohl, MA,
Center for Leadership Development University of Kentucky
and Certified Lights On Leadership™ Coach*

“Leading Team Alpha is an intriguing novel that illustrates the skills necessary to lead in the global workplace. Joel creatively interweaves educational theory with practical applications to show what’s needed to deal with the complexities of leading in the business world. He articulates the principles of leadership well and shows how great leaders deal with the varying characters and challenges every day.”

*—Ashley Brown,
VP Financial Planning & Analysis*

ALSO BY JOEL DIGIROLAMO

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LEADERSHIP IN
NOVEL FORM

JOEL DIGIROLAMO

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Lexington, Kentucky USA

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*To my father, Joseph DiGirolamo, who demonstrated
charismatic leadership for me at an early age.*

LEADERSHIP

More than 100 years of research, an incredible number of intelligent people toiling, and we still don't have a comprehensive definition of it. But—we know it when we see it.

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FOREWORD BY ROBERT HOGAN

As practical guides to action, most popular books on leadership are, at best, misleading. They are often thinly disguised, self-serving and score-settling reminiscences written by failed former managers and military officers. Many times the lessons offered in these books endorse exactly the behaviors and attitudes that caused the manager to fail in the first place—but there is no way for the unwary reader to know this.

The leadership literature is plagued by two big problems. On the one hand, everyone thinks he or she is an expert on leadership—there are no barriers to entering the business of being a leadership guru—and becoming a leadership guru can be quite profitable. As a result, the leadership literature is one of the largest and most incoherent in the social and managerial sciences—we might call this the tyranny of the amateurs.

The second problem concerns the fact that the professionals—academic researchers—can't agree on any big issues. The academic study of leadership has largely failed. One searches the literature in vain for practical suggestions regarding how actually to do leadership. This reflects the fact that most academics have had very little experience with real leadership challenges. And it

reflects the fact that they have defined leadership incorrectly. Most academic studies of leadership define it in terms of the people who are in charge. Think for a moment about the kinds of people who ascend to the top of large, hierarchical, male-dominated institutions. Those people are politicians who, for the most part, have never demonstrated any talent for leadership.

Now comes Joel DiGirolamo's new book, *Leading Team Alpha*, a book with three important characteristics to recommend it. First, Mr. DiGirolamo has abundant and significant practical business experience on which to draw, and this is evident in the contents of the book—sharply observed incidents from real life in “the office.” Second, the book is framed in terms of a novel, based on the notion that stories are more accessible and educational than tables of statistics. The book is clearly and briskly written and fun to read.

But most importantly, the leadership lessons that it teaches are consistent with the best modern thinking on leadership. Specifically, leadership is not about having a successful individual career—think, for example, of the long list of highly compensated CEOs who in recent decades have ruined or crippled their companies. Rather, leadership is about building and maintaining a high performing team, a point that emerges forcefully from the study of human origins.

Leading Team Alpha is an enjoyable and entertaining introduction to the best modern thinking on leadership, and virtually anyone interested in the topic can read it for profit and pleasure.

Robert Hogan, Ph. D.

FOREWORD BY TOM WELDON

My relationship with Joel goes back to the earliest days of my business career—Junior Achievement. I still remember calling him to join the “company” I was leading at the time. We were faltering, and I felt that his skills would be a great asset in turning the group around. I was right—he made a tremendous difference in making that company a success. And so when he asked if I would be interested in writing a foreword to his leadership book, I agreed without hesitation because I knew that he understood how business works and what leadership is about.

Leading Team Alpha is a rare book, one that is both entertaining and informative. Think of it as a management primer in a fictional business story. In this tale Joel does an excellent job outlining management and leadership theory and illustrating how it can be applied to everyday situations, leading to superior team performance.

Managers frequently apply the mantra “ready, fire, aim.” Although there is much to be said for taking prompt action, there is more to be said for thinking first. *Leading Team Alpha* gives the reader an opportunity to witness the power of thoughtful action.

As you become immersed in the story, you will enjoy following the thoughts and actions of the protagonist as he deals with a dire business situation, seeks outside guidance, builds the trust and support of his team, and artfully maintains a true sense of urgency. The results he achieves are the kind that not only deserve praise and promotion, they are the kind that would make any CEO proud. I hope you find *Leading Team Alpha* as enjoyable and enlightening as I did.

Tom Weldon

CHAIRMAN AND PARTNER, ACCUITIVE MEDICAL VENTURES
FOUNDER AND FORMER CEO AND CHAIRMAN, NOVOSTE CORPORATION

PREFACE

When writing my first book, *All Paths Lead to Now*, I noticed a consistent theme in the feedback—“I really liked the story about...” This caused me to think about stories as teaching aids. As I pondered this teaching modality, it occurred to me how often we remember new material and relate it to others by describing a story we have heard, seen, or read.

And so when I considered writing a book on leadership I felt that I must do so in the setting of a novel.

I am grateful to have had a business career of over 30 years that took me to almost 20 countries for technical, strategic, financial, managerial, marketing, or business development work. I grew up in the soybean fields of Indiana. My father was CEO and Chairman of a public electronics company, and I have visited with hundreds of companies around the world. I have a technical degree, an MBA, and a master’s in psychology. These experiences and educational opportunities have equipped me with the tools necessary to talk to virtually anyone in any type of organization and quickly develop a rapport.

Almost everyone has an opinion on leadership—which is part of the problem. Everyone has an opinion. Mounds of research data and many concepts have been generated in the academic

community and yet little has leaked out into the business community. Robert Hogan has an apt description for this duality: the Troubadour Tradition and the Academic Tradition. With mixed success, Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology practitioners have labored for years to bridge this chasm.

One aspect of the problem is that the two communities speak different languages. For example, an I/O psychologist will talk of an “assessment” whereas business professionals tend to call them “tests.” In the world of psychology we speak of “cognitive ability,” but the concept is better known in lay terms as “intelligence.”

Beyond the orientation aspect of the divide lies the difficulty of structure. The business leadership realm is relatively amorphous while the academic leadership tradition has a clear history, evolution, and set of facets, or lenses through which to view leadership.

Leadership research titans such as Bernard Bass, Jim Collins, David Day, Ed Fleishman, John Hemphill, Robert Hogan, Kurt Lewin, Rensis Likert, Fred Luthans, Ralph Stogdill, Gary Yukl, and Stephen Zaccaro have assembled a vast depth and breadth of knowledge for us to draw upon. The only problem is that it rarely gets translated or repackaged for the business community.

Leading Team Alpha is my contribution to bridging this divide. My desire is to bring the leadership research to the business community in such a manner that it is understandable, entertaining, thought-provoking, and immediately useful.

Joel DiGirolamo
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2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and certainly foremost, I want to thank my father for showing me what leadership, rapport, and challenge are all about. I have vivid childhood memories of him engaging with everyone he met in the plant he managed. He knew everyone's name, about their kids, their vegetable gardens—and they knew him. I watched as he showed people that he cared about them and challenged them to do their best. He pulled people together to work toward a solution to a problem or concern. I observed my father negotiate with skill, tact, knowledge, and respect. He showed me how to confront a person with honor, speaking with the voice of reason and without ego. He genuinely cared about all of the people he met.

I thank my editor, Beth Connors-Manke, for her patience with me, guidance, attention to detail, and insightful analysis of this story.

And speaking of patience, I appreciate the encouragement, faith, and patience of my wonderful wife, Karen. Through the days, weeks, and months of work, she stood by me and did not waver. Despite my moments of doubt, she said, "You'll get it done, and it will be great." Thank you, my love.

Lastly, I thank all of the people in every corner of the globe

whom I have met in this lifetime. They have provided even more lessons, fodder for this story, and companionship through this life's journey.

chapter one

*You are not here merely to make a living.
You are here in order to enable the world to live
more amply, with greater vision, with a finer
spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to
enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if
you forget the errand. —WOODROW WILSON*

Dean fidgeted in his chair, awaiting his turn to speak. As he squinted to see the audience behind the bright lights, his thoughts turned inward, to the perils he had avoided to reach this place of honor. It was easy for him to go back to the place where it all began, when he struggled to keep his small, yet powerful team alive amidst CEO demands and corporate intrigue.

Although it was almost two years ago, he remembers that morning's call well: "Dean, did you see what BenSoft just announced? They're saying they're going to deliver your NU technology in July." His gum still popping, Tony continued, "We're toast, pal, unless you deliver soon. Hate to see what this is gonna do to the

stock price. Just wanted to make sure you knew. Remember you heard it here first. Ciao, pal.”

“Uh, thanks,” was all that Dean could muster before the phone clicked on the other end. He despised Tony, his finely tailored Italian clothes, his air of confidence. Antonio Androni, *Italian aristocrat*. It made him want to puke. He always had to be out front, ahead of everyone else. Setting his ego aside for a moment, Dean checked a few news sites and confirmed the announcement. The stock was already taking a hit—down four points to \$74 and change.

Dean had feared this day. He knew that NU technology was the future to pursue but had always been held back by minimal funding. While he was lucky to have four very talented programmers, they were only enough to create prototype interfaces and network communication modules. *Things are certainly going to be changing quickly*, Dean thought. *I better chat with Randy.*

Unable to focus on anything other than putting one foot in front of the other, Dean strode down the hall to Randy’s window office, relieved to find him there even though he was engaged in a phone conversation. Randy motioned for Dean to enter then returned to his phone conversation. Sitting in one of the guest chairs gave Dean more time to collect his thoughts. *This is not going to be pretty. On one hand the pressure will be on to produce a new version of software with NU technology; on the other this is an incredibly challenging assignment. I hope they don’t feel they need someone with more “experience.” I’ve heard that one too many times.*

Glancing at all the awards and diplomas on Randy’s wall was intimidating. The master’s degree in computer science from MIT seemed to be his crowning achievement. Knowing that most CS

graduate students at MIT get Ph.D.s, he often wondered if Randy had bailed out of the program before completion. He certainly wasn't going to ask.

While he had been reasonably successful in his career, Dean often felt inferior with his midwestern computer science degree. Reluctant to go to school out of state, he hadn't even bothered applying to the top tier schools. *Maybe that was a mistake.* He was happy with his move to Ann Arbor, however. The local university provided enough culture and diversion as well as continuing education. It was a nice place to raise his family.

Dean enjoyed managing his small team. He'd spent several months hand-picking the programmers he wanted for the job. They were a close-knit team, enjoying the challenging assignment working with leading edge technology. His role was comfortable, keeping the team focused on gaining experience with the technology and ensuring DandaData was poised to integrate the technology whenever the senior management of the company felt it necessary.

Still surveying Randy's wall, Dean's eyes reached the corporate vision. He'd seen it hundreds of times, but he read it once again. "Viewed as a leader in database software by our customers. Passion for our products and the ways in which our customers use them. Ethical in all our business dealings. Socially responsible."

Randy was a reasonable manager, but Dean would often become irritated when he shrank from the task of requesting more funding for Dean's team. He could sense Randy was winding his conversation down.

Placing the handset down, Randy swiveled his barrel-chested body around to face Dean. "So what's up? You're not looking your usual chipper self."

“Randy, we’ve got a problem. Have you seen the BenSoft announcement?”

“No I haven’t. What did they announce?”

“A new version of their database product with NU technology. Availability is slated for July—only three months from now. The stock has already taken a small hit and I’m worried. You and I both know this could really impact our business.”

“Yeah, you’re right. What are the details? Are they revving the whole database product, or is it just some communication module?”

“The best I can tell is that they’re revving the whole database product, interfaces and middleware. Of course with these big changes there will be early problems, but meanwhile they can cause the market to stagnate and stop all sales. Given NU technology’s ability to simplify installation and management, you and I both know that all database software will eventually switch to it. I guess we should have listened to our sales team when they said customers were saying that our competitors were going to be doing something to improve installation and management. So where do you think we go from here?”

Randy began spinning his pen over his knuckles. “Well, we knew it would eventually come to this. Let’s just hope it doesn’t crater us too badly. Go ahead and gather whatever information you can find. Engage the competitive analysis folks, if they’re not already engaged. They’re usually pretty quick about finding out about these kinds of announcements. Maybe they can get some inside scoop from a ‘friendly’ customer. I’m sure Jim’s going to want a review as soon as possible, maybe late today or in the morning. Don’t worry about the usual CEO review outline, just give him all that you can gather. Eventually he’s going to want to know how we can build up your team and match this, but

clearly we can't have that analysis for this meeting. I'll see when we can get on his calendar. Can you give me an update later this afternoon?" Randy turned back to his computer to check his calendar. His right arm flung outward, a nervous tick that Dean had seen only once before, when they went through a round of layoffs three years ago.

"How about 4:00 o'clock? Do you think you can have anything then?" Randy asked.

"I'll bring what I've got and see who else should join us. I'll get a room if the group gets too large for your office."

"Thanks. We'll get this figured out."

Dean rushed toward the glass-walled building, glancing at his watch one more time, *7:28, good, I'm not going to be late. Ugh, these early morning meetings are killers.* Placing his badge against the reader, Dean saw the security light turn green. He pulled the heavy glass door open. Still hazy from lack of sleep, he hardly noticed the plush carpet and modern artwork of the DandaData lobby as he advanced toward the second badged door. *Damn badge readers are always slowing me down.*

Making a turn down the bright corridor toward the CEO enclave, Dean enjoyed the pristine white walls and industrial linoleum flooring. Nothing to distract his focus at this early hour. Rounding the final corner to the CEO's conference room, he closed his eyes and wished this were a dream. Tony and Randy were milling outside the conference room in the dark wood paneled reception area. The subdued lighting, deep carpet, wood trim, and artwork always seemed to bring a sense of hushed whispers. A sign might just as well have been placed on the wall

saying, “Quiet.” While he knew that Tony would be at the meeting, seeing him in real life made him want to pivot on his heel and walk back out.

Tony’s athletic form was leaning forward, approaching Dean like a man on the hunt. “Gotta love these 7:30 meetings, eh, pal?” Tony said as he chomped on his gum.

“Yeah, sure,” Dean replied, not wanting to engage the conversation.

Tony was fully attired for an audience with Jim—neatly pressed and starched cream colored button down shirt with business blue pleated pants. Dean wondered if Jim cared how anyone dressed, but then reminded himself that Tony was one level higher than him: Tony was at the Director level. *Maybe I should upgrade my wardrobe.*

Thankfully, Randy cut in between Tony and Dean. “Did you get much sleep?”

“Yeah, about three hours worth. I sure hope we’ve got enough stuff to satisfy him,” Dean said.

“Don’t worry, it’ll be fine.” Randy’s right arm began to flinch again. “Listen, I’ll kick the meeting off and then hand it over to you. You OK pitching the whole thing?”

“No problem. It certainly makes sense for me to.”

“I noticed the stock closed down eight points yesterday. This isn’t looking good.”

“I know. Hopefully we can ramp up our development efforts quickly enough that it won’t impact sales. Our maintenance contracts should be good for—”

Jim wheeled around the corner as if on his morning jog. He spoke without breaking stride. “Morning gentlemen. Go ahead and have a seat. I need to set this stuff down in my office.”

“Good morning sir.” Straining his neck toward Jim, Tony piped

up before anyone else could get a word in. They filed into the conference room and as Dean began setting up his computer for the presentation he already felt the perspiration running down his armpits.

Tony once again began to speak, intending to have a conversation in full swing when Jim returned. “Randy, I had my team engaged with a few of Dean’s folks yesterday to get started looking at the architecture changes we’ll need to incorporate NU technology into the existing database product. It’s a good thing we both work under you so that our teams can work closely without anyone worrying about turf battles. I think Dean’s guys have done a good job showing the feasibility of the concept. We should be able to take what he’s got and run with it.”

Dean could hardly believe his ears. Tony was already attempting to take charge of the project. *That SOB. He’s going to lobby to keep me in the background.*

Jim launched into the conference room, a single pad of paper in his hand, his closely cropped hair still wet after having gone through his daily exercise routine. Clad in a simple polo shirt emblazoned with the logo of a local prestigious golf course, Jim’s short stature belied the absolute power he wielded and his impressive pilot skills. Jim owned one of the few privately held MiG-29 fighter planes, capable of Mach 2.4 and remarkable maneuvering capability. He would occasionally use the plane, literally a cockpit perched on two massive jet engines, to attend meetings in Silicon Valley for the day, returning late in the evening.

I wonder if this will be a “good Jim” day or a “bad Jim” day. Given the circumstances, this is probably going to be unpleasant.

“Good morning again gentlemen, looks like we’ve got a major problem on our hands. What can you tell me about this BenSoft

announcement?” Jim snapped. “I’m sure you’ve all seen that the stock price closed down eight points yesterday. We’ve got to figure out how we’re going to respond. What’ve you got for me?”

Tony wriggled in his seat, preparing to speak when Randy piped up. “Sir, we’ve looked at all the material BenSoft has provided publicly and our Market Intelligence group has dug up some more detailed white papers from a consultant. I think you remember Dean Edmonds here, our Development Manager for New Technology. His team has been working on NU technology with a small team of four people in the back room, so to speak, for the last year or so. Of course you know Tony, manager of the current software product.

Just then a tall man with dark hair combed up and back popped his head into the doorway. “Excusez-moi, would it be acceptable if I join you?” he queried in his thick French accent.

“Sure Jacques,” Jim uttered as he looked down and waved him in. “I think all of you know Jacques Foucault, our VP of Sales and Marketing. Go on, go on.”

“They’ve built prototype interfaces and communications modules,” Randy continued. “Also, our folks who attend standards meetings have heard several people in the industry talking about NU technology. Given the advantages NU technology offers in terms of ease of installation and maintenance, we have no doubt that our entire industry will eventually switch over to it. The question is just how quickly the products will adopt it. Dean will take you through what we know.”

“And so, you can see that their announcement is pretty comprehensive. My guess is that they’ve already got two or three pilot

sites up and running,” Dean said, winding down his presentation. “As Randy said at the outset, we just don’t know how quickly customers will want the technology. Given the long time periods some of our customers use our products, we may be OK. On the other hand, as you saw, with the annual maintenance cost savings with NU technology some customers may be willing to switch fairly soon. Of course, entirely new customers will find it very compelling.”

In a rare event, Jim was silent, looking up in thought. No one dared break the silence, not even Tony. Jim turned back to the group with a sober face. “This is about what I expected and it’s troubling. Here’s what we need to do. Jacques your sales guys need to have their ears to the ground, they need to find out if any of our customers are looking at this. Of course you don’t want to go asking them about it directly, but we need all the eyes and ears on it. Randy, when can you give me an estimate on how soon we could roll out a new database version with NU technology?” His mood becoming agitated, Jim barked, “I need to know timelines, resources, funding, the usual”

Randy looked at Tony and then Dean, “What do you think guys, one week? Next Wednesday?”

“Oh, I think we can do it quicker than that.” Tony blurted out. “Dean, think we could come back late Monday?”

His anxiety building, Jim shot out, “Listen, I want the answer 7:30 a.m. Monday morning! We’re behind on this and one way or another I’m going to get a team to build what we need. I don’t care who you need or where you have to go to get it. We’ve got to get this in gear. Our future is at stake, guys. I built this company from nothing and I’m not about to watch it wither away. Another thing, Jacques, you need to get with the finance guys and look

at the potential impact this could have to our bottom line over the next year and a half if these guys here can't deliver. I want some scenarios built with high impact, low impact, etc. Look at what we might need to do for pricing on our product in the short run. Any questions?"

Barely leaving time for anyone to inhale, Jim said, "Good. Let's go. Move! See you Monday."

Before anyone could arise Jim was gone like an owl on its silent flight.

Jacques raised his eyebrows and was the first to speak. "Well gentlemen, it appears that we all have our marching orders. Good luck on your project, and we'll let you know if we hear anything." He arose from the chair, his frame towering over Dean as he leaned forward and strode out.

Not wanting to let Tony muscle in first, Dean began, "Tony, we need to get our teams together this morning and get this kicked off. Randy, do you want to say anything to our teams about how important this is to the business to set the tone? I want these guys to realize what a huge threat this is to our business. There's no question that BenSoft has gone for the jugular."

"I'm right behind you, Dean," stoked Tony. "My guys have a status meeting at 9:00. How about we get everyone together at 10:00? We'll wrestle this baby down to the ground."

"I'll get us a room. Randy, you in? You're sitting there awfully quiet. What's up?"

"I'm just sitting here thinking about all the pieces we need. I'll ask Becky to sit in as well since this will impact her integration team. You guys remember the ancient Chinese curse, 'May you live in interesting times?' I think we've been cursed."

Packing up, Dean wasn't sure what to think. *I'm not sure how*

we're going to get all of this done by Monday. We've got to figure out all of the code modules we need, how big they might be. Then we've got test, build, integration, alpha and beta tests. How do we split the work between Tony's team and mine? Ugh. How am I going to fend him off this time? The last time we were in a situation like this he ended up cutting me off at the knees by going behind my back to Randy. I hope we don't have to go through that again.

"Cheer up pals, we'll work it through and it'll be a smash hit. Just you wait and see. See you at 10:00, gents," Tony said as he resumed popping his gum.

"Hey Randy, you still OK to meet now?" Tony queried, hands against the door frame, leaning into Randy's office.

"Sure, come on in," Randy replied, pressing his arms against the chair to lift his body out. Tony glanced around, angling for the proper seat. He reached for the door and gently closed it.

"Sit in the sofa," Randy said as he took a place in a guest chair, his wide frame filling the entire seat. "How was lunch?"

Tony brushed the wrinkles from his neatly pressed slacks. "Fine. A few of us went to the new Indian restaurant on Mayfair Road. Too bad you couldn't join us."

"Yeah, I would have liked to but I need to have this budget update finished by the end of today. So what brings you here?"

"First, I want to thank you for kicking off the meeting on Wednesday. I think it set the tone for the teams on the NU technology project. By the way, we're calling it project Phoenix since this project will need to pull us out of our current disaster. We had another round of meetings yesterday, and I wanted to catch you before the weekend so that you could be thinking

about this. I've been thinking about how we separate out the work between my team and Dean's. I'm wondering if it doesn't make sense to just bring his four people into my team so that we can have a tight integration of the NU technology into our existing product. Dean could remain the lead for the team. I'm not sure what other organization would make sense. After all, my team has been working on this code for many years. They know it well. You don't need to give me an answer now, I just wanted to plant a seed to let you think about it."

"Tony, I have given it some thought, but first we need to see how Jim is going to react to our sizings and see how much additional funding we get. I don't know if he'll go for the ten million additional dollars you guys are projecting. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts with me, but let's see what happens on Monday morning."

Looking down at his Italian loafers, Tony replied, "Sounds fair enough, but I don't want us to waffle on this issue too long. I want our teams fully engaged on the project as quickly as possible."

Randy looked down at his watch. "Sure. Well, I really need to get back to this budget. Is there anything else?"

"No, that's it. You going to the game tonight?"

"Yeah, let's hope they pull through this time."

Tony rose slowly, releasing the stiffness in his lanky body. "I really do appreciate your support on this. Thanks."

Dean was the first to arrive. Glancing into Jim's office through the window, he could see Jim aggressively engaged in a phone conversation. *This is not going to be fun.*

Randy strolled up, heavy briefcase in hand. "Good morning

Dean. How was your short weekend? Sorry for the Saturday meeting, but you know how important this is to the company,”

“It’s OK. I think we’re ready. I reviewed the three development options again, and I still think it’s the best we can muster.”

“Yeah, really, all other options are just variations of those,” Randy agreed.

Jim burst through his door, a serious look on his face, “Where is everyone? We’re starting at 7:30!”

“I’m sure they’ll be here in a few minutes, sir.” Randy looked at his watch. “It’s just now 7:30. Did you have anybody else coming?”

“I don’t need anyone else. Go in and have a seat. I’ll be right there,” he said as he turned to go back into his office.

Dean and Randy quietly filed into Jim’s conference room just as Tony and Becky were arriving. Randy began to attach his computer to the projector for the presentation. “Good morning guys.”

“Good morning...I think,” Becky mustered. She remained uncomfortable, once again feeling as if she were in the background while others held jobs in the spotlight. Becky wanted to move up in the organization but felt she was held back by the low perception brought from her third tier school degree. She felt as if no one took her seriously. Despite her strong on-the-job performance, she knew few respected her degree from a less well-known university. In the pecking order, Becky knew it was important to have good academic degrees hanging on the wall. Every time she looked at Randy’s collage of diplomas, her confidence took a small hit. She wondered if Tony or Dean ever felt this way.

Dean eyed Becky’s smart attire, a fitted skirt with a low cut, lavender blouse that accentuated her athletic figure. He enjoyed how the color brought out the blue in her eyes and highlighted her smooth, straight brown hair. The lack of chatter suddenly came to

his attention. *Hmm, Tony certainly seems subdued this morning.*

“Morning, chaps,” Tony said as he lifted his coffee mug.

Dean summoned the will to speak to Tony. “So what do you have in your cup today?”

“Oh, just a bit of cappuccino from the old country. Of course, I’ll never find coffee here like that back home in Italy, but I certainly dream of—”

Jim swept in, almost silent on his feet, without so much as a pen in his hand. He thrust the door closed with a thud and stood in front of the group. “I’m sure you all have been watching the stock price.”

Everyone began to shift in their chairs, assured that this was not going to be pleasant.

“We closed at around \$65 on Friday. I just got off the phone with Walter, head of sales in EMEA, and he said they’ve heard from two of our large customers over there that they’re piloting the new BenSoft release. We’re starting to get questions from other customers about if or when we’ll have NU technology. I want all of you to understand how important your development is to the viability of this company.” His eyes shifted to scan everyone in the room, “Is that clear? OK, what have you got?” he said as he took a seat near the screen.

Randy broke the silence. “Sir, I’ve had my entire team looking at the project ever since we met last Wednesday. I’ve asked Rebecca Green, Manager of Integration Services to join us. As you recall, all three of these folks work for me, so we should be able to do most of the development in my shop. We’re calling the project Phoenix, by the way.”

“OK, OK,” Jim responded impatiently.

“What I have to show you this morning is three scenarios

we've laid out. As I mentioned, we worked the rest of last week and Saturday on this. Our first scenario is for a 15-month delivery schedule, the second one an 18-month delivery, and the third a 24-month delivery with no incremental funding."

Randy noticed that Jim was uneasy but continued on, bringing up his first slide.

It was almost as if Jim's blood was boiling, his body physically shaking. "Listen, I don't need to see any more of this. I don't care what that last scenario says. Here's the story. We can't afford any incremental funding. If anything, we need to be looking at ways to cut costs. If we start losing sales or customers put purchases on hold, we're going to be hurting, boys and girls. What you guys need to do is figure out how to give me a new release in 15 months without any—without *any* incremental funding. Is that clear? And I want full functionality, not some lame half-assed release. Got it? Come back in two weeks and show me where you are. You can have my AA put it on my calendar. I gotta run."

Blasting out of his seat, Jim didn't look back. Randy, Tony, Dean, and Becky looked at each other, not knowing what to say.

As usual, Tony was the first to speak. "I'd say we've got our work cut out for us."

"Yeah, I guess so. Let's reconvene in my office," Randy uttered. "I've got a bad feeling about this."

Randy flipped through the project estimates again, his right arm moving almost incessantly. "I think we all know what we need to do. We've got to figure out how to do all of the project work

in 15 months with the manpower we currently have on board.”

Not wanting Tony to gain the upper hand, Dean spilled out, “I hate to bring this up but one card we haven’t played yet is utilizing the Bengaluru support teams. I think there are around 50 developers that we could redeploy. This is a big enough deal that I think we could get some of them.”

Without hesitation Tony added, “You know, that’s a fantastic idea, Dean. Some of those guys have already worked on my code. Given the pay differential, it might work.”

“If I extend out the delivery times for my integration projects, I could probably offer up a few folks. I know that every little bit helps,” Becky proposed.

Randy was heartened at the spirit of cooperation, a rare occurrence. “It shouldn’t be too hard to figure out if that will work. I’ll chat with Anil in Bengaluru. Let’s see, it’s 10:10 our time, so that would be 8:40 their time in India. I’ll give him a call on his cell phone and see if I can catch him. Dean, can you run the estimates again to see how many Bengaluru folks we’d need to add?”

“Sure thing.”

“Becky, how many do you think you could give up? Two?”

“Yeah, I could do that,” she said, flashing her blue eyes at Dean and Tony. “You guys owe me for this, you know.”

“Baby doll, you name it,” Tony shot back.

Randy glared, “Tony..”

“OK, OK, I get the message. Sorry Becky.”

Randy sighed, his broad chest seeming to collapse. “Let me check my calendar. Dean, could you give me an update at 3:00?”

Dean nodded and Randy carried on, “Becky, see who you could shake free in the next couple of weeks, and they need to be top tier, all right?”

“No problem.”

Randy closed out the meeting, once again spinning his pen over his fingers. “I’m getting a better feeling about this. Maybe Jim will let one of us fly his MiG to Bengaluru for a meeting.”

“Ah, wouldn’t that be something. I’d rather get my all my stock options above water, though,” Tony blurted.

Randy glared at Tony once again as Dean shook his head. *I didn’t get any stinking options. I just wish this guy would shut his mouth.*

Filing into the auditorium, the energy was palpable. Each person was to have been given his or her role in the new organization. Dean watched as each of Randy’s employees sat, pushing their spring-loaded, deeply cushioned seats downward, often slumping into a relaxed position.

When the new headquarters building was designed, Jim insisted on an auditorium which could perform double duty—large corporate meetings as well as evening concerts or theatrical performances. Designed into the building with a set of security doors behind and beside it, public functions could easily be accommodated while maintaining security for the rest of the complex.

Randy approached the podium. Tony, Dean, and Becky were seated on the stage to his right. “Please take a seat folks, I’d like to get started.” Pausing, his right arm flinching, Randy began. “Thanks for coming out for this exciting announcement. You should all have been informed of some of the changes, although we’ve kept the overall structural review for this meeting. As everyone knows, one of our major competitors, BenSoft, has announced a new release of their database software which will

utilize NU technology.”

“Just to make sure we’re all on the same page, I want to talk about NU technology a bit. NU stands for Network Ubiquity and is a loose term for a set of network protocols that allow software to be deployed with little human intervention across enterprise networks. This technology will greatly reduce installation time and complexity as well as reducing run-time expense and maintenance. For a bit of trivia, it is also the Internet TLD, or country code top-level domain name for the small island country of Niue in the South Pacific. And no, people assigned to the project will not be relocating to Niue.”

Everyone laughed.

“You may have seen it on some domain names, .nu in Sweden, Denmark, or Holland, where it means “now.” It also happens to be similar to “nouveau,” the French word for new, and of course our English word N-E-W, new.

“Anyway, back to our industry. BenSoft announced their release on April 17th, with availability in July. We’ve since found out that they have several pilot projects running and some of our large customers are looking at it quite seriously. Of course our stock has taken a hit with this as well. Just before the announcement we peaked at around \$78, and now we’re at around \$64. This is clearly troubling.

“We’ve had several meetings with Jim Sousa, and where we’ve come out is targeting the next release of our database product with NU technology in 15 months. We know this is aggressive, but we feel that given your talent and ability we can do it. This is an “all hands on deck” moment, folks. We’re going to be asking a lot from you in the coming months because this is an aggressive goal and clearly is crucial to the vitality of our corporation.

“Obviously we’ll need to change some roles, and so today I’m announcing a few changes to the structure in my organization.” Flipping to the next slide, Randy continued. “As you can see, Tony, Dean, and Becky will still report to me, but their teams will be changing somewhat. Tony Androni will continue as Director of Current Products, Dean Edmonds as Manager of New Technology, and Becky Green as Manager of Integration Services.

“The communications and interface teams that were in Tony’s area will be moving to Dean’s group to work more closely with the folks who have been researching this technology for the last year or so.”

Tony shifted in his chair, uncomfortable with this turn of events.

“In order to bring additional manpower to the project, we’ve negotiated with the support team in Bengaluru to bring many of them into Tony’s area. We realize that there will be a learning curve for this team, but we feel it’s necessary to complete the project on time. Finally, a few folks from Becky’s team will be joining the New Technology group, although we don’t know who those folks will be at this moment. And now I’ll turn it over to Tony to take you through his group.”

As Dean listened to Tony, his mind began to wander. How would he organize his group? What did he need to do differently with a larger group? *I think I’ve done a good job with my small group of four, but what will I need for a group of 60? Can I really do this? Where do I start?* Then it occurred to him, a vivid memory from a college course in general psychology. The instructor, Dr. Solomon König, had been an inspiration. His passion for the topic of leadership and genuine interest in applying results from scientific

psychological studies to organizations was contagious. While Dean had been reluctant to engage Dr. König in a lecture hall of 150 students, he had enjoyed the few personal conversations he'd had with him. *Perhaps Dr. König could help me with this.*

"Department of I/O Psychology, may I help you?"

"Yes, my name is Dean Edmonds, and I'm trying to reach Dr. König. I'm a former student of his. Is he available?"

"I think he's in a class at the moment. Let me check...Yes, he has a class but should be back shortly. Would you like to leave a message in his voicemail?"

"Uh, sure. Thanks."

"Just a minute, please."

Hearing Dr. König's voice again brought a smile to his face. His vibrant energy seemed to travel through the phone line, bringing a sense of Dr. König's physical presence. *How does he do that? What is that?* The beep on the other end brought Dean back to consciousness. "Uh, Dr. König, this is Dean Edmonds. You were my instructor for Psych 101 seventeen years ago, way back in 1984. You probably don't remember me, but I'd like to chat with you for maybe an hour or so to discuss some leadership issues. I remember your passion for that topic, and I think maybe you can help me if you can spare the time. You can reach me at 743-528-8299. Thanks a lot, and I look forward to hearing from you."

As he hung up the phone, Dean wondered if he'd ever get a return call. He remembered Dr. König talking about the research and business articles he'd written along with his consulting experiences. It seemed that he could rattle off one tale after another. *Am I worthy of a return call in his eyes? I guess I'm about to find out.*

With the cool morning air hanging in the trees, Dean approached the psychology building, a generic red brick college building similar to most in the Midwest. The spring air and familiar footpaths took him back in time to his student days there at the University of Michigan. He could still feel the weight of his backpack, an ever-present weighty companion. Beyond computer science, his psychology and Eastern philosophy courses had the most impact on him. The discussions on human behavior, enlightenment, and gurus remained present in the back of his brain.

Pounding his way up to the third floor, a wave of discomfort came over Dean's body. While the stark white concrete block walls and linoleum floor seemed familiar and comfortable, their austerity clashed with the lush corporate environment he had become accustomed to at DandaData.

Reaching the upper floor, Dean paused for a moment, thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out his cell phone. *I certainly don't want to be bothered during this meeting.* In an automatic motion, he set the phone to vibrate mode and slipped it back into his pocket.

The hallway wound around the central core. He passed classrooms, the library, and finally arrived at his destination. A simple black nameplate adorned the wooden office door: DR. SOLOMON KÖNIG, PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY. He squared his body with the door, feeling as if he were about to pass over the threshold into another world. Raising his arm, he lightly tapped on the wooden door frame, causing the frosted glass window to rattle.

A muted, "Come in," was heard in response. Dean turned the

doorknob and slowly entered the office as the professor swiveled in his chair to face Dean. While Dr. König had certainly aged since he last saw him, his rugged face and full salt and pepper beard looked very much as Dean recalled. His unmistakable thick, wiry hair was still evident as was his athletic body. Dean wanted to smile, noticing he still wore his trademark flannel shirts over his broad frame.

“You must be Dean.”

“Yes I am, Dr. König—”

“Sol, please. I don’t need any of that doctor nonsense. Glad you could make it. You’re fortunate I had this opening. I was to be in California on a consulting assignment, but these business people can sometimes be quite fickle, canceling at the last minute. So you say you were in my Psych 101 class many years ago. I’m flattered that you remembered me.”

“Oh, I couldn’t forget you! Your class, along with Eastern Religions, was far and away one of my favorites here. I enjoyed your enthusiasm and the passion you had for bringing the science of psychology into organizations. Your energy was contagious.”

“I see. Have a seat. Well, I guess I did a bit of good teaching you undergraduates, then. I always wondered if anybody was awake in those classes. Being semi-retired, I currently teach only a graduate level seminar, and I don’t have to worry about it much now.”

Glancing around the room Dean noticed the starkness of the concrete-walled office was softened slightly by the overloaded wooden bookshelves lining both side walls. Scanning the titles, they seemed foreign, yet familiar. *Power in Organizations, Real Managers, The Nature of Managerial Work, Management and the Worker.*

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