



Chapter 3 Case Study for Discussion

Use this case study as a discussion prompter with your teams or students.

Sarah found herself in what she felt was an untenable situation. She had been chosen for a leadership position in a large division of a Fortune 500 company that manufactures fiber optic cable. At hire, it appeared to be a plumb opportunity with a high-income salary. She had successfully won out over 100 candidates in being chosen for the job. She was recruited because she had been an economic major who earlier finished at the top of her class at a prestigious university. She had a few years prior experience with a financial services firm. Although she was young with limited related experience, she was energetic and full of ideas.

At her direction, the managers in her division, those who would be under her leadership, met with her for the first time. Prior to this meeting, she discovered the person previously in her position had abruptly left the company and she soon found out that many considered the division to have become a toxic work environment. There were ongoing supply chain issues, and an increasing number of customer complaints concerning late deliveries of product. When she met with the members of her team, she was taken aback and somewhat shocked concerning the people she would be leading.

Two of the people dominated the meeting, talking about themselves incessantly, and one seemed totally self-focused. They each went on and on discussing their strengths and accomplishments. They even interrupted others as they would participate in the conversation. Another member was silent unless addressed directly, and then even spoke very softly, was difficult to hear, and sounded negative. Another member spent his time complaining about the toxic environment and how difficult were his job responsibilities. Overall, nothing came out of the meeting in a positive light, except for the overly confident members who were positive about themselves.

Sarah thought to herself after the meeting, “what a bunch of narcissists and complainers.” She scheduled a meeting with the CEO of the division and spilled the beans about everything heard in the meeting. Without saying so, the CEO became initially concerned about Sarah’s reaction and apprehensions. He thought to himself, “I agreed to hire her because I believed she was sharp, and would thoroughly study the goals of the organization, and should be able to reinvent herself as each situation required.” He believed she should collect and assimilate knowledge and experiences of the team members, and quickly adjust to the current dynamic and move forward successfully with all involved.

Questions to Consider

1. Sarah is in which dimension of the Leadership Blueprint?
2. Based on the LB, should Sarah have been placed in a leadership position, why or why not?



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3. Learning agility is essential to leader success. Is it too late for Sarah to successfully guide her team, why or why not?
4. How do you recommend the CEO handle the situation?