

The relational side of Hidden Maturity: a case study in emotional intelligence

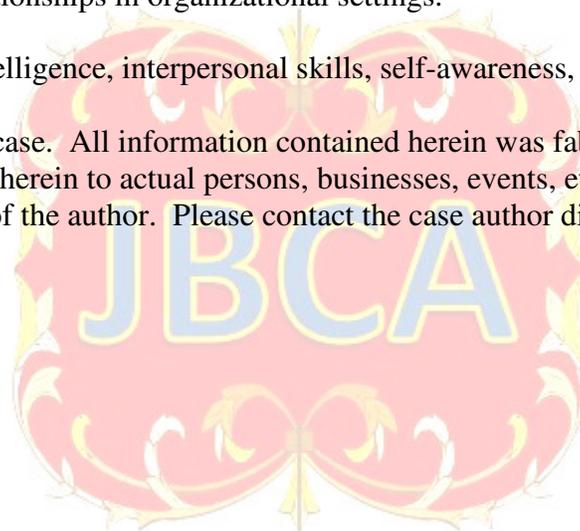
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ABSTRACT

Students need to understand the importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace. This case illustrates why top managers and leaders should exhibit good interpersonal skills when interacting with those inside and outside their respective organizations. Hidden Maturity is a novel case that offers students ways to effectively apply their understanding of emotional intelligence concepts and theories. By understanding the theoretical framework and using critical concepts related to emotional intelligence, students can gain a deeper appreciation of maintaining positive relationships in organizational settings.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, relationship management

Note: This is a fictitious case. All information contained herein was fabricated by the author. Any similarity contained herein to actual persons, businesses, events, etc., is purely coincidental and is the responsibility of the author. Please contact the case author directly with any concerns.



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INTRODUCTION

The focal point of this case relates to the competencies needed for building trust and positive relationships in the workplace. Top managers and leaders bear a large amount of responsibility and accountability to organizational stakeholders. These individuals need to be results-oriented while displaying integrity, humility, and empathy in their actions (Bennis, 1984; Collins, 2001; Greenleaf, 2002). In other words, those in management positions need to be emotionally intelligent. Goleman (1998) noted that managers and leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to boost performance and get results.

Unfortunately, many organizations struggle to achieve optimal outcomes due to a lack of good management and leadership skills. These companies may face problems related to poor communication, employee turnover, group conflict, and other detrimental issues. Although the potential for suboptimal performance exists, businesses can reduce the fallout by strengthening working relationships between managers and employees.

This case offers students innovative ways to apply their understanding of emotional intelligence concepts and theories. Moreover, the case illustrates the importance of using good interpersonal skills when interacting with others. By understanding the theoretical framework and using critical concepts related to emotional intelligence, students can gain a deeper appreciation of maintaining positive relationships in organizational settings.

CASE DESCRIPTION

Hidden Maturity has been in the business of remodeling homes for over thirty years. Its core offering is to take an older home and resurface the exterior, which hides the original look with an updated and modern appearance. Hidden Maturity established itself during the early years of business as a reputable choice among homeowners. The original owners immersed themselves in the day-to-day operations of the business. They worked alongside the managers and employees to ensure that each project was designed and built according to strict quality standards and client preferences.

However, once the original owners sold Hidden Maturity to an investment firm ten years ago, things began to trend in a negative direction. Despite its early success, bad management practices led to high employee turnover and dissatisfaction. For instance, the company's managers now average less than one year in their positions before moving on to other employment options. In addition, recent managers have tended to be poor communicators and delegators. The high turnover rate among managers and employees combined with other negative factors has created a challenging environment for building trust and positive working relationships.

Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit new employees to work for the company. Management problems, poor working conditions, and low employee morale have led to unfavorable word-of-mouth conversations. Current and former employees have also posted unfavorable content on social media regarding the company. As a result, Hidden Maturity felt pressured to significantly increase its initial starting pay to attract entry-level workers.

The instability in management and employee relations has taken a financial toll on the business as well. Hidden Maturity has incurred a 15% decline in sales revenue during the past five years. The significant decline has been intensified by missed growth opportunities despite

the current popularity of home makeover shows on television. Consequently, Hidden Maturity senses a change in direction, and leadership is needed to improve its financial and reputational position in the industry.

CURRENT SITUATION

Hidden Maturity rightly senses that change is needed. Sam Strong is a new manager recently hired to address the company's ongoing issues with morale. Sam is a results-oriented visionary yet believes that satisfied and motivated employees are the key to long-term success. He wants to see Hidden Maturity continue to grow and prosper externally, but with a new emphasis on strengthening internal areas of concern among managers and employees – collaboration, communication, and dedication. To achieve his goals, Sam has determined the need to develop interpersonal skills in the company's managers and employees.

Likewise, Sam believes that building positive relationships with clients is crucial as well. He is implementing a new system that tracks the home makeover project from start to finish. His tracking system will use various metrics related to improving communication, satisfaction, and client interactions. Sam is also interested in improving interpersonal and relational skills among his employees as a way to enhance team-building and collaboration. As a result, Sam wants to know more about emotional intelligence and its role in improving the workplace.

CASE QUESTIONS

Students should answer the following questions as if they are consulting Hidden Maturity's top management regarding emotional intelligence in the workplace.

1. Given your understanding of emotional intelligence, discuss how you would present the concept to Sam Strong and the company's senior leadership.
2. How would you apply the components of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness and relationship management, to improving Hidden Maturity's personnel issues?
3. Do you think an increase of emotional intelligence among the managers and employees can restore the company's reputation and fiscal position? Explain.
4. Consider Sam Strong's implementation of a new tracking system for home makeover projects. How would you integrate emotional intelligence competencies to improve communication, satisfaction, and client interactions?
5. Can you think of ways that emotional intelligence can help managers and employees build a more stable and collaborative working environment? Explain.

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