**Case Study #1 : Alex and Dave (Due in Week 4)**

Alex is the general manager of Allied Software Corporation’s Tysons Corner, Virginia division office.   His company develops large software systems for the defense department.   Alex has four program managers reporting to him, each with a program worth between $3 and $6 million.  Dave was one of those program managers.   Recently hired, Dave wanted this job to work out well.   Dave’s team was made up of 15 system analysts and programmers working on a one-year program worth about $4 million.  The program had a short turnaround time for a program of this magnitude and Dave felt that the deadlines were almost impossible to meet.  In fact, he was facing a critical deadline on Monday and it was Friday.  They were already a week late.   Moreover, some of the department computers were down for service and a few of his people didn’t seem familiar enough with the programming skills needed to create this part of the software.   Still, he needed this job to work for him so complaining to Alex was out of the question.   Dave knew that some of his subordinates were very disgruntled about being overlooked for the job Dave now held and they may take the opportunity to criticize him.   Nine of the 15 department members were old timers at the job while the remaining programmers were there only two years.   The department was noted for being good and while tensions ran high everyone seemed to work well together in a crunch.   Dave knew he could count on his team to meet deadlines, but did not know why they always had to be in crunch mode to get the group to work together.  He guessed this coming weekend would be one more crunch.   Dave was fairly sure that Alex was not aware of the department dynamics and he wanted to keep it that way least Alex think that he could not handle the job.   He and the department would just make the deadline work by putting in some long weekend hours.

Alex arrived at work one Monday morning at 8:00 a.m.  By 8:01 a.m., every member of the finance department was lined up outside his office complaining that someone had stolen all the computers right off their desks.

Robbery foremost in his mind, Alex searched the departments and by 8:15 a.m. he knew the answer.  No robbery had occurred. The computers were not taken from the building but just had been moved.  All of the computers from the finance department had been found on the desks of Dave’s engineering team.  Alex instructed the financial staff to leave the computers on the engineer’s desks for now, until he could figure out exactly what happened.  The financial staff was understandably ready to tar and feather Dave, but Alex was able to keep everybody calm until Dave came to work.

The first of his team to arrive, Dave came in at 8:30.  Immediately upon his arrival Alex asked to see Dave in his office, alone.  “What the heck happened, Dave?” Alex did not yell it out, but he emphasized the word “What”.

Dave calmly explained that his team had promised the customer that specific work that was overdue would be in the customer’s hands by Monday morning.  The team decided the only way to get it done was to work through the weekend.  By Saturday afternoon they realized they were not going to get it done unless they had more computing power. So they took the computers off the desks of the finance department. They worked through Sunday and late into Sunday night and delivered the product to the customer very late Sunday night for its promised time, Monday morning.  When they left late Sunday evening they were just too tired to put the computers back on the desks of the financial staff.   They just thought they would do it in the morning. Dave assumed that the others would be there at the usual time of 7:45 to return the computers.  He did not think it necessary to leave a note.

Still a little upset but thoughtful, Alex asked, “Why did you need more computing power?”  “We just did not have enough machines up for everyone to use.  The service guy was not due until Tuesday.” Dave replied. “Why didn’t you have the work done before this?” Alex asked. Not looking him in the eye, Dave said, “We hit a few snags on the programming end of things and we just couldn’t get past them. It cost us a week’s time, so being late already we all decided that we would work over the weekend to get the material in on Monday.” “While I appreciate your team meeting the deadline, which was the most important task, Dave, not letting the finance department know that the machines could be found in your offices or leaving a note was not a good decision. They lost a lot of time without computing power today.”  You need to address Joe and his department and explain the debacle.

“My bigger concern here” Alex continued, “is that your department seems to need a crisis to get the work done. This isn’t good. Do you have any ideas?” Anxious to deflect Alex Dave said, “I think you and I should work closer to set more realistic deadlines with the customer.  Also a better service policy would help.”  Alex nodded his head, but was not convinced.  Alex asked Dave if he thought more computers or different software would help.  Dave replied, "It couldn't hurt."  Thinking he dodged a bullet.  Dave left Alex’s office and went straight to the finance department to mend fences. He felt better when he left there and went back to his department.

It appeared that Dave needed help in some way but Alex wasn't sure what was needed. Dave left Alex feeling uncomfortable and he was still unsure if he had gotten enough concrete information to solve his dilemma.

Alex decided to have an informal meeting of Dave’s department and get the rest of the staff's opinions. The meeting seemed to yield the same answers Dave gave. However, Alex's suspicion that there was more information to be gotten was confirmed.  He noticed that everyone kept looking at Dave and each other trying to take Dave's lead and not suggest other ideas.  Also, Dave seemed miffed that the team had to be consulted after he had given Alex his opinions.   Alex left the meeting wondering if he was making more of the last minute crunch time phenomena than was necessary.  Maybe he should take Dave at his word; work on the deadline setting and get him a new service policy.

After reviewing his concerns with his own supervisor, Alex decided that he wanted to learn more about Dave’s department and how they operated.  He asked Dave to have dinner with him after work.  He did not discuss work at all, but only personalities.   He just wanted to find out more about him to try to determine if he was controlling the troops or just new to the job and eager to please.  Alex discovered that he had some similar interests with Dave but most importantly that Dave just found out his wife was expecting their first child.   Dave was worried about being a new father and doing well in his new job.  Alex also discovered that Dave was encountering some resistance among the older members of the team.  They were testing Dave, Alex gleaned.  They did not trust Dave. Armed with this new information, Alex decided that Dave needed to do something similar.  He told Dave to take his team out to Dave and Busters for lunch for the afternoon where they could play games like many of the team enjoyed doing and getting to know one another.  The only conditions were that Dave was to make sure that he teamed the younger members with the older members Dave was also to play with them. Further, the games chosen had to be new to everyone! (Dave needed to get help from Dave and Busters for that one.)

 The following Monday Dave’s department hit Dave and Buster’s.  The groups compared scores at the end of the first round and the younger members were winning.  After the second round the younger members were still ahead so Dave shook up the groups by placing some of the younger members with the older members.  The scores not only improved for all the teams but the scores among the teams were also closely matched.  Dave noticed that the older members, forced with a new game, listened to the younger ones because their initial scores were higher.  By the end of the afternoon there seemed to be a new respect for each other that had not been there before. The older members seemed to listen more and react less especially to Dave.

Back in the office with the encounter fresh in their minds, Alex and Dave decided to break the team in to groups again, mixing younger members with older members, and posed the problem of resources and scheduling again.  Dave’s fear of losing his job was now removed from the meeting.  The older members less reactive to change and armed with a better understanding of Dave created a new atmosphere to the exchange of ideas. The younger talent who now felt their ideas would be listened to felt more like they could discuss ideas rather than stay silent. The “new” team discussion resulted in the following information:

·         Scheduling was too client-driven, not taking into account the teams capabilities

* The projects assigned to Dave’s team did not have any content flow, one time it was health care, next time food processing. It was hard to find ways to apply previously developed material as it seemed the team always had to reinvent the wheel.
* The problem that cost them the overtime weekend.
* Hardware service issues were limiting the number of computers available.
* The older IT guys needed more training on the newer hardware and software techniques but because of the workload the training had not taken place.
* Computer hardware needed to be updated.
* It was uncertain that Dave’s team needed more help if they had updated machinery and training.
* Weekly reviews within the group were held to keep from duplicating work and to keep Dave organized with his assignments, an issue that previously had contributed to weekend work.
* Team members would enjoy more down time with each other that allowed everyone to refresh their ideas.

Alex, now armed with the revelations from Dave’s group wonders about his other three IT teams and whether they have similar issues.  Should he incorporate the other teams into the decision statement or keep it initially limited to Dave.   His questions make him seek additional information.  The costs of new hardware for all 15 computers would run $75,000 ($5,000 per computer). Educational training for everyone would cost $25,000. (For the older ones only $10,000) The cost of hiring a new tech would be $175,000 including benefits. The cost of a new hardware service policy giving “white glove” treatment is likely to be $20,000 more a year than the current policy, but he was promised that time would be kept down time to less than three hours as opposed to the 24-48 hour policy they currently have.

In speaking with his other program managers Alex discovers they have the same service problems as Dave, but less project turnover because the assigned projects to date have been larger.  They take longer to produce and have less content turnover.   Deadlines are fewer because they have more lead time for projects.   He sees that in the other departments that training is needed for some of the older members, although fewer in number than in Dave’s department.  However, the program managers would like more help.  They feel they do not have enough staff and while the hardware for the most part is sufficient two new computers in each department would be beneficial. Alex reviews this information with his supervisor and is given a budget of $400,000 to solve the problems in the entire Tysons Corner division.