

she was on a fast track to further career success and wanted to continue performing well. With continuing success, she expected an appointment in Norwich's international business operations in the near future. Ann was pleased about this prospect, as international experience was becoming a prerequisite at Norwich for senior-level managerial positions—her ultimate goal. Several problems, however, were brought to her attention on what she thought was going to be a good day at the office.

As Ann was entering the building, Joe Jackson, the current manager of the market research group, stopped her in the hall and complained that the company's intranet had been down about half of the night. This technical problem had prevented timely access to data from a central server, resulting in a delay in the completion of an important market analysis. Ann thought that immediately jumping in to help with the analysis would be useful in dealing with this matter. She had promised Anil that the analysis would be available to him and other upper-level managers this morning. Now it would have to be finished on a special priority basis, delaying work on other important projects.

Joe also told Ann that two of his analysts had submitted their resignations over the last 24 hours. Ann asked, "Why are we having so much trouble with turnover?" The manager responded, "The market is tight for smart analysts who understand our product lines. We've been having problems hiring anyone with the skills we need, much less people who have any loyalty. Maybe we should offer higher starting salaries and more attractive stock options if we expect to have much hope of keeping the people we need." Ann asked Joe to develop a concrete proposal about what could be done to reduce turnover, promising to work with him to resolve the issue.

Just as she reached her office, Ann's phone rang. It was Brooke Carpenter, the manager of market strategy and administration. "I'm glad you're here, Ann. I need to talk to you now. I'm on my way." As Brooke came through the door, Ann could tell that he was quite upset. He explained that two of his people had discovered through searches on the Internet that the average pay for their type of work was 7 percent higher than what they were currently earning. Sharing this information with co-workers had created an unpleasant environment in which people were concentrating on pay instead of focusing on tasks to be completed. Ann had a conference call coming in a few minutes, stopping her from dealing with the matter further, but she asked Brooke to set up a time when the two of them could meet with his people to talk about their concerns.

After her conference call, Ann spent the rest of her morning dealing with e-mails that were primarily related to dissatisfaction with her department's work. Most of these concerned the delays that other Norwich units were experiencing in receiving outputs from her department. The problem was complicated by the inability to retain workers.

Ann had just returned from lunch when her phone rang. "Ann, it's Brooke. Can you meet with us at 2:30 this afternoon? I know that this is short notice, but we really do need to talk with my people." Although the time was inconvenient, given that Anil expected his analysis today, Ann knew that dealing with issues concerning Brooke's associates was also important. Plus, she believed that Anil's report was about to be finished by the research group, taking that immediate problem off her plate.

The meeting with Brooke and his people lasted almost an hour. Not surprisingly, other concerns surfaced during the conversation. Ann thought to herself that this was to be expected. Her managerial experience indicated that complaints about pay often masked concerns about other issues. She learned that people weren't satisfied with the technology made available to them to do their work or Norwich's commitment to training and development. Young and eager to advance, Brooke's associates wanted assurances from Ann that Norwich would spend more money and time to develop their skills. Ann agreed to the importance of skill development—both for associates and for Norwich. She said that she would examine the matter and provide feedback to them. "It may take some time, but my commitment to you is that I'll work hard to make this happen. While I can't promise much about the pay structure overnight, I'll also investigate this matter to become more informed. Brooke and I will work on this together so you can have direct access to what is going on." Ann wanted to deal with these issues, knowing that their resolution had the potential to help both associates and the company reach their goals.

Ann then spent a couple of hours dealing with still more e-mail messages, a few phone calls, and other requests that reached her desk during the day. Anil received the report he needed and seemed to be satisfied. Although she had been busy, Ann felt good as she left for home around 8:30 that night. Nothing came easily, she thought.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the people-related problems or issues Ann Wood faced during the day. Did she handle these effectively? If not, what do you believe she should have done?
2. Is Ann Wood a high-involvement manager? If so, provide evidence. If not, how well do you think she'll perform in her new job as head of marketing?
3. Assume that Ann Wood wants her managers and associates to be the foundation for her department's competitive advantages. Use the framework summarized in Exhibit 1-2 (in the chapter text) to assess the degree to which Ann's people are a source of competitive advantage at this point in time.