**What Do We Do with Howard?**

Agrigreen, Inc., manufactures various agricultural fertilizers in several plants in the western United States and Canada. Tad Pierson, appointed three months ago as a project engineer at one of the Agrigreen plants, had been told last week by Burt Jacobs, the new manager of engineering to whom he reports, that he was to take on the added responsibility of supervising the plant surveying group. Having worked with members of this group in the past, Pierson was aware of some performance problems and conflicts that existed within the group. Contemplating what action, if any, he should take as their new supervisor, he reviewed the history of the surveying group with others in the company (see Figure 1) and then talked with each group member individually to arrive at the following picture of the situation.

**FIGURE 1**

Today -- Tad Pierson faced with decision on the survey group.

One week ago -- Tad Pierson becomes supervisor of survey group.

 Burt Jacobs becomes engineering manager

 Lee Miller reassigned as project manager.

Three months ago -- Tad Pierson assigned as project engineer.

Last 12 months -- Tad Pierson & Mel Cutler work on pipeline project.

2 years ago -- Mel Cutler works on

3 years ago a number of projects

4 years ago under the direction of Dan Richards.

5 years ago

 -- Survey group moves to the Tech offices, ½ mile away.

6 years ago

7 years ago

 -- Dan Richards & Mel Cutler stake mining claims in Nevada.

8 years ago

 -- Frank Silverton becomes coordinator of survey group.

9 years ago -- Lee Miller becomes engineering manager.

 -- Paul Jackson becomes plant manager at another plant.

10 years ago -- Mel Cutler joins the survey group.

 -- Dan Richards transfers to manufacturing department.

11 years ago

 -- Dan Richards is hired as a laborer in the plant.

12 years ago -- Mel Cutler is hired as a laborer in the plant.

13 years ago

14 years ago

15 years ago -- Paul Jackson becomes engineering manager.

 -- Jerry Givens retires from the company.

16 years ago

17 years ago

 -- Howard Lineberry hired as surveyor.

18 years ago

 -- Jerry Givens is engineering manager.

**Howard Lineberry, Lead Surveyor**

After receiving his surveyor’s certificate from the local civil technologies college, Howard Lineberry had gone to work for the State Highway Department as a chainman. The job hadn’t paid very well, and he always felt that the lead surveyor didn’t like him and often had him doing work that was better suited for a rodman, a position of lower status than chainman on a survey crew.

So, when a job for a lead surveyor had opened up at Agrigreen eighteen years ago, Lineberry had been glad to get it. He told Pierson how excited he had been to be hired into the newly created position. Previously, survey work at Agrigreen had been handled on a part-time basis by drafting personnel or project engineers, mainly Frank Silverton (see Figure 2). Because of significant growth during the preceding three years, survey work had begun to eat up nearly all of Silverton’s working hours. As a project engineer, his salary was too high to justify using him for survey activities, so management had decided to hire someone with an education in surveying and some experience to support the work of Silverton and the five other project engineers.

**FIGURE 2**

Jerry Givens, manager of the engineering staff at the time, and since retired, was the man who had hired and first supervised Lineberry. Since being hired, he has worked for four different supervisors. He remembered Givens as a “cantankerous, hard-headed boss who had very specific things that he wanted done and definite ideas on how they should be accomplished.”

VINCE ADAMS

Surveyor

MEL CUTLER

Surveyor

**Plant Manager**

Manager

Manufacturing

BURT JACOBS

Manager

Engineering

Other

Managers

DAN RICHARDS

5 Other

Project Engineers

TAD PIERSON

Manager

Engineering

FRANK SILVERTON

Project Engineer

HOWARD LINEBERRY

Lead Surveyor

He often lost his temper and openly criticized Lineberry oranyone else doing something he didn’t like. Nevertheless, Lineberry felt that he got along well with Givens. He usually had Lineberry’s daily work scheduled by the time Lineberry arrived in the morning and explained what needed to be done and how it should be done. Only occasionally would Givens have to stop by during the day to change the focus of activities.

After Givens retired, Lineberry reported to Paul Jackson, the new manager of engineering. Unlike Givens, Jackson expected Lineberry to plan his day based on the work that needed to be done and to go ahead and do it. About that time, Lineberry had been thinking that he could do a better job supporting the project engineers, who were increasingly busy on more and larger projects, if he worked with them more directly. The increased pace of work often resulted in last minute requests for Lineberry to provide information and field work. He felt that he had handled fairly well what had become frequent daily changes in his work schedule.

Then one day Jackson accused Lineberry in front of a couple of the engineers, of being “disorganized and possibly lazy.” Later, maybe as a result of thinking about what Paul had said, or maybe as a result of just bad luck, according to Lineberry he made an error fixing the location of a building foundation. The error wasn’t noticed until it was time to erect the new mill. What followed, Lineberry remembered, was “pure hell as the foundation was demolished and replaced at considerable cost in time and money.” After that, people stopped talking when he walked up, and he often overheard “little biting comments” about him. Lineberry had “considered quitting, but good jobs were hard to get.”

After the foundation incident, Jackson became increasingly critical and finally decided that Lineberry needed someone to assist him and double check his “error prone” work. At the same time, Agrigreen was planning to build a new wastewater holding pond, and the project would require extra surveying help. Jackson hired Dan Richards to assist Lineberry. Richards was a bright, hard-working young man who had the same training as Lineberry and who was also pursuing a degree in engineering. As the project proceeded, Richards had openly expressed his feelings that his leader, Howard Lineberry, was slow and stupid. Lineberry felt relieved a year and half later when Richards was transferred to the manufacturing department.

Mel Cutler, who had been employed in the plant for two years as a laborer, replaced Richards. He had previously worked for another employer as a draftsman and had also gained considerable experience in surveying. Lineberry immediately liked Cutler, something he had never felt for Dan Richards. Cutler was willing to work with Lineberry on how to do the jobs and often caught small errors before they became problems.

Ten years have passed since Cutler first joined Lineberry, who now felt a “slight pang” as he wished things were still the same between them. But, during the past five years, relations between them had become increasingly tense. Recently, the only verbal exchanges between them had been terse and directly concerned with the job. Much of the enjoyment of his job is gone, and Lineberry often dreaded coming to work.

A few months after Cutler had been hired, another supervisory change occurred. Lee Miller, a former project engineer, took the manager’s job when Paul Jackson was promoted to plant manager at another Agrigreen plant. Miller had been very successful as an engineer but as a supervisor was somewhat indecisive.

Meanwhile, increasing workloads had resulted in the hiring of additional draftsmen, and office space was getting tight. Miller corrected the situation by remodeling some space in the basement of the Tech offices located about a half-mile from the plant, and Lineberry and Cutler moved there. Nobody bothered either of them much in the new location. Lineberry felt good about the change because he now had space for the survey equipment and he was away from the mainstream of the operation. He needed to see the engineers only when he felt like it and wasn’t bothered as often by hearing their derogatory comments.

Four years ago, Miller had told Lineberry and the other surveyors that he would like them to coordinate their job assignments and schedules through Frank Silverton, indicating that Silverton had much more surveying experience than he did and would know better what the needs were. Lineberry remembered feeling uncomfortable about this arrangement because Silverton wasn’t really his boss, and he still had to have Miller sign his time cards and approve his vacation.

During the past four years, Cutler had occasionally worked on small projects outside the plant, most frequently for Dan Richards, who always specified which individual he wanted when requesting help.

Recently, the company had constructed a fifty-mile pipeline to deliver raw material to the plant, and Cutler was chosen to work under Tad Pierson on that project. Pierson was a recent engineering graduate charged with overseeing the pipeline survey and construction, which had lasted from April through December the previous year. Lineberry still felt angry about Cutler’s assignment to the project because he has had “more experience than Mel at surveying and could have used the over-time money.” The only benefit to Lineberry resulting from Cutler’s outside work was that Miller had hired Vince Adams to help Lineberry during the summer months. Lineberry and Adams thought much the same way about many things, and Lineberry had a genuine affection for this “just-out-of-high school” young man.

Following completion of the pipeline project, Tad Pierson had been made a project engineer, and because of the lack of space in the plant offices, was given space in the Tech offices near Lineberry Adams, and Cutler. Pierson was openly friendly with Cutler, but Lineberry felt that Pierson “acted coolly” toward him and Adams. They seemed to have nothing in common, and each time Lineberry had tried to talk to Pierson, Pierson seemed to cut the discussion short and make an excuse to leave.

A week ago, Lee Miller had stepped down as manager of engineering and resumed duties as one of the project engineers. Burt Jacobs, a big, loud, direct person (in Lineberry’s opinion), who had been the manager of purchasing and stores (plant supplies) replaced him as manager. Jacobs was an engineer about half Miller’s age and several years younger than Lineberry. Only this morning, Jacobs had called the engineering department together to say that change was needed because of the friction between engineering and the other departments in the plant. He also said that the surveyors were now to report to Pierson (which made Lineberry very uneasy) and that anyone needing surveying services must now schedule it through Pierson.

**Mel Cutler, Surveyor’s Helper**

Mel Cutler arrived in town without a job and was a “happy man” when he got the call from Agrigreen. The company needed a plant laborer, and he needed a job. He remembered the job for the next two years as “the most exhausting and filthy job I have ever worked.” Finally, ten years ago a surveyor’s helper position had opened up, and with his background in surveying and drafting he was able to get the job.

Cutler was assigned to Howard Lineberry. For the first few years, they worked well together. Both men had young families, and they shared many of the same outside interests. Cutler had been willing to go along with the way Lineberry had always done things until about five years ago when he noticed that they “experienced continual problems due to the way Howard kept his notes.” Cutler tried to show Lineberry the way he had been trained to keep notes, but “Howard would have nothing to do with it.” The debate continued for several weeks.

Soon, Lineberry started keeping the work schedule to himself, and Cutler often had no idea what they were going to do next until Lineberry stopped the truck and started unloading equipment. In addition, Lineberry’s frequent snack breaks were starting to bother Cutler. He began losing respect for Lineberry and thought that Lineberry was “growing less concerned about his job.” No amount of criticism from Frank Silverton, their boss, seemed to have any effect on Lineberry or the number of errors he committed.

Moving the surveyors out of the plant had been wrong in Cutler’s opinion. He said, “Howard started taking advantage of the situation almost immediately by coming in late and leaving early a couple of times each week.” Lately, Lineberry had been taking naps after lunch, justifying it by saying that he often worked late and was just making up the time. For the past year or so, he had been far more likely to be late for work than to be on time. Whenever Silverton mentioned it, Lineberry always had an excuse. Silverton gave up trying to get him to work on time and settled for just getting some good work done.

Years ago, Dan Richards had first called to see if Cutler wanted to help him stake Agrigreen mining claims in Nevada, and Cutler had jumped at the chance. This turned out to be the first of many surveying expeditions that the two men made together. Looking back, Cutler could see how they had developed a “lot of respect and trust in each other’s work.” They often joked about Lineberry’s laziness and what an idiot they thought he was.

Cutler had been extremely happy when he became part of the pipeline survey crew. He had met Tad Pierson, the pipeline field engineer, at a party that Richards had given and had immediately liked him. Shortly into the project, Pierson, on Richards’s recommendation, put Cutler in charge of the pipeline survey crew and made him responsible for inspections for the eastern half of the pipeline.

Cutler felt good about the assignment and vowed that he would be “the best worker Tad had ever seen.” The hours were long--he had averaged more than thirty-five hours overtime a week for fifteen weeks straight and had never once complained. Pierson was also working long days, and Cutler felt that they had developed an unspoken respect for each other as solid, hard workers. Pierson had backed him without question when Cutler had ordered the contractor to dig up a quarter mile of pipeline that had been buried rather hastily while he had been gone from the work site. Cutler had felt, and later proved, that the contractor buried the pipe to prevent proper inspection.

Cutler had talked with Pierson about Lineberry indicating he didn’t “look forward to working for him again when the pipeline is completed.” Later, after Pierson had been reassigned to the plant, Cutler regularly stopped by to talk with him, often pointing out some of the things that Lineberry and Adams were doing; Cutler and Pierson laughed and shook their heads.

Cutler had been excited to hear at this morning’s meeting that Tad Pierson was now in charge of the surveyors. He wondered how long it would take Pierson to fire Howard.

**Tad Pierson, Project Engineer**

In reviewing his own career with Agrigreen, Tad Pierson had the following thoughts.

I don’t know; I guess I’ve known Dan Richards since I was about fourteen or so. We used to pal around in high school and have always been dose. Dan told me he had wanted out of this area so badly because of Howard. He really hates the guy, and I guess I don’t have much respect for him either. It’s really ironic that now I’m Howard’s boss.

Yeah, it was Dan that talked me into going back to school. When I was ready to give up as I’d done before, he told me, “You can always quit.” He knew it’d make me mad enough to stay. I guess I owe him for that. That, and his pulling the strings that got me on here. When I called him yesterday, to let him know about the change, he almost fell off his chair laughing. Then he stopped and said that he wished he was me so he could fire Howard. He was serious; he really hates him.

I don’t know what I’m going to do. I think the company would be money ahead to fire Howard. But, I went through the firing thing with a guy on the pipeline crew last summer. With all the letters and documentation and stuff you have to go through, it’d take two years to get rid of him. When I think of how long he’s been here and his family and all, I get kind of squeamish. I guess I just don’t know what to do. I’m going to think on it some.

When Burt asked me if I’d take the surveyors I told him I would, but not like Frank had. If I wanted to fire Howard, I wanted to be able to do it. He told me, “They’d be yours; just document it. I’m going to have my hands full trying to fix other messes without trying to handle that problem too.” I almost get the feeling that both of us are in up to our ears.

With regard to Howard, about a month ago I went over to see Mel for a minute. There was Howard, with his head down on the drafting table, sound asleep. He didn’t even hear me come or go. Vince wasn’t any better, he was sitting there holding his hard hat and staring into it, dazed. I don’t know if he knew I was there or not either. What a pair!

The pipeline was different. You knew it was just a summer thing, so we could put up with a lot of stuff. Mel’s a good man. He’s pretty sour on the company though. He doesn’t think Howard should get paid more than he does and “still get away with the crap he does.” He’s already told me I should fire both Howard and Vince.

I just don’t know what to do. I talked with some of the engineers. Half of them don’t trust the work they get from Howard—they’d rather go out and do it themselves, and they do. I sometimes wonder what the heck we even have the surveyors for. I wonder what I should do?