



## Employee Motivation – A Short Case Study

Rohit Narang joined Apex Computers (Apex) in November after a successful stint at Zen Computers (Zen), where he had worked as an assistant programmer. Rohit felt that Apex offered better career prospects, as it was growing much faster than Zen, which was a relatively small company. Although Rohit had enjoyed working there, he realized that to grow further in his field, he would have to join a bigger company, and preferable one that handled international projects. He was sure he would excel in his position at Apex, just as he had done in his old job at Zen.

Rohit joined as a Senior Programmer at Apex, with a handsome pay hike. Apex had international operations and there was more than a slim chance that he would be sent to USA or the UK on a project. Knowing that this would give him a lot of exposure, besides looking good on his resume, Rohit was quite excited about his new job.

Rohit joined Aparna Mehta's five-member team at Apex. He had met Aparna during the orientation sessions, and was looking forward to working under her. His team members seemed warm and friendly, and comfortable with their work. He introduced himself to the team members and got to know more about each of them.

Wanting to know more about his boss, he casually asked Dipti, one of the team members, about Aparna. Dipti said, "Aparna does not interfere with our work. In fact, you could even say that she tries to ignore us as much as she can."

Rohit was surprised by the comment but decided that Aparna was probably leaving them alone to do their work without any guidance, in order to allow them to realize their full potential.

At Zen, Rohit had worked under Suresh Reddy and had looked up to him as a guide and mentor – always guiding, but never interfering. Suresh had let Rohit make his own mistakes and learn from them. He had always encouraged individual ideas, and let the team discover the flaws, if any, through discussion and experience.

He rarely held an individual member of his team responsible if the team as a whole failed to deliver – for him the responsibility for any failure was collective. Rohit remembered telling his colleagues at Zen that the ideal boss would be someone who did not interfere with his/her subordinate's work.



Rohit wanted to believe that Aparna too was the non-interfering type. If that was the case, surely her non-interference would only help him t grow.

In his first week at work, Rohit found the atmosphere at the office a bit dull. However, he was quite excited. His team had been assigned a new project and was facing a few glitches with the new software. He had thought about the problem till late in the night and had come up with several possible solutions.

He could not wait to discuss them with his team and Aparna. He smiled to himself when he thought of how Aparna would react when he told her that he had come up with several possible solutions to the problem. He was sure she would be happy with his having put in so much effort into the project, right from day one.

He was daydreaming about all the praise that he was going to get when Aparna walked into the office. Rohit waited for her to go into her cabin, and after five minutes, called her up, asking to see her.

She asked him to come in after tem minutes. When he went in, she looked at him blankly and asked, "Yes?" Not sure whether she had recognized him, Rohit introduced himself. She said, "Ok, but why did you want to meet me?"

Rohit started to tell her about the problems they were having with the software. But before he could even finish, she told him that she was busy with other things, and that she would send an email with the solution to all the members of the team by the end of the day, and that they could then implement it immediately.

Rohit was somewhat taken aback. However, ever the optimist, he thought that she had perhaps already discussed the matter with the team.

Rohit came out of Aparna's cabin and went straight to where his team members sat. he thought it would still be nice to bounce ideas off them and also to see what solutions others might come up with. He told them of all the solutions he had in mind.

He waited for the others to come up with their suggestions but not one of them spoke up. He was surprised, and asked them point-blank why they were so disinterested.

Sanjay, one of the team members, said, "What is the point in our discussing these things? Aparna is not going to have time to listen to us on discuss anything. She will just give us the solution she thinks is best, and we will just do what she tells us to do; why waste everyone's time?"



Rohit felt his heart sink. Was this the way things worked over here? However, he refused to lose heart and thought that maybe, he could change things a little.

But as the days went by, Rohit realized that Aparna was the complete opposite of his old boss. While she was efficient at what she did and extremely intelligent, she had neither the time nor the inclination to groom her subordinates.

Her solutions to problem were always correct, but she was not willing to discuss or debate the merits of any other ideas that her team might have. She did not hold the team down to their deadlines not did she ever interfere.

In fact, she rarely said anything at all! If work did not get finished on time, she would just blame her team, and totally disassociate herself from them.

Time and again, Rohit found himself thinking of Sureshm his old boss, and of how he had been such a positive influence. Aparan, on the other hand, even without actively doing anything, had managed to significantly lower his motivation levels.

Rohit gradually began to lose interest in his work – it had become too mechanical for his taste. He didn't really need to think; his boss had all the answers.

He was learning nothing new, and he felt his career was going nowhere. As he became more and more discouraged, his performance suffered. From being someone with immense promise and potential Rohit was now in danger of becoming just another mediocre techie.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What, according to you, were the reasons for Rohit's disillusionment? Answer the question using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.
2. What should Rohit do to resolve his situation? What can a team leader do to ensure high levels of motivation among his/her team members?