

Intouch



India's Century

Vishal Jain, MBA '93, and many other Ivey alumni, are embracing the opportunities of an economy growing at a dizzying pace.

Case Study

Take a moment to read through the case and develop some ideas. Then compare your conclusions to those of other Ivey alumni and experts at www.ivey.uwo.ca/alumni/intouch/casestudy

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IVEY

To Fire or Not To Fire DETERMINING WHEN A PAST CONTRIBUTOR CAN BE SAVED AND WHEN TO CUT BAIT

Glenn Yonemitsu wrote this case solely to provide material for class discussion. The author does not intend to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a managerial situation. The author may have disguised certain names and other identifying information to protect confidentiality.

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"She used to be such a good employee. What should I do?" Robert Paulson was the Vice President of Operations for Pacific West Inc., a natural resources company located in Vancouver, BC. He was thinking about Sharon East, his Manager of Quality Control.

Pacific West Inc. Pacific West Inc. was a vertically integrated natural resources company focused on timber, pulp and paper. PWI was involved in everything from harvesting and sawmills, to pulp and paper, processing, and distribution. The company had operations throughout B.C., mostly in remote small towns. With 500 employees, Pacific West produced close to \$100 million in revenue.

In an industry dominated by big multinational conglomerates, PWI was an entrepreneurial darling—a small, nimble company that took advantage of market opportunities. Senior executives had a solid reputation for being innovative, although middle managers were generally more typical of a forestry company.

Sharon East. In an industry and company dominated by men, East had to be strong to succeed. Trained in forestry management at UBC, she had worked in remote camps in the interior during her student years. East joined PWI after graduation in the 1990s, and had worked in several locations with a broad range of positions of increasing responsibility. She had a string of successes to her name, was respected, and had the confidence of senior management. She was 38 years old, married and had one child.

Manager of Quality Control. Two years ago, East was promoted to the role of Manager of Quality Control for the company, working from the head office in downtown Vancouver. While it was expensive to relocate to the Greater Vancouver area, the East family seemed settled in Surrey. In her new position, East worked normal office hours and was able to have a measure of control over her business travel. The new role took advantage of her diverse experiences, her broad network of managers around PWI's locations, and her seniority.

What have you done for me lately? East started out nicely in her new role. In the first year, she was able to implement a new tracking system, introducing new metrics, which led to greater efficiency, reduced waste and improved quality. Then things went off the rails. Her dedication and performance tailed off. She missed deadlines, didn't seem to have any new ideas, and was not even a good caretaker of the current programs. She arrived late, often harried, and regularly left early. She wasn't able to get plant management buy-in for programs, she seemed distracted and she started missing deadlines for reports to senior management.

Paulson knew that East's home situation was not ideal. Her husband hadn't found work in his field and that led to marital problems. Paulson asked himself if it was the challenges of her role, her management approach, or her personal problems that were affecting her work performance. He couldn't understand how a strong performer could have taken such a left turn.

Paulson's Dilemma. Paulson sought the help of the Vice President of HR, who suggested the use of an executive coach. For the past six months the coach had been meeting with East on a regular basis, but her performance had not improved. With the weak economy, Paulson's leash was short. He wanted to help East turn things around, but he knew that at some point it would be his head on the line. He wondered if he should start another intervention, or simply to cut bait and take decisive action. What should Paulson do?

Go to www.ivey.uwo.ca/alumni/intouch/casestudy to read the expert's opinion and share your thoughts.

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All characters and locations in this case are fictitious.

