

To leave, or not to leave: The choice of an unfulfilled employee

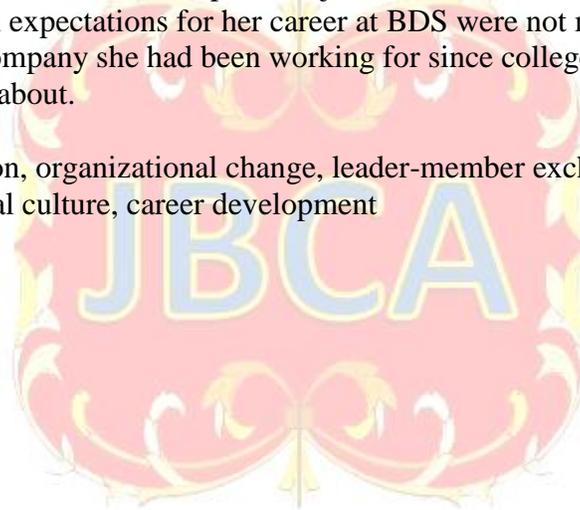
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ABSTRACT

Ashleigh Wright had reached her one-year anniversary as a computer engineer with Business Data Services (BDS) Corporation. Instead of celebrating the occasion, Ashleigh arrived at work that day intending to submit her letter of resignation. She decided to pursue an opportunity with another company that she felt would better prepare her for a career in the technology industry. As she waited to meet with her manager, Ashleigh reflected on her time at BDS, thinking back to when she first accepted her job offer with the company. Overall, she recognized that her initial expectations for her career at BDS were not met. However, she was torn between leaving a company she had been working for since college for a new company that she knew relatively little about.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, organizational change, leader-member exchanges, generational differences, organizational culture, career development



INTRODUCTION

Ashleigh Wright had reached her one-year anniversary as a computer engineer with Business Data Services (BDS) Corporation. Instead of celebrating the occasion, Ashleigh arrived at work that day intending to submit her letter of resignation. She decided to pursue an opportunity with another company that she felt would better prepare her for a career in the technology industry. As she waited to meet with her manager, Ashleigh reflected on her time at BDS, thinking back to when she first accepted her job offer with the company. At the time, she had just finished school and was excited about starting her career. To her, the job was an opportunity to fulfill a lifelong dream of becoming an engineer at a major corporation. Ashleigh had been impressed with the team she worked with in Poughkeepsie during her internship and assumed that the work environment in Austin would be similar. Overall, she recognized that her initial expectations for her career at BDS were not met. However, she was torn between leaving a company she had been working for since college for a new company that she knew relatively little about.

REFLECTION (MONTH 1 AT BDS)

On her first day of work in Austin, her manager, Pat Thomas, took her around to meet the other members of the team. Ashleigh was unpleasantly surprised by the vast differences between the Poughkeepsie and Austin groups. In Poughkeepsie, most of her teammates were men closer to her age, belonged to various ethnic groups, and were excited to have a new intern on the team. On the other hand, her teammates in Austin were mostly older male workers who were nearing retirement and were more concerned with job security than grooming new employees. That was the first cue that caused Ashleigh to question her decision to come to Austin.

During the next few weeks in her new job, Ashleigh spent time learning how to conduct her tasks with the guidance of Bill Blodgett, the mentor assigned by her manager. As Ashleigh began to interact more with Bill, she observed his unwillingness to help her with the learning process. She wondered if it had something to do with her being a female or if she had said something to offend him in any way. After a few weeks, she came to realize that Bill was not pleased with being assigned a new employee to mentor. The revelation occurred through a discussion with her officemate, Mark Chamarro. Even though Ashleigh felt that she didn't fit in with her new colleagues, Mark was the one person on the team she felt comfortable with. She talked to Mark about her interactions with Bill and was surprised to hear his opinion on the situation. After her discussion with Mark (see Appendix, Exhibit 1), Ashleigh was demoralized. She was confronted with the harsh reality of people's mindsets in industry and began to worry about her future with BDS.

REFLECTION (MONTH 3 AT BDS)

With three months of experience in her new job, Ashleigh had become accustomed to the work environment. She realized that there were things she didn't like, but was focused on doing well in her job and moving on to the next phase of her career. She felt disappointed about her work responsibilities because she thought her assignments would be similar to what she was given during her internship in Poughkeepsie. She discussed her feelings with a friend a fellow BDS colleague named David Anderson (see Appendix, Exhibit 2). Ashleigh had known David

from college and frequently sought his advice on various issues. David started his full-time position as a development engineer with BDS around the same time as Ashleigh. He had also been confronted with the realities of life in the corporate world. As a result, the two young engineers regularly met for lunch to discuss their problems. During one lunch meeting in particular, David suggested some actions that Ashleigh could take to improve her situation.

The day after her discussion with David, Ashleigh contacted Audrey and asked for some time on her calendar. Audrey Stoyanov was a senior engineer at BDS and had been with the company for twenty-six years. Ashleigh met Audrey during her first week of work and since then Audrey had served as a career mentor for Ashleigh. In her meeting with Ashleigh, Audrey came to understand her frustration. Due to her knowledge of the culture at BDS, Audrey was not surprised by Ashleigh's circumstances. She informed her that women tend to face various challenges working in the male-dominated environment at BDS. Audrey assured Ashleigh that the situation would improve, but that she would have to stay in her current job for at least a year before changing to a new group. In the meantime, she encouraged Ashleigh to get involved with the BDS Women Inventors Group. Since she wasn't always busy with her job, Audrey felt that Ashleigh could use her downtime to develop patents. BDS placed heavy emphasis on intellectual property, so adding patents to her record would be a way to demonstrate her value to the company. Ashleigh took the advice and soon became involved with the Women Inventors Group.

After her meeting with Audrey, Ashleigh began to question her decision to come to Austin. She couldn't wait to meet with Pat to discuss her feelings, but their next one-on-one meeting was two weeks away. Pat had been meeting with Ashleigh once a month to discuss her new role and responsibilities. During their next monthly meeting, Ashleigh informed Pat that she didn't feel the job and team were a good fit for her (see Appendix, Exhibit 3). Ashleigh felt that the other team members could be more helpful in guiding her through the learning process, but instead she felt as if she was on her own. Pat assured her that he would talk to the other team members and see if he could help improve Ashleigh's feelings about the team and her job.

Ashleigh left her meeting with Pat feeling a glimmer of hope about her career. She was optimistic that her job would soon change and that her situation would improve. But when Ashleigh met with Kirk the following week, she learned that he didn't have any opportunities available on his team. He suggested that Ashleigh meet with other managers and have her the names of some people that she could talk to. Having high hopes about a potential opportunity with Kirk's team led Ashleigh to become upset when she learned that he could not help her. As a result, she became saddened and frustrated about her situation, feeling that there was no way out. She immediately went to Pat's office to inform him of her meeting with Kirk (see Appendix, Exhibit 4).

Ashleigh left Pat's office in a good mood. She felt better about her future at BDS and was thankful to have a manager that was willing to help her. The weeks following her meeting with Pat were better since Ashleigh knew she would be changing jobs in less than six months. She spent the majority of her downtime meeting with different hiring managers to learn about job openings within BDS and also working with the Women's Inventor Group, developing ideas that could be patented. By the time she reached the eighth month in her job, Ashleigh had filed three patent applications. Things for her could not have been better.

As a result of a discussion with Pat, Bill was no longer assigned to mentor Ashleigh. She was reassigned to work with Richard Peterson, another member of the lab network team who was responsible for the placement and removal of hardware in the test lab. Ashleigh met with

him in the lab to learn about the new tasks for which she would be responsible (see Appendix, Exhibit 5).

At this point, Ashleigh was in utter disbelief. As soon as Richard left the lab, she ran to the bathroom and burst into tears. She was frustrated because she had spent seven years to earn two engineering degrees, only to be given the task of screwing servers into a rack. Ashleigh didn't believe that the work on this team utilized her skills in any way. The next day, she kicked her job search into high gear, determined not to be relegated to tasks that she deemed as menial.

REFLECTION (MONTH 9 AT BDS)

Around that time, BDS was undergoing a corporate restructuring. Due to declining sales in server and storage systems, upper management decided it would be best to consolidate various parts of the organization, leading to a reduction in workforce within BDS's Technology Group. Three people on Ashleigh's team were told that their jobs would be eliminated, and that they had 30 days left with the company. The reduction in workforce sent shockwaves through the company, as it was rare for employees to lose their jobs. Ashleigh was stricken with fear over the news of job losses, as she felt vulnerable in her position on the team. She was the youngest team member with the least amount of experience. In addition, she was not being fully utilized by the team. With her sense of job security weakened, Ashleigh intensified her search for jobs within BDS.

As a result of the reorganization, Ashleigh's manager, Pat, was given the responsibility of managing a new team. Pat scheduled a meeting to inform the team of the recent events taking place within BDS and introduced the team's new manager, Katie Hughes. She wouldn't be taking over the management job for at least a month, but Pat wanted to get her involved with the transition process early on. Pat also scheduled a three-way meeting with each team member, allowing them to have a discussion with Pat and Katie. During Ashleigh's three-way meeting, they discussed the upcoming job change, and Pat explained to Katie the reason why he approved the change. Ashleigh informed them that she had made contact with several hiring managers, and felt that an opportunity would be available for her after she completed one year with the team. Katie agreed with Pat that it would be best for Ashleigh to change jobs after one year. Ashleigh left the meeting feeling that Pat and Katie were on the same page with her.

Within the next month, Katie transitioned into her new role as manager of the lab network support team. She set up a meeting with each team member to follow up on previous discussions from the three-way meetings. During Ashleigh's meeting with Katie, she began by informing her manager of the progress of her job search (see Appendix, Exhibit 6).

Ashleigh was furious when she left Katie's office. She couldn't believe what just happened and was upset with Katie's decision. Ashleigh had her mind set on changing jobs in two months and now would have to wait another ten months before she could change. Feeling that ten months was too much time to spend in a job she was unhappy with, Ashleigh decided to focus her job search on opportunities outside of BDS. Every night for the next month was spent applying for jobs, and Ashleigh expanded her search outside of Austin and the state of Texas due to her frustration with her experience at BDS.

REFLECTION (MONTH 11 A BDS)

Two weeks before her one-year anniversary with BDS, Ashleigh received a job offer with a leading military defense technology firm, Adcon Technologies. She would be hired into the Adcon Leadership Development Program and rotate to a different job assignment every six months for a period of two years. The program was Adcon's way of training the next generation of engineering and technology leaders. Even though Adcon was a smaller company compared to BDS, the salary was higher than what Ashleigh was currently making and the prospect of rotating jobs was also attractive. In Ashleigh's mind, the Adcon offer was an opportunity to gain exposure to different areas without having to be stuck in a job on a permanent basis.

Despite her feelings about her current job, Ashleigh enjoyed some aspects of BDS. Since she had worked for BDS as a student intern, she developed an extensive network within the company. She had also identified various mentors that could assist her with her career. Even her efforts with the Women's Inventor Group led to the award of two patents. But regardless of these positive aspects, Ashleigh felt that she was not developing any useful skills for her future career as an engineer and that she needed to leave BDS. If she waited until eighteen months to change jobs, her skills could further diminish or she could even be laid off.

CASE TEACHING NOTE

This case is developed for students majoring in business that have been exposed to a general course in organizational behavior. The case presents several key issues that are critical for students to recognize and understand. More importantly are the effects of these issues on individual workers and the organization as a whole. For senior-level undergraduate students preparing to enter the workforce, understanding these issues can assist them in their career progression. For graduate students aspiring to become managers in a corporate setting, understanding these issues will be critical for their success in management. The scenarios in this case study relate to various key issues highlighted below.

In this teaching case, the experiences of a former BDS Corporation employee will be discussed. The individual was employed at the company for a term of twelve months. Within that twelve-month timeframe, the individual was exposed to numerous issues that can be directly linked to classic concepts in organizational behavior. As a result of the various issues experienced by the employee, the individual decided to leave BDS Corporation and pursue another career opportunity. A discussion around each of these scenarios can be useful to students studying organizational behavior, as they offer real-world examples of the implications of organizational behavior concepts.

MAIN CHARACTER OVERVIEW

Ashleigh was based at BDS's Austin, TX site. She relocated to Austin from Knoxville, TN where she completed the B.S. and M.S. degrees in computer engineering at the University of Tennessee. She began working with BDS while she was a student in college and completed internships with the company in various geographic locations. She completed her last internship with BDS in Poughkeepsie, NY and was offered a permanent position by her internship manager in BDS's Technology Group. Since her family was based in the Southeastern, US, Ashleigh suggested to her manager that she would accept the offer but work with the team based out of

Austin. After wrapping up her internship in Poughkeepsie, she returned to school to complete the final year of her graduate degree. Upon completing her master’s degree, Ashleigh relocated to Austin and began her career with BDS at the age of twenty-five. At BDS, she was responsible for maintaining and supporting the network within a lab used to test various high-end server and storage system configurations.

COMPANY OVERVIEW

BDS was a private global technology company founded in 1980 with annual revenues of approximately \$9 billion. Based in San Diego, CA, the company employed 30,000 people across the globe and offered information system solutions to clients across various industries. BDS was regarded as a major player in the technology industry and was the go-to company for cutting edge data management systems. One of BDS’s major product offerings consisted of data processing and storage systems for various Fortune 1000 firms. The research and development activities surrounding the data processing and storage systems were conducted the BDS Technology Group location in Austin, TX.

CHARACTERS

Ashleigh Wright (engineer, main character), Pat Thomas (1st manager), Katie Hughes (2nd manager), Bill Blodgett (1st job mentor), Richard Peterson (2nd job mentor), Mark Chamarro (officemate), David Anderson (friend, colleague), Audrey Stoyanov (career mentor), Kirk Powell (Pat’s peer manager)



KEY ISSUES

The case presents several key issues that are critical for students to recognize and understand. More importantly are the effects of these issues on individual workers and the organization as a whole. For senior-level undergraduate students preparing to enter the workforce, understanding these issues can assist them in their career progression. For graduate students aspiring to become managers in a corporate setting, understanding these issues will be critical for their success in management. The scenarios in this case study relate to various key issues highlighted below:

1. Attracting, selecting, and maintaining a talented worker is critical to an organization's success. In order to ensure employees are given the tools necessary for career success, organizations must focus on the career development of their workers.
2. As a business undergoes various structural changes in an effort to adapt to the marketplace and remain profitable, employees often become casualties in the process. Organization downsizing and the reduction of workforce is a common issue experienced by workers and has numerous implications.
3. A challenge for many organizations relates to getting the most out of their workers. The concept of worker performance is critical to business managers and can be tied to many factors, such as job satisfaction, motivation, person-organization fit, stress and organizational commitment.
4. Effective communication within an organization is essential to organization success. In regards to managers and employees, the lack of effective communication between the two groups can lead to dissatisfied and disillusioned workers. The communication and exchanges between the two groups is an important area of focus for organizations to consider.
5. In the modern-day workplace, employees represent various age groups. These different groups can bring to light various generational differences among groups of workers. If not managed effectively, these differences can hinder productivity in the workplace.

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

This case will enable students to develop and display a mastery of classic organizational behavior concepts through their participation in a discussion regarding the details of the case.

The specific concepts are:

1. Career development
2. Communication and leader-member exchanges
3. Downsizing and survivor reactions (manager & employee perspectives)
4. Generational differences and group dynamics
5. Motivation and performance in organizations
6. Organizational culture, socialization and person-organization fit
7. Stress in the workplace
8. Work-related attitudes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment)

SUGGESTED TEACHING APPROACH

It is suggested that instructors first allow students time to read through the case and develop their own notes and discussion points. Then starting with each organizational behavior

concept, the instructor should probe students to discuss how the various scenarios in the case relate to each concept. Using the supplied discussion questions, the instructor should also pose these questions to the students, enabling them to provide their perspective on the scenarios and how they would react to them.

CONCEPTS / THEORY

Organizational behavior: job satisfaction, motivation, stress, attitudes, organizational change, organizational commitment, downsizing (manager & employee perspectives) and survivor reactions (manager & employee perspectives), leader-member exchanges, generational differences, organizational culture, career development

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTED ANSWERS / ANALYSIS

1. In relation to the career development of employees, what role did the organizational culture at BDS play in Ashleigh's decision to leave the company?

Organizational culture is defined as the "beliefs, attitudes, values and expectations" that people within an organization adhere to (Baron and Greenberg, 1990, p. 297). At BDS, the corporate culture in relation to career development can be observed through the actions of Ashleigh's managers, Pat and Katie. When Ashleigh expressed her concerns about her job satisfaction with Pat, he initially suggested that she try to make things work in his group before suggesting that she move to a different department. In her discussion with Katie, Ashleigh was told to delay her timeframe for moving to a new job by several months. It is apparent that the BDS culture with respect to career development suggests that employees stay within their current department instead of moving to a new one. This was observed on more than one occasion in the case despite the fact that Ashleigh informed her managers of her dissatisfaction with her job. If the organizational culture allowed employees to move into a job that is better suited for them, the rates of attrition and retention could be positively impacted. Instead, Ashleigh felt frustrated by what she perceived as her manager not wanting her to change jobs. This led her to intensify her job search and eventually accept a position outside of BDS.

2. How could the level of communication between manager and employee be improved?

In general, the communication between Ashleigh and her managers was effective on her behalf. She openly and actively communicated her opinions about her job to her managers. An area that Ashleigh could have improved communication in was with her manager in Poughkeepsie that initially offered her the job. Has she asked more questions about her the nature of her job responsibilities in Austin prior to joining the team, Ashleigh may have then realized that the job was not a good fit for her. She could have also asked more questions to her managers in Austin about their suggestions related to her desire to change jobs. From the perspective of the managers, Pat made a concerted effort to communicate with Ashleigh and assist her with finding the job she desired. Katie, on the other hand, could have done more to explain to Ashleigh the reason why she wanted her to delay her job search. This may have caused Ashleigh to understand her manager's viewpoint. Instead, the lack of communication in relation to delaying her job search caused Ashleigh to become upset and was probably what caused her to eventually leave the company.

3. What issues can be observed in the case that relate to gender and age diversity?

Ashleigh realized the demographic differences between the teams in Poughkeepsie and Austin on her first day of work. She noticed that the Austin team mostly consisted of older, male workers. This led to what she perceived as generational differences in attitudes towards age and gender. These attitudes can be defined as prejudice, or “negative attitudes toward the members of specific groups based solely on their membership in those groups” (Baron and Greenberg, 1990, p. 177). After speaking with her officemate, Mark, about her first job mentor, Bill, Ashleigh learned that he might not have been willing to work with her because of her gender. But his lack of desire to work with her could have also been linked to their differences in age. Ashleigh also felt undermined by her second job mentor, Richard, when he asked her if she knew how to perform the assigned task. This may have occurred because Richard felt that as a female, Ashleigh might not have known how to carry out the assigned task. These age and gender related issues led Ashleigh to feel uncomfortable and out of place within the team. As a result, Ashleigh’s overall job satisfaction, attitude and self esteem may have been negatively impacted, leading to her desire to find a new job.

4. The structural changes that were executed at BDS were prompted by the need to improve business sales. How did the reorganization of the BDS Technology Group and subsequent reduction in workforce impact Ashleigh’s perception of job security and her decision to leave the company?

Organizational changes are often necessary as organizations struggle to remain competitive and profitable. These changes can include; 1) structural changes, 2) technological changes and 3) workforce changes (Baron and Greenberg, 1990). For organizational members, these changes can have various effects, especially on their sense of security. In Ashleigh’s case, witnessing members of her team lose their jobs caused her to become concerned about her own job security. This negatively impacted her overall attitude towards her job. The layoffs caused Ashleigh to become more focused on finding the right job to utilize her skills because she wanted to demonstrate her value. This would help her avoid being selected during the next round of layoffs. Ashleigh’s perception of BDS as a company that she could stay with for her entire career was also impacted by the reorganization. This led to a reduction in her level of commitment to the organization. As a result, she did not hesitate to extend her job search outside of the company and was more willing to leave the company for an opportunity that she felt was better for her career.

REFERENCES

Baron, R. A. and Greenberg, J. (1990). Behavior in Organizations: Understanding and Managing the Human Side of Work. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.



APPENDIX

Exhibit 1: Ashleigh's conversation with Mark

Ashleigh: Mark do you have a few minutes; I'd like to get your opinion on something.

Mark: Sure Ashleigh, what's up?

Ashleigh: Well you know I've been working with Bill for a few weeks now, right?

Mark: Yep. Heard about it from Pat. Bill's an interesting guy you know.

Ashleigh: Yeah he's definitely interesting. But he doesn't really seem to like being bothered by me. I mean, I try to go by and talk with him every day. Sometimes he's busy and other times he'll just ask me if I have any questions. I just don't feel like he's being very helpful to me.

Mark: Well, Bill is one of those guys who like to keep to his self. Antisocial I guess. So I wouldn't take it personal.

Ashleigh: But at some point I'm going to have to do my job on my own and I would like to be prepared so that I can perform at a high level. Maybe I should ask Pat to assign a different mentor to me.

Mark: Well for the lab network support tasks that you'll be doing, Bill is the best person to guide you. He's been on the team the longest and has the most knowledge about the testing environment in the lab and the networking requirements. To be totally honest, not too many guys on the team are going to be happy about being assigned a new hire, especially a female.

Ashleigh: Wow, are you serious? Well, I guess I'll just figure things out on my own. Thanks for the heads up.

Mark: No problem. You won't be with this group for your whole career anyway, so just learn what you can and then move on to the next role.

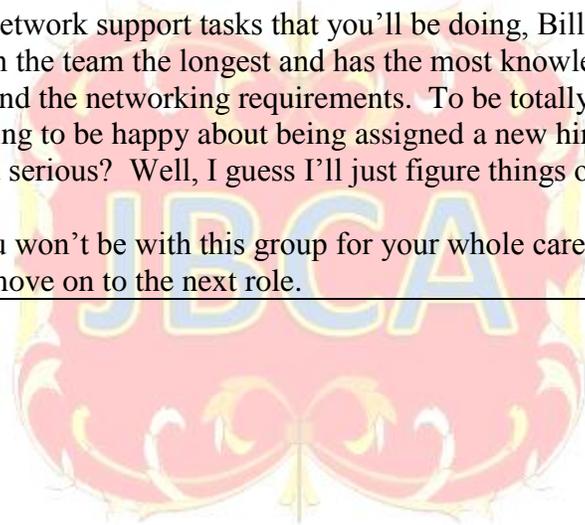


Exhibit 2: Ashleigh's conversation with David

David: So are you still having problems with that old-timer who is supposed to be mentoring you?

Ashleigh: Unfortunately I still am. It's really frustrating. You know what I mean? Here I am trying to be the diligent worker and learn as much as I can. But whenever I go ask Bill a question, he only gives me a small piece of information. I feel like I'm a kid being spoon-fed for whatever reason.

David: Hey, at least you have someone to ask for help. I feel like I've been thrown in the fire and have no clue how to get my assignments done. I thought I was gonna have a mentor as well, but after a month on the job, I learned that I'm taking over a job from a guy that's transferring to a new team. So of course he's ready to just dump all his responsibilities on me and take off.

Ashleigh: I guess it could be worse then. I could just be a slacker and just come to work, do the bare minimum and go home.

David: Exactly, just show up, get paid, and hit the road. Hey, why not?

Ashleigh: Yeah right. To be honest, there is really no pressure on me from anyone to perform. But I know how it works around here. If you're not showing how you are valuable to the team, you'll be at the top of the list when layoff time comes around. And besides, I like to do my best with anything I do. I feel like things would have been better in Poughkeepsie. I should've just gone there instead.

David: How about this. When you meet with your manager again, let him know that you don't feel challenged and that you would like some new responsibilities. Let him know that you don't feel fully utilized and maybe he can find some new work for you to do. Also, set up a meeting with Audrey. She's been here for a long time, is very resourceful, and seems to really want to help you with your career.

Ashleigh: Those are some good ideas. I'll do what you said. Hopefully something good comes out of it because I don't think I can go on like this much longer.

Exhibit 3: Ashleigh's first conversation with Pat

Ashleigh: Good morning Pat, how's it going?

Pat: It's going ok. Still trying to figure out how things work around here.

Ashleigh: You too? I thought I was the only new face on the team.

Pat: That's funny. I've been with BDS for seven years, but this is my first management role. I took over this team about four months before you came to Austin. So I'm new, but I'm also old at the same time.

Ashleigh: Oh I see. So are you enjoying being a manager?

Pat: Overall, I am. But as with anything, there are challenges. For me, most of my current challenges are related to personnel. I'm still a young guy but the majority of my team has been with BDS for twenty years or more. That makes for some interesting interactions.

Ashleigh: Yeah I can see how that might be tough for you. I feel like I'm dealing with the same thing. Working with Bill is ok, but I don't feel like he's being very helpful to me. I almost get the feeling that I'm bothering him when I go and ask questions. Like he's too busy or doesn't have time.

Pat: Hmm. Did you try to schedule regular meetings with him? Maybe get on his calendar once a week or so?

Ashleigh: Well, no. But only because he told me to just stop by whenever I had questions. It's really frustrating. I don't even know if I'm doing my job the right way. I was expecting that Bill would give me a little guidance, and then I could take it from there.

Pat: Ok. I can relate with you because I had a similar issue when I first started my career. As for Bill, I think he's worked alone for a long time, so having a mentee to train might be out of his comfort zone. I matched you with him because the other guys said he was the lab network expert on the team. But now I realize that it might not have been the best move.

Ashleigh: Oh I see. That leads me to my next point. I wanted to ask you if I could change my job role and maybe pickup a new assignment. I feel that the work that I have now doesn't take up enough of my time, and I end up with a lot of downtime.

Pat: Well we definitely don't want you to be bored. How about this. You have my permission to talk to my peer manager, Kirk Powell. He manages the team that maintains the network for the low-end server and storage system test lab. Reach out to him and let him know I sent you. Ask him if there are any projects that he could use your help on and get back to me after your discussion with him. In the meantime, I'll talk with Bill to try and figure out what's going on.

Ashleigh: Ok. Thanks for your help Pat. I'll let you know how the meeting with Kirk goes.

Pat: No problem. I want my team members to be happy with their jobs. And as a new-hire, it is important for you to get a good start to your career.

Exhibit 4: Ashleigh's second conversation with Pat

Ashleigh: Pat, do you have a quick second to chat?

Pat: Sure, have a seat. Is everything ok?

Ashleigh: Yeah, I guess. I just left Kirk's office. He said that he didn't have any work that he could use me for. He actually said he barely has enough work for the people on his team and that would bring me on if he could.

Pat: Well things are kind of tight around here but I thought he would at least have something for you to do.

Ashleigh: Yeah, I was really hoping it would work out. I feel that if I don't have enough work to do, then I won't get to build any skills, and the skills I do have will diminish over time.

Pat: I understand. You know, I've been doing some thinking about your situation and I'm not even sure why they placed you in this department in the first place. Typically the lab network support folks tend to be technicians instead of engineers. But you have two engineering degrees, which makes you even more educated than me. I think we should focus on finding you a position that will better utilize your background and education.

Ashleigh: Ok, I like the sound of that. I agree with you about the department but when I was in Poughkeepsie, the work that I was doing on that team seemed to be a better fit. I was under the impression that the team here in Austin did the same kind of work at the team in Poughkeepsie. That's basically why I decided to accept the job but work with the team here.

Pat: This team is supposed to be directly aligned with the Poughkeepsie group but I've found that the folks here like to do things their own way. Since most of these guys are old-timers, they like to do things their way and don't really like for the manager to provide too much input. That's made my job here kind of tough. But I was looking for an opportunity to jump into management, and this was the first thing that came up.

Ashleigh: Oh I see. So about me switching jobs. I remember them telling us at orientation that it was best if you stayed in your current job for one year before moving to a new position. Is that true.

Pat: Yes and no. It is more of an unwritten rule. Upper management feels that one-year gives the company the best return on their investment. So they typically don't approve job changes before the one-year mark.

Ashleigh: Ok. I'm already halfway through my first year so you're saying I can change jobs in six months?

Pat: Yes. I think it will be best for your career. How you start in the company really plays a big part in how your career will turn out. But keep in mind that it takes a while to find the right job. BDS is a huge company. So you should really start using your spare time to review the jobs database and see what's available. Also, talk with your mentor, Audrey, about getting connected with the right people to learn more about job openings. In the meantime, keep doing a good job with your current assignments.

Ashleigh: This is really good news. I really appreciate your help Pat. BDS is a great company. But I just want to make sure I'm getting the most out of my time spent here.

Pat: No problem at all. I've been in your shoes before so I know how it can feel. But understand that there is a job out there that is a good fit for you in BDS. We just have to figure that part out and I think you'll do just fine.

Exhibit 5: Ashleigh's conversation with Richard

Richard: Hey Ashleigh. You ready to have some fun?

Ashleigh: Sure, I've been waiting for some more interesting work to do.

Richard: Ok, well let me show you what we're going to be doing. You see this server rack? Well all the hardware that the test guys use has to be setup in these racks so that we can get them setup on the network. So what happens is that we get a shipment from manufacturing, we unpack the hardware, get it installed in the racks, run the network cables and then let the test guys get to work. Once they're done with their stuff, we'll get the hardware packed up and ship it back to manufacturing.

Ashleigh: Ok, that seems pretty straightforward. So do the test guys tell you how to setup what they need?

Richard: Yes ma'am. We'll meet with them to get a idea of their test plan and requirements, then we take it from there and get it all setup.

Ashleigh: Ok, I think I can handle that.

Richard: Great. Let me show you how to get the hardware setup in the rack. You know how to use a screwdriver?

Ashleigh: Umm..yeah. Just turn it to tighten the screw, right?

Richard: Yes ma'am, that's all there is to it. Is this stuff gonna be too heavy for you to lift?

Ashleigh: Umm..no. I should be able to use to lift and just slide the system into the rack.

Richard: Great. Well I'll let you to it then. There are four systems in the back. Get them setup in the rack and then we'll jump on the networking stuff.

Ashleigh: So you just want me to screw those four systems into the rack?

Richard: Yes ma'am. You got it.

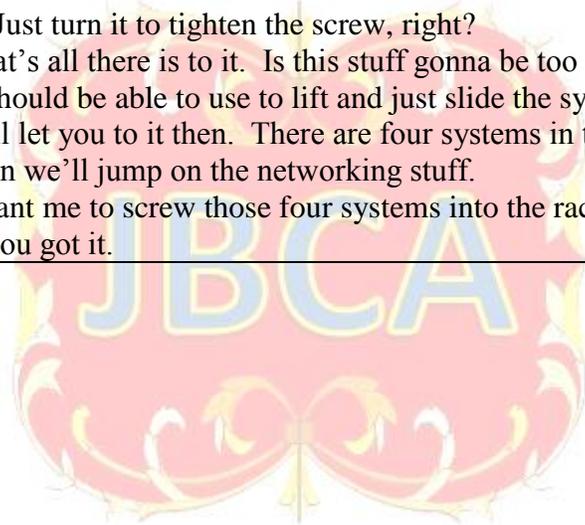


Exhibit 6: Ashleigh's conversation with Katie

Katie: Its good to see you again Ashleigh. Fill me in on how things are going since we last met.

Ashleigh: No problem. As you know, I've been working hard on finding a new job within BDS. I'm in my tenth month with the company and by the time the next two months have gone by, I think I will have a new job. There are a few managers that I met who really seemed to like my skills and are interested in having me on their team.

Katie: I see. Ashleigh, I know Pat have you permission to look for a new job, but I think we should take a step back from that process and see how we can better utilize you on our team before losing you to another group.

Ashleigh: Oh. Well Pat felt that the work being done on this team is not technical enough for someone with my background, that's why he suggested I look to join another group.

Katie: I do recall him saying that. How about his. Let's hold off on you changing jobs until after eighteen months. That way, by that time, I will have a good handle on how things run with this group. I wouldn't feel comfortable losing a talented employee without fully understand the needs of the team.

Ashleigh: Ok, well should I still continue to engage other managers about job openings?

Katie: I think that is a good idea. That way you can continue to build your network and by the time eighteen months is up, you should have keyed in on the right job for you.

Ashleigh: Ok, thanks Katie.

Katie: Don't mention it. I'm here for you so don't be afraid to stop by anytime.

Ashleigh: Ok.

