Chapter 2
Career Transitions:
From the Boardroom to the Classroom – Do You Know What It Takes? A Teaching Case in Global Leadership

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every organization requires leaders. What "leadership" looks like is different across industries and across cultures. This chapter provides academics, executive education instructors, and other skill development specialist with an opportunity to analyze a real case scenario from the perspective of emotional intelligence, cross-cultural communication, motivation, and leading across cultures. Students will benefit from using analytic skills to identify areas of opportunity in a case that presents a real-life situation involving various concepts used in leadership development programs. Names and other key details have been changed to keep confidentiality.

INTRODUCTION

On a cool fall morning Helena was sitting at the university cafeteria where she usually grabbed a cup of coffee before going to her office. This time she was trying to decide if she should step down from the new role she had accepted just a year ago as program director in a new specialization in the College where she had been a full time professor. Helena had been thinking about retirement for the past 6 months. After all, she had been a university professor for about 15 years and had been quite

successful at it. She remembered how difficult it had been to switch her 20-year career in the banking industry for a career in higher education. Those last 15 years at an ivy league university had been the best years of her life. During those years she had worked at Nantucket State University in a large business department with other 38 colleagues focusing on teaching and research. This new role as program director was bringing new challenges to her. She had only 4 staff members in her new department and had all the freedom she could wish. But the first 52 weeks into her job had been stressful to say the least. She was seriously reflecting on the possibility of stepping down. This new role was not what she had expected.

STATUS REPORT

When Helena got assigned to a new role as Program Director at Nantucket State (NS) she had 4 staff members who reported to her. One person from China, one from Spain and two from the USA. This department was created because the College had identified that a new skill development program was necessary to meet the requirements of the global business environment so that graduates would acquire new skills to succeed. This role also interacted with international clients interested in training and development. Because this was a new initiative it required someone with an entrepreneurial vision and who was able to lead a diverse group of smart, talented staff members.

   NS was not different from many other universities, but the organizational environment was something Helena had to learn to navigate from the start. She very quickly discovered that tenured faculty had a lot of say in the decisions that were made, how the budget was distributed, who kept their tenure and who did not have a chance to be part of the "in" group. Helena also realized that power was distributed in a very unique way and that there were some faculty members whose opinions strongly influenced the strategy and direction of the program. And these individuals could help or hinder Helena's career. During the first months in her role at NS Helena had already had a couple of arguments with two of her staff members. Helena could not understand why it was important for one of them not to have specific office hours but to allow for a "just in time" student mentoring. Helena thought it was important to have specific hours so that students could know in advance when professors were available. The second situation involved something she could still not figure out. Her staff member from China, Ying, had sent a message to the school faculty asking for their input into a new program and with a summary of new ideas for their consideration to be included in a new skill development course. These were ideas that had been discussed during their last faculty meeting. Helena noticed that the message had some grammatical errors. Helena was concerned about this

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