
**Activity 11-1:
Exploring
Perceptual Issues
via Dan Dunwoodie's
Challenge**

Objective:

To have small groups identify and define the problem in a case study so that the process can be studied through the analysis of contrasting results presented by the groups.

Task 1:

Participants are to read the case study "Dan Dunwoodie's Challenge," which follows. Each team is to answer the following three questions on the case study:

- a. What is the problem?
- b. What is the principal cause?
- c. What action should Dan Dunwoodie take?

(Time: 15 minutes)

Task 2:

Each team first presents its results on problem definition, which the instructor lists on the board. Then the same procedure is followed for causes. After these have been listed, the action recommendations are given and listed. During the process of listing the contrasting results from the various teams, team members are not to challenge or discuss the solutions. Questions may be asked for clarification. When the data are all out, there should be open challenges and discussion of differing points of view and of the feasibility of the suggested actions.

The class should develop at least one criterion for deciding upon the problem; a decision should be reached as to what would be the best solution from the standpoint of the criteria developed. (Time: 30 minutes)

Case Study: Dan Dunwoodie's Challenge

Up to this point I have been doing very well. At 27 years of age I am chief of an economic analysis branch in the United Automobile Manufacturing Company. I was hired personally by John Roman, my division chief, who interviewed me at the university where I was completing my MBA. John had expressed interest in several of my qualifications: BA in economics from an outstanding university, 4 years of work experience as an analyst in industry, and a specialty in information systems while working on my MBA.

When I came on duty 3 months ago, John gave me guidance as follows:

Economic analysis functions and processing at United need updating. Analysts are substantive experts and do not comprehend the importance of management or the possible application of information systems to managerial decision making. They keep insisting that judgmental processes cannot be automated; they resist suggestions that they can augment their activities by using computers. After you have had 3 to 6 months to learn your job, you are to come up with recommendations for organizational and procedural changes in your branch. You are to keep in close touch with your peers, the other branch chiefs in the division, all of whom have been with the company for 5 or more years.

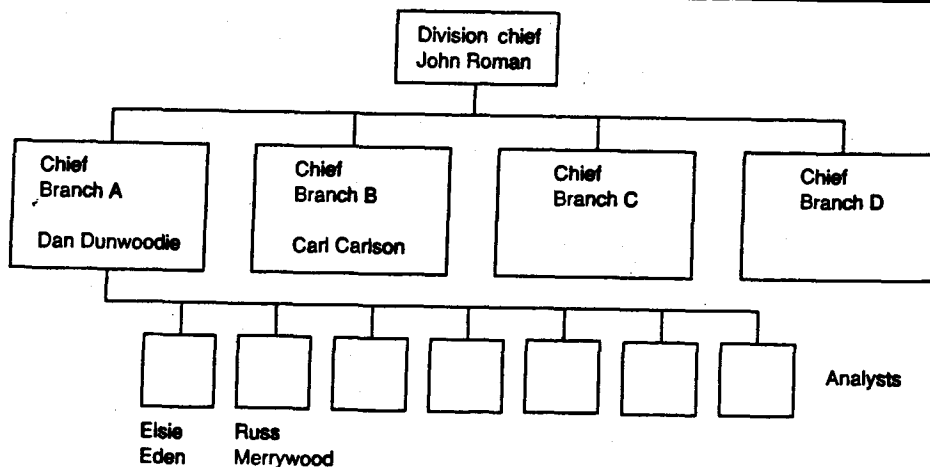
(Their responsibilities were almost identical to mine except each branch had different economic specialties.)

I assumed my responsibilities with great energy and soon saw many possibilities for developing the effectiveness of my branch. I worked evenings and weekends on a new plan. As I developed ideas, I would try them out on each of the other branch chiefs. They were helpful and responsive. One objection did arise from Carl Carlson, chief of Branch B, who criticized some of the information systems suggestions. (Carl was regarded in the division as the next man in line for John's job. See Exhibit 1.)

At the end of 3 months with United, I presented my plan to my entire branch in a briefing session, complete with a statement of objectives, charts, and expected results. In response to my request for their reactions, two people spoke up. One was Elsie Eden, who was a contemporary of John and the branch chiefs. (I had heard she would have had my job if she had been willing to take an extensive computer training program.) The other was Russ Merrywood, also an old-timer, who had been passed over for advancement. (I had also heard that Russ had money and was not too committed to his job, although I find that his work is excellent.) My plan was well thought out, and further clarification of various details appeared to satisfy all questions raised.

On a Wednesday afternoon I gave the same oral briefing to John (division chief), who showed enthusiasm and pleasure. He promised me an early decision and asked for a copy of my written report for further study. On Thursday afternoon I received the report back with the notation, "Sounds great. Proceed soonest with entire plan with the

Exhibit 1



exception of paragraph 6, which I wish to study further." (Paragraph 6 contained an information system suggestion concerning which Carl had expressed disapproval to Dan.)

I spent Friday in meetings with my branch making initial plans for implementing the new program. Over the weekend I continued on my own to make final plans.

Early Monday morning I was asked to come to the division chief's office. I then learned that John had reversed his decision, and no changes were to be put into effect at this time. John appeared rather brusque and said he did not have time to discuss the decision. Later that day, I learned that John had attended a dinner party at Russ's house over the weekend.