

# See-Saw Jeans

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## SEE-SAW JEANS FOR KIDS

### Part I

Pete Wilmington is on his way to meet with Oliver Knight, president of See-Saw Jeans for Kids. Pete has good news to share. As Vice President of Sales, Pete has finally wrapped up the deal with Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart is going to carry See-Saw Jeans in all of its stores on a trial basis for the next year. See-Saw Jeans for Kids has been a small-to-medium-size clothing manufacturer with sales of \$41 million, but this account has the potential of doubling the company's sales. And the increased exposure—well, that could lead to even more stores carrying See-Saw Jeans.

The future for See-Saw Jeans looks much brighter today than it did yesterday. Still, Pete is going into this meeting with some trepidation. To get the Wal-Mart account, See-Saw Jeans must implement Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), a process of direct computer to computer communication. With EDI, orders and billing between Wal-Mart and See-Saw Jeans will pass directly from computer to computer and won't go through human hands. EDI has the potential of dramatically reducing the amount of time it takes to process orders and bills, thereby also reducing costs. Still, Pete can see that it will require major changes in how the company operates—in virtually every department.

Pete doesn't have to wait long before he's ushered into Mr. Knight's office. Pete has always had tremendous respect for Mr. Knight. He started the company from nothing but a dream, a vision, and \$10,000 of borrowed money. He's always been visionary and has little patience with those who do not share his vision. His leadership style is a bit too "hands off" to suit some in the company, which has created problems now and then as others try to implement his vision. Today the company employs 140 people and has an annual net income of \$12.5 million.

Pete explains the Wal-Mart deal to Mr. Knight, including projected sales. Mr. Knight is visibly pleased. Then Pete explains the stipulation that See-Saw Jeans begin using EDI in its transactions with Wal-Mart. Before Pete really gets into his re-

luctance about EDI, Mr. Knight stops the discussion and calls in Steve Stone, head of the Management Information Systems Department. Pete repeats the story of the Wal-Mart deal—the potentially doubled sales, increased exposure, and the EDI stipulation. If Pete is not mistaken, he thinks he sees a look of excitement go across Steve Stone's face at the mention of EDI. Steve does explain that Wal-Mart's is a proprietary EDI system, which means it can't be used with any other company. Further, Steve points out, Wal-Mart is known for the requirements it makes of its suppliers. Still, the potential for increasing sales is HUGE!

Mr. Knight abruptly ends the conversation. "If EDI is what we need, then EDI we shall have. Do whatever it takes," he says to Steve Stone. Pete sighs an almost audible sigh of relief. At least the ball was no longer in his court. Perhaps no one will blame me, he thinks.

*Should Pete have been worried?*

*Why was Mr. Knight not worried?*

*Why was Steve Stone excited?*

## SEE-SAW JEANS

### Part II

Steve Stone accepts the challenge of implementing EDI. Steve graduated from Texas Tech five years ago with a master's degree in MIS. Although he's never seen EDI implemented, he has read about it, and, quite frankly, he is excited about the challenge. See-Saw Jeans has never been particularly behind the times technologically, but this requirement by Wal-Mart may help push the company ahead of many of its competitors.

Steve's first step in the implementation process is a visit to Wal-Mart headquarters where he meets with the company's MIS guys. They point out the advantages of using EDI and the procedure Wal-Mart employs. "By using EDI," the Wal-Mart EDI consultant explains, "Wal-Mart will pass to your production scheduling program our projected requirements in time to have them on our dock just-in-time to place them on the shelves. You will not have to inventory goods at your factory, and we will not have to inventory them here. When we receive

your goods, we will key the computer to immediately send payment to your bank via electronic funds transfer (EFT). This way, we both will minimize inventory, reduce the uncertainty and the delays of the ordering process, and reduce the financial float for payment.”

“What will I have to do to make this work?” Steve asks.

“Here is the information we require, with the fields defined,” the consultant says. “I will put you in touch with an EDI software vendor if you like or you can develop the conversion program yourself. In any case, you will need to be ready to receive the data we have included here and to provide us with the data on the next page. Our connections will be on CompuServe, but we will create the account there for you.”

Steve comes back from his visit even more excited than when he left. Surely everyone will be able to see how this will open new opportunities for See-Saw Jeans.

Monday morning Steve takes the first step in implementing EDI at See-Saw Jeans. Steve meets with Walt Morgan, head of the Order Department. Walt has heard of EDI but doesn't seem to show a great deal of enthusiasm as Steve tries to explain its advantages. “I suggest you just meet with my guys and just do what you have to do,” Walt said, obviously closing the conversation.

The meeting with Pat Wilson, head of Accounting, doesn't go much better. Perhaps Walt and Pat are just not “up with the times,” Steve thinks as he sets up a time to visit with both of their staffs the following morning.

The next morning, Steve finds himself looking at the faces of the 18 people from the Order Department and the Accounting Department. They already know about the Wal-Mart account and its EDI stipulation. What they don't know is exactly what EDI is and how it will affect them. Taking a deep breath he begins, “EDI is the direct computer to computer communication of information in a standard format that permits the receiver to perform a specific business function.” From his place at the front, Steve sees several people exchange quizzical looks. Steve, too, is puzzled. What is it they don't understand—English? Steve mentally scraps his prepared speech. “Let me put it to you this way. To place an order, Wal-Mart would simply enter the purchasing information into their computer. Their system would electronically forward the purchase order to our computer. That message would automatically create an update in our order entry system, triggering the generation of the product. The message would also contain delivery deadlines. Once the order is produced and shipped, our system would automatically generate and transmit a corresponding invoice to Wal-Mart. Verification of

the received merchandise would also be automatically processed as would be the transfer of funds. I simply don't know how to describe it any simpler than that.”

A hand goes up, “I don't understand how all of this can be done from computer to computer without human involvement.”

Steve explains, “The computers communicate using ANSI X.12, it's a standard approved by the American National Standards Institute and is the only standard approved for the transfer of business documents. The standard cuts across both industry and functional lines.” Steve notices that people are beginning to shift in their seats and decides to try another angle. “A major advantage of EDI is that it will reduce DOS,” he says, proud of his accounting jargon.

The crowd seems unimpressed. Steve hears a voice from the back, “I think you mean days sales outstanding—DSO. Perhaps it'd be better if you just tried to talk to us in English.”

Frustrated, Steve replies, “Perhaps it would be better if I just answered questions.”

The first question comes from a veteran of the Order Department. “If everything is done automatically, how do we know that there is no error? We could be producing, shipping and billing 6,000 pairs of jeans when the order was meant to be 600. Maybe it was just a typo. A machine can't catch irregularities like that—only people.”

“Good point,” Steve replies. “We will have a contractual agreement that places the responsibility on Wal-Mart to be sure the order is correct. Also, our agreement will include a check number so that if a typo makes a number too large, the order will be rejected. In this case, we can program in checks-and-balances for just such a case.” Steve notices that the man asking the question does not seem convinced.

The second question also comes from the Order Department. “If everything is on the computer, don't we run the risk of losing valuable information if there is a power loss, for example? And how do we go back and check records of an order if there is no paper trail?”

“We have been dealing with MIS audit for years, so this is not a new situation,” Steve replies. “We record all transactions and keep them in log tapes for three years. As for power outages, if our mainframe detects a disruption before the completion of the data transfer to our permanent files, the total transfer will occur again. By the way, the telecommunications program has provisions to insure that not even one character is changed in transmissions, something we have trouble with when we key in the data by hand.” Steve glances at the front row just in time to see a woman from Accounting unconsciously roll her eyes toward the ceiling. Why

can't these people see the benefits of EDI, he thinks to himself, feeling his blood pressure begin to rise.

Someone from accounting speaks up, "How do we know when an account has been paid if no one is keeping track of it? An account could go unpaid forever if no one is tracking it."

Feeling his patience beginning to dwindle, Steve tries to explain, again. "When Wal-Mart receives the goods or an invoice, whichever we agree to in the contract, they will do two things: (1) They will send commands through EFT to move funds from their bank account to ours, and (2) They will send us a confirmation that the funds have been transferred. We will have our program keep a memo to itself of the expected confirmation of funds transfer, and if it does not happen within the time allowed, the program will notify our Accounting Department automatically."

"When will we be installing this EDI?" a voice from the back asks.

"As soon as possible. Wal-Mart is ready to start receiving our merchandise as soon as we get EDI operational." Ready to escape, Steve quickly shuts off further questions, "In summary, I guess you can now see how EDI will allow us to conduct business with Wal-Mart better than ever and with a minimum use of paper, postage and people. Let me just say that I am looking forward to working with you in initiating EDI at See-Saw Jeans." With that Steve quickly leaves, knowing full well that the meeting with the Finance, Marketing and Production Departments is the next morning. But surely they will see the advantages.

On his way back to his office, Steve is stopped by Jean Whittenburg, Director of Human Resources. Steve had noticed Jean sitting at the back of the room during his presentation. "Steve, you have to understand that this is a major change you're asking these folks to make. Many of them are just not quite up to speed on this technology. Perhaps you should back up and take this more slowly. You might even appoint a team to assist with implementation," Jean says.

"Just why would I want to do that?! You saw how they acted in there. Besides, *you* don't understand," Steve says, "Wal-Mart is ready. This may be a once in a lifetime opportunity. We need to move quickly; we don't want to let it slide through our fingers. Besides, Mr. Knight, has authorized its implementation, IMMEDIATELY."

"OK, do it your way," Jean says. "I'm just speaking from experience and from my knowledge of our employees."

The next morning, Steve walks in to face 22 men and women from Finance, Marketing and Production. Quickly he realizes that this is not going to be better at all. He feels a bit like Indiana Jones trying to deal with a pit full of snakes. He takes a

deep breath and repeats the explanation of EDI that he gave yesterday. Before he even makes his concluding statement, a hostile voice cuts in, "Just cut to the chase. Exactly how is this going to affect US?"

"In some ways the three departments will be similarly affected; in other ways, each department will experience different outcomes. Basically, we will all receive information that is more reliable and in a more timely manner," Steve answers.

He continues, "Finance will receive accounts receivable and accounts payable information automatically as orders are entered into our system from the Wal-Mart system through the EDI connection. Payments will be on schedule and any discounts will be taken automatically, in accordance with the contract. We will no longer play the float game with accounts receivables as the funds will be deposited exactly when expected. By the way, we now have the opportunity to begin to use EDI with our suppliers and pay them automatically."

A voice from the back interrupts, "And just why would we want to do that? We make some pretty hefty change by using float and holding our payments until just before they are due."

Steve chooses to ignore the question and move on. "Marketing will be able to reassign or release some of its people as their tasks change from order-taking to introduction of new products. The computers will take care of orders, and probably do a better job than in the past as Wal-Mart will ensure that there are no errors. We will be able to send our pricing lists to Wal-Mart via EDI and not have to print them as in the past."

"You people in Production are really going to enjoy EDI. Now, your computer program will be talking with their inventory management program. You will only have to watch for unusually large orders and adjust your scheduling of people accordingly. This will require fewer production planners and stock clerks, a great deal less work-in-progress inventory, less safety stock for raw materials inventory, and less storage space for raw materials and finished goods inventory.

"You know, through EDI we are really building a partnership and an alliance with Wal-Mart. This will really help us to become more of a part of the Wal-Mart family."

As Steve pauses for a breath, he hears a not-so-subtle whisper from the front row, "And who says we want to be a part of the Wal-Mart family?"

Then a louder voice from the far side of the room asks sarcastically, "Do we have any say in this adoption process?"

Not feeling in the mood to handle more hostile questions, Steve concludes, "I've got to run, but if you have any questions, just put them in writing and I'll get back to you." With that he slips out of

the room, grateful for the quiet hallway.

Steve leaves the meeting thinking that the worst is over. Now at least they all know about EDI, the changes the company is facing and the advantages.

Almost immediately, the memos start arriving. "You should be aware that the Accounting Department does not support the move toward EDI." In essence, all the memos say the same thing—no one supports the move toward EDI. The only department he didn't hear from is Production. At least they're supportive, Steve thinks to himself. Personally, he begins to feel like a carrier to the plague. Conversations abruptly stop whenever he rounds the corner. No one is speaking to him. Why don't they see the advantages?, Steve wonders. Besides, they have very little choice in this matter—so they might as well grin and bear it.

Two days later, Steve runs into Marlin Thomas, head of Production. Marlin opens the conversation, "Steve, you should know that my people have discussed this EDI thing for two days now, and they just really don't like the idea. It seems to them that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages."

Steve starts to try to explain again but Thomas continues on, "We like to have some control over when we have to retool for a product, and it just makes more sense to produce in large batches rather than having to stop everything and produce an order just for Wal-Mart."

Steve has had all he can take, "Look, to get the Wal-Mart account, we must do it—whether we like it or not. Mr. Knight—you recall him, he's the president of our company—told me to implement EDI; and dammit, I'm going to do it!"

"Then just do it!" Thomas snaps back. "But don't expect me—don't expect any of us—to like it!"

Suddenly Steve is left standing in the hallway, stunned. Now what? Why are people acting this way?

*How would you answer Steve?*

## SEE-SAW JEANS

### PART III

Everyone is gathered for a plant-wide meeting. The atmosphere is so cold, you could chill champagne; but then no one would feel like drinking it, Steve thought wryly. Even if they did, they might throw the glasses at me, he thinks, half smiling to himself.

In desperation, Steve has brought in Tom Stoy from Wal-Mart to try to persuade everyone as to the merits of EDI and to help get the computer system compatible. Steve introduces Tom to the room-

ful of cold stares.

Tom is gregarious and seems not to even notice the mood of the room. "Just see me as a dating service. I'm here to arrange for your computer to talk to our computer. You never know what wild and wonderful things can happen when you get two computers talking!"

Steve winces. It's not even a good joke, and no one in the room smiles. He wishes he could go back to the day he was called into the president's office when he was first told about EDI and See-Saw Jeans. He wishes he could just start over, and this time he'd do everything right. Problem is, he thinks, I still don't know what "right" is.

What is right?

*How should Steve have started?*



# INSTRUCTORS' NOTES

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See-Saw Jeans is a case about a fictional company that manufactures clothing for children. Although the case is fictional, the situation it represents is very true to the experiences of many companies that have struggled to implement various aspects of technology into their companies.

## CASE SYNOPSIS

Pete Wilmington, Vice President of Sales for See-Saw Jeans for Kids, has wrapped up a deal with Wal-Mart to carry See-Saw Jeans for Kids in all Wal-Mart stores on a trial basis for the next year. See-Saw Jeans for Kids is a clothing manufacturer with sales of \$41 million, but the Wal-Mart account has the potential of doubling the company's sales. However, Wal-Mart does require the implementation of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), an electronic means of transferring orders, payments, etc.

Pete meets with Oliver Knight, President of See-Saw Jeans for Kids, and Steve Stone, head of the Management Information Systems Department, and receives support for the implementation of EDI in order to get the Wal-Mart account. Knight has now asked Steve to inform the various departments regarding the change.

Steve first visits with the Order and the Accounting Departments, who are unable to understand Steve's technology jargon. They are concerned about computer error, lack of physical records, and tracking payments. Jean Whittenburg, Director of Human Resources suggests that Steve slow down the implementation process and perhaps even appoint a team of employees to help. Steve is characteristically unenthused. The next morning, Steve meets with the Finance, Marketing, and Production Departments. Again, Steve is met with much hostility and chooses to ignore several questions that are posed to him.

In a final desperate attempt to get all the departments to understand why See-Saw Jeans for Kids needs to implement EDI, Steve calls in Tom Stoy from Wal-Mart to try to persuade everyone as to the merits of EDI. By now, the employees have already heard enough, and are not willing to listen to Tom Stoy, even if he is from Wal-Mart. Steve wishes he could go back to the day when he first heard about EDI and the Wal-Mart account and start over doing things the right way. The problem is, Steve still doesn't know what the "right way" is.

## CASE OBJECTIVE

The case examines the problems frequently encountered when the technologically sophisticated

(often referred to as "techies") try to implement that change among those who may be more technologically challenged (non-techies). The case highlights the gap in interests, knowledge, and perspectives between the two groups. Discussion on the lack of understanding each group has of the other becomes a valuable teaching point. This is a particularly valuable lesson for those from technological fields who may one day need to implement technological change among those who actively fear the outcome of such change.

The case and subsequent discussion lends itself to an effective exploration of the differences between techies and non-techies and how each side can better understand and work with the other.

## ALLOCATED TIME

While the case can be assigned in advance, it is intentionally short enough to be distributed and read in class. This assures everyone will have read the case prior to the discussion. Students can typically read the case in 20 minutes. Discussion can then be opened up to the large group or, to encourage participation by quieter students, the case can first be discussed in small groups. The instructor should allow 10-15 minutes of small group discussion and then 10-15 minutes of discussion in the larger group.

## AUTHOR'S EXPERIENCES IN USING THE CASE

The See-Saw Jeans case has been used in a wide variety of classes and even workshop settings. The author has used it in organizational behavior classes as well as upper-level classes in our Business-Engineering-Technology major. Essentially, it works in any format or class in which the instructor wants to discuss the implementation of change, specifically the implementation of technological change among those who may be uncomfortable with that change. It is not designed as a case on technology but rather a case on the behavior of people facing technological change.

The case can be used as a stand-alone case and be completed in 50 minutes or less. If desired, the instructor can further develop the concepts of the case through additional experiential exercises and discussion.

My favorite way of using the case begins with an exercise designed to help students experience some of the emotions of those undergoing change in their environment. In the exercise, I have all the students get up and come to the front of the class-

room (assuming space is available). Once they are all at the front, I break out my CD player and tell them I am going to teach them how to line dance, specifically we do the Electric Slide. (Understand that the only time I line dance is when I do this exercise, so only a minimal level of skill is necessary.) I show them once full speed. Then I stop the music and teach them the basic steps. Then we practice over and over until most of the group can do the dance. In the debriefing, we talked about their comfort levels in doing the dance. Some already knew it and were fine. Others didn't know the dance but were open to the experience. Some will hover around the outer edges and only minimally participate. In the debriefing (when asked), they talk about the fear of stepping on others' toes (failing). They don't want to look foolish in front of their peers. They had much rather be at their desks where they know what to expect and they know how to do their job. "This," I tell them, "is how people feel when change is implemented." In this situation, those who know how to do the Electric Slide represent the techies. On the opposite end of the spectrum are those unwilling to try for fear of failing. After processing this for a bit, then I break out the See-Saw Jeans case.

A detailed discussion of the See-Saw Jeans case follows in the next section. After discussing the case and if time allows, the case serves as a nice springboard into a discussion of the basic philosophy and departmental culture of engineering, IS and other technological departments compared to more business-related departments. For example, "What criteria does each use to measure success?" "How does the training received in most business schools differ from that in engineering and other technological fields?" "Do people self-select into those fields because of some basic personality differences?" "How does each field perceive the other (stereotypes are allowed)? What, in fact, is true of those perceptions?" If the class has students from both engineering disciplines and business disciplines, this discussion is most interesting if the two groups are separated. (If there are enough students from the business disciplines, the MIS students can join the engineering students for a more balanced representation.) They should answer the questions in their small groups and then come back to the large group for what can be a rather lively discussion of their differences.

I have had great fun in teaching and helping students experience and better understand the differences between techies and non-techies. I hope these insights can provide some assistance for those who may choose to use See-Saw Jeans.

## CASE DISCUSSION

Someone once said something to the effect, "Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow is unknown. All we

have is the present." In juxtaposition is Donald Davis' statement in the first line of his book, *Managing Technological Innovation*, "Technological innovation abruptly destroys the present while creating the future." These statements are at the heart of this case.

In the See-Saw Jeans case, the implementation of EDI is perceived by MIS Department Head Steve Stone as creating a new future, one that is exciting and full of potential. For most of the departments, however, EDI will simply destroy the present and lead to an unknown and uncertain tomorrow.

## PART I

In Part I of the case, Pete Wilmington, Vice President of Sales, has informed Oliver Knight, President of See-Saw Jeans that a deal has been concluded with Wal-Mart that may double the company's sales of children's jeans. Mr. Knight assigns the task of implementing EDI to Steve Stone, head of the Management Information Systems Department. Pete thinks he sees a look of excitement go across Steve's face. But as for himself, he is relieved the ball is no longer in his court. Part I ends with the questions, "Should Pete have been worried?" "Why was Mr. Knight not worried?" and "Why was Steve Stone excited?"

In working out the deal with Wal-Mart, Pete is aware of the potential benefits of such a relationship with such a large chain of retail stores. However, Pete comes from the Marketing Department, which is typically not filled with people who are technologically sophisticated. He likely foresees the problems that will occur as changes are implemented.

So why was Mr. Knight not worried? We might conclude that he trusts his IS team to implement the needed technology. More likely, though, he simply is looking at the bottom line—the potential of doubled sales in a short period of time with relatively little effort within the company. The case notes that he is a "hands-off" kind of company president, simply expecting his employees to do their jobs. Regardless, he is most certainly naive as to the impact that change and even the DISCUSSION of change will have on his employees.

Why was Steve Stone excited? Coming from a technology-driven field, he is very comfortable with the idea of technological change. As a student in MIS, he was taught about EDI but has never had the opportunity to implement it. The case is unclear, but he may have had little opportunity to implement many of the MIS concepts he studied. Now is an opportunity to "strut his stuff," so to speak—to show people just how great this change can be.

## PART II

In Part II, Steve visits with Wal-Mart to get all the specifics needed to implement EDI, and then he begins the task of meeting with department heads and staffs to tell them how the implementation of EDI will affect them and their jobs. Instead of the enthusiasm he expected, Steve is surprised to be confronted with a great deal of hostility and an open lack of cooperation in implementing EDI. Stunned, he asks himself, "Now what? Why are people acting this way?" Part II closes with the question for the reader, "How would you answer Steve?"

In general, people's first reaction to change is resistance. As suggested in the earlier quotes, change eliminates the present: those things we are most comfortable with. Generally, we know how to do our jobs and are comfortable doing them. However, technological change removes that comfort zone. We may now be asked to do things we don't know how to do. There may be an element of fear of failure for many non-techies in this case. "What if I can't do the aspects of the job that may now be required? What will my colleagues think of me? Will I be fired?"

For employees and managers accustomed to working hands-on with numbers, production schedules and billing, EDI presents a completely new challenge. What happens when something goes wrong? What if the numbers suddenly don't make sense or a mistake has been made or, god forbid, the system crashes? In such instances, these formerly competent managers and staff are often at the mercy of the IS Department. Not only do the non-techies struggle with the new technology, but constant redesign and improvement means that users may never develop a level of comfort with the technology.

All of this can be tremendously intimidating to the non-techie. As Joseph Coates, coauthor of the book *2025: Scenarios of U.S. and Global Society Reshaped by Science and Technology* has said, "For the old-line manager, all of this is very traumatic. The methods and techniques that got him where he is are no longer valid."

Additionally, Steve has hinted that some departments may need fewer people with the change. That adds the fear of job loss. Employees may ask themselves, "If we implement EDI, will I still have a job in two months?" Seymour Siegel, Director of the Pepperdine University Technology Management Program, feels there may be some validity to those concerns, "The nature of work 10 years ago was very different than today, and the changes will only accelerate over the next decade. This new workplace requires people who are comfortable with computers and technology, and can use them to work in different ways. Unfortunately a lot of people

are going to be left behind. One of the biggest challenges for employers, HR professionals and the rest of society will be to deal with this issue from a social policy point of view." That fear of being left behind is likely a major contributing factor to people's reactions to the proposed changes at See-Saw Jeans.

Finally, because of his comfort with technology and his excitement about the pending change, Steve walked into the meetings oblivious to the concerns he would encounter. Thus, he was unprepared for the questions and the attitudes he encountered.

## Part III

In the third and final part of the case, a plant-wide meeting has been called in which Steve introduces Tom Stoy from Wal-Mart to try to convince the See-Saw Jeans employees of the merits of EDI and the contract with Wal-Mart. Unfortunately, Tom is not any more empathetic to the concerns of the employees than Steve was and the meeting is doomed to failure. As the case closes, Steve wishes he could just start all over and this time do everything right. Problem is, he thinks, I still don't know what "right" is. Readers are left with the final questions, "What is right? How should Steve have started?"

The first mistake was made by Company President Oliver Knight. While Steve is the most knowledgeable champion of the EDI project, the decision was the president's. He must come out in vocal and visible support of EDI. Without Mr. Knight's support, managers and employees alike feel emboldened to make Steve's job difficult. Knight's support needs to be personally stated multiple times, with recognition and appreciation going to those departments which are helping to make a smooth transition.

Second, Steve needs to understand the power and politics involved in the situation. Scientists and engineers often scorn company politics and devote their energies to more satisfying activities. Steve needs to identify the power brokers and those most respected within the organization and gain their support. To do so, he needs to be able to speak their language and place a priority on addressing their needs and concerns first. That may mean some needed coaching and homework for Steve.

Third, Steve needs to be empathetic to the fears and concerns of the employees of See-Saw Jeans. The emotional reactions will inevitably occur. (This is where I refer back to the line dancing.) Steve needs to be prepared to address the concerns of those he is trying to persuade. And he needs to realize those concerns will not always be rational.

Research shows that the introduction of new

technology or the transition into a job with new technology, increases anxiety and stress levels among affected employees. However, steps can be taken to reduce these typical reactions. Classroom training, hands-on experience, coaching from supervisors or peers can all help to lower employees' stress levels.

Certainly Steve's technical skills are important in this situation. A failure of the process or the creation of a system that is not user friendly will further dampen its acceptance. However, Steve should realize that the most important skills here may not be technical skills, but interpersonal skills. This softer side of management is not often taught in the technical fields, but Badawy argues that interpersonal skills are the most important of all skills for today's technical managers. "The manager, to be effective, must interact with, motivate, influence and communicate with people. Managing people effectively is the most critical and most intricate problem for the (technical) manager of today," he writes in his article *The Role of the Technical Manager*.

Finally, Davis argues that employees outside the MIS Department should be involved in the implementation process. "Only infrequently are those responsible for the development and use of technologies knowledgeable about the social and organizational factors that limit their effectiveness. Seldom, for example, are human resource professionals involved in the planning and implementation of new technologies, yet implementation will almost surely cause severe disruptions among employees." Untended, those disruptions can turn into employee feelings of disenfranchisement.

Employees who feel they have some input into the process are more likely to support the process. This doesn't mean they get to over-rule the president of the company. However, their commitment to the change should increase as they are given the opportunity to be involved. This involvement might be in the design of the new technology or in its implementation. Maybe some employees can be designated as coaches and given the first training on the system. They can then serve as trainers for others.

In her book, *Managing Technological Change: A Strategic Partnership Approach*, Carol J. Haddad argues that organizations miss opportunities for increased performance and technological success if they fail to engage employees in strategic technology planning, design and decision-making. This case illustrates the value of that integrated approach to management of technology—one that not only brings together the disciplines of engineering and business management, but also integrates technical and interpersonal skills.

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