



STUDYDADDY

Get Homework Help From Expert Tutor

[Get Help](#)

Westco Enterprises

Kyle Roberts retreated to his den at home near Evansville, Indiana. It was a Sunday night in July, and he and his family had just returned from a week of vacation at a friend's lake house in Michigan. Kyle and his wife had agreed not to check their respective company e-mails during the vacation to provide a much-needed break away from their jobs, but now Kyle decided to read his messages so that he could hit the ground running Monday morning.

An eighteen-year veteran of Westco Enterprises, Kyle was promoted to the position of Vice President of Marketing two months ago. He began his career with Westco in 1994 as a Marketing Analyst. After earning his MBA by taking classes at night and on weekends, he took on assignments in other areas of the company including positions in finance and logistics. Kyle had just moved back to Westco headquarters in Evansville after four years of running Westco's plant in a suburb of Chicago. As head of the marketing organization, Kyle has five managers reporting to him, and a total staff of eighteen people. (See Organization Chart.)

Westco was started as a family-owned business in Evansville in 1952. The company was run for many years by its founder, Donald West. Westco began as a supplier of parts to the auto industry. Later, the company secured defense contracts with the federal government. Over the past two decades, the company has diversified by providing auto parts and supplies to retailers such as Pep Boys and Autozone. Ownership of Westco passed down through two generations until the founder's grandson, Edward West, decided in 1995 to take the growing company public. Westco employees were concerned for their jobs during the recent economic downturn. Westco implemented a hiring freeze at the time, but with the bailout of the auto industry, it weathered the storm and layoffs were avoided. The company now has nearly 6,000 employees.

As usual, Kyle's inbox was full. This evening, his attention was drawn to two particular messages from the past week from employees who report to John Tucker, a manager in Kyle's marketing organization:

To: Kyle Roberts

From: Susan Thompson

Kyle,

I know you're on vacation and I hope you and your family are having a good time. However, when you get back, I really need to speak with you. I had a disappointing conversation this morning with John Tucker during my midyear performance review. His performance feedback for the first half was fair enough, but I'm really upset about the discussion we had regarding my development plan. I've shared with John my interest in participating in the MDP (Westco's Management Development Program). I need a management recommendation to get into the program, but despite my solid performance, John hasn't seemed supportive of my participation in the program. Today he had the audacity to say that he thought the MDP was "more suited to younger employees." I nearly hit the roof! I'll contact Joan to get on your calendar next week when you return.

Thanks,

Susan

Westco Enterprises

To: Kyle Roberts

From: Oscar Hernandez

Kyle,

I want to use Westco's "open door" policy and schedule a meeting with you as soon as possible. I'm not sure if you are aware of this, but I was interested in the Retail Promotions Manager position that opened up last month after Steve McGee retired. The entire conversation I had with John regarding the position was very awkward. Later, when he told me that he decided to offer the position to Adam Donaldson, who we had to relocate from the Detroit sales office, he said that he didn't think this job was a good fit for "someone like me." I pressed him about what that meant, and he went on and on about me being better suited to working on internal projects, but he never really explained why I was passed over for that position. I've been through similar situations with other employers in the past and I had hoped that things would be different at Westco.

Oscar

Kyle muttered, "How am I going to implement the marketing programs I was hired to lead when I have to spend so much time dealing with all of these people issues?" He turned off his computer, deciding to address these e-mail messages when he returned to the office the next day.

In the morning, Kyle worked with his administrative assistant Joan Edison to clear some time in his schedule in the afternoon. Despite having to prepare for a budget meeting and a review of some proposed advertising campaigns, he wanted to speak with Susan and Oscar as soon as possible. At a department meeting during his first week as Vice President, Kyle had told the marketing staff that he took employee satisfaction seriously. He thought this would be a good opportunity to demonstrate that commitment. Kyle also left a message for John Tucker that he would be meeting with the two employees today, and that he hoped they could get together the following day to discuss those conversations.

Only leading the department for two months, Kyle was still learning about the people in his organization. His approach to the afternoon meetings would be to acknowledge the employees' concerns and ask a few questions, but primarily to listen and learn as much as he could about the situation. Kyle and Susan had worked together briefly in the past and Susan had little hesitation about sharing her concerns: "Look, it's true that I put my career on the back burner for a while as I worked part-time when Tommy was struggling at school. You know I'm a single mom and I just had to give him more attention. But now, Tommy's off to college and I'm ready to re-dedicate myself to my career. I'm only 48. I've still got a lot of runway ahead of me. I've always had stellar performance reviews and my experience should make me an ideal candidate for the MDP. I need a manager who is going to support my development, not block it."

Susan continued, "I think John recommended Bob Nelson for the MDP. I like Bob, and I'm happy for him, but he's got a lot less experience than I do and I can't think of any way in which he's more qualified than I am..... I'm wondering now why Jennifer Adamson really left our department and Westco last year. She

said that she hadn't been looking for a new job and that Delco contacted her out of nowhere, but now I wonder if that's the truth. She was so talented and her career just wasn't going anywhere here..... John doesn't seem to take women seriously – I can't remember him promoting any women in the past.... He once told me I should spend more time with the rest of the staff. A lot of the guys, and it's usually just the guys, go to happy hour on Thursdays after work. I would've liked to join them, but I had to get home for my son."

"I hate to say it but I think John is just very old school in his attitudes. I once overheard him making jokes with the guys about the picture Denny Morton has on his desk of Denny with his partner Kevin from their commitment ceremony. I realize Denny works for Andy Bowman, rather than John, but John's been around here for almost 30 years and he carries a lot of weight with the younger managers like Andy and Allen." Susan concluded by saying, "Sometimes it feels like people are living in the past around here."

Later, Kyle met with Oscar, who, after some initial trepidation, also opened up and shared his thoughts. "I came to Evansville and Westco about four years ago. My wife Beatriz took a job as a professor at the university here. I was grateful to find a position with Westco following our move from Oklahoma City.....I've been here four years now, but I still don't feel appreciated. John is friendly enough outwardly, but I don't think he's comfortable with having a Latino employee representing his organization with important customers. No, he's never come out and said that, but I can read between the lines. After four years of him not recognizing my ability, I'm fed up with watching less talented people pass me by in this company."

Oscar then shared some of his background with Kyle, "After coming to the U.S. from Mexico with my family when I was nine years old, I went to high school in a small town in Oklahoma..... Even though I was in the top 10 percent of the class, the guidance counselor suggested I go to trade school or learn how to do landscaping. I ignored that advice and even got a partial scholarship to Oklahoma State. That's where I met Beatriz..... After graduating from OSU, I worked for three years in industrial sales. At that company, I had to continually fight the perception that I was less capable than my co-workers. Since I couldn't get assigned to any of the prime customers where I could excel and make better money, I left and went to school full-time and got my MBA."

"After getting the MBA, I landed a marketing assignment at Anderson Controls, where I worked for just under a year before moving with Beatriz to Evansville..... Unfortunately, I'm finding that Westco is similar to my first company. John still doesn't assign me to critical projects and he fails to recognize that I'm capable of representing Westco with clients and moving into a position with real responsibility..... I thought of reaching out to other Latino employees about their experiences here, but I discovered that except for the plants in Detroit and near Chicago, there aren't any Latinos at the management level."

After the meeting with Oscar, Kyle was still compiling his thoughts about his discussions when there was a knock at his door. "How did things go with Susan and Oscar?" asked John Tucker. Kyle saw no reason to wait until tomorrow to meet with John, so he welcomed him into his office and summarized some of what the two employees shared with him.

John had a decidedly different view of the two situations. "Susan hasn't shown the same commitment to Westco that employees like Bob Nelson have. That's why I recommended him for the training.....Putting someone in the Management Development Program is a significant investment. We need to know they're going to be around long enough to get the payback on that investment. Putting someone like Susan in the MDP just doesn't make sense.....I've never excluded anyone from events at work or after work. If they don't want to participate, that's their decision. People have to assume some responsibility and take charge of their own careers."

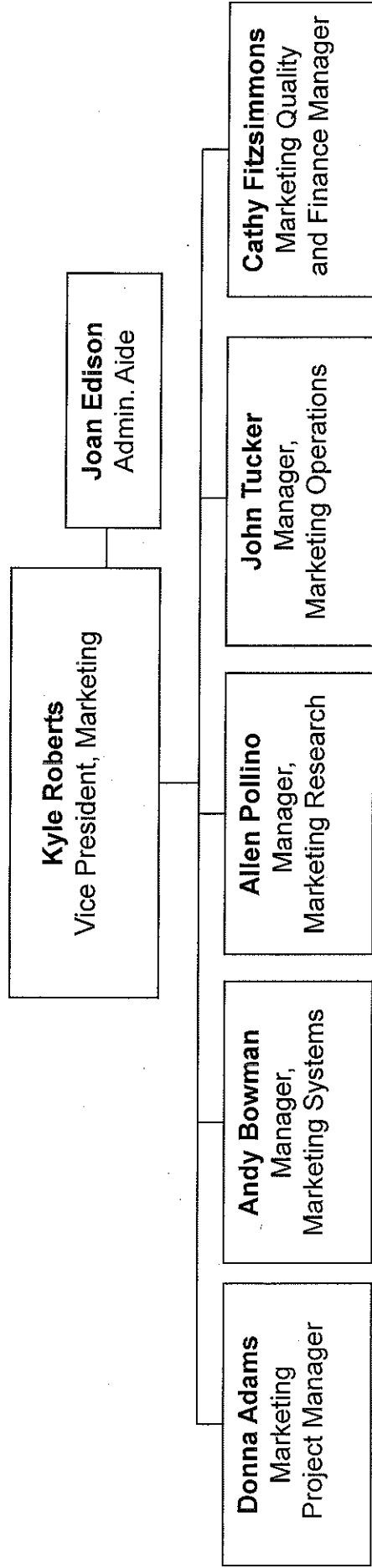
John went on to talk about Westco's customers. "It's taken years to build some of the relationships with our customers.....Sure Westco has a conservative reputation but we're in a conservative industry in a conservative part of the country. Perceptions matter. Can you imagine having someone with an accent like Oscar's in front of our key customers making a critical presentation?.....Oscar was hired four years ago while I was on leave for my back surgery. Steve McGee hired Oscar while he was temporarily filling in for me. I suspect that Human Resources pushed hard on Steve to hire Oscar over some other candidates.....I don't treat Oscar any differently than any other employee. He just needs more time to develop and demonstrate that he can handle bigger assignments that are appropriate for him."

"Just because someone thinks they're ready for the next step," John continued, "doesn't mean they've got the right skills, performance, or background for the job. I've got a long track record of success and I'm not going to put Westco at risk by placing someone in an assignment or a management training program that's not the right fit."

After a few more minutes of discussion, John asked Kyle, "Well, based on what you've heard today, where do we go from here?"

Mr. Rocco A. Manzo
Department of Management
Farmer School of Business
Miami University

WESTCO CORPORATE MARKETING



David Johnson
Systems Analyst

Anne Palumbo
Systems Analyst

Dennis Morton
Systems Analyst

Leonard Nguyen
Systems Analyst

Betty Reynolds
Research Assistant – Retail

Trevor Baldwin
Research Assistant -
Automotive

Chantrelle Jones
Research Assistant – New
Markets

Adam Donaldson
Retail Promotions Manager

Oscar Hernandez
Advertising Channels
Manager

Jim Hammonds
Public Relations Manager

Susan Thompson
Marketing Analyst – Public
Sector

Bob Nelson
Marketing Analyst –
Automotive/Retail



STUDYDADDY

Get Homework Help From Expert Tutor

[Get Help](#)