

KATHRYN

The executives couldn't agree on which of Kathryn's features presented the biggest problem. There were so many.

First, she was old. Ancient, at least by Silicon Valley standards. Kathryn was fifty-seven.

More important, she had no real high-tech experience other than serving as a board member of Trinity Systems, a large technology company in San Francisco. Most of her career had been spent in operational roles with decidedly low-tech companies, the most notable of which was an automobile manufacturer.

But more than her age or experience, Kathryn just didn't seem to fit the DecisionTech culture.

She had started her career in the military, then married a teacher and basketball coach at a local high school. After raising three boys, she taught seventh grade for a few years until she discovered her affinity for business.

At the age of thirty-seven, Kathryn enrolled in a three-year business school night program, which she completed a semester early at Cal State Hayward, which was not ex-

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actly Harvard or Stanford. She then spent the next fifteen years in and around manufacturing, until her retirement at the age of fifty-four.

The fact that Kathryn was a woman was never an issue for the executive team; two of them were women themselves. With much of their collective experience coming from the somewhat progressive world of high tech, most had worked for women at some time during their careers. But even if her gender had been a problem for anyone on the team, it would have been dwarfed by her glaring cultural mismatch.

There was just no mistaking the fact that, on paper, Kathryn was an old school, blue-collarish executive. That presented a stark contrast to the DecisionTech executives and middle managers, most of whom had little experience working outside of the Valley. Some of them even liked to brag that they hadn't worn a suit—outside of a wedding—since graduating from college.

It was no surprise that after first reading her resumé, board members questioned the Chairman's sanity when he suggested they hire Kathryn. But he eventually wore them down.

For one, the board believed their Chairman when he flat out assured them that Kathryn would succeed. Second, he had been known to have extremely good instincts about people, notwithstanding the problem with Jeff. He certainly wouldn't make two mistakes in a row, they reasoned.

But perhaps most important of all (though no one would

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

admit it), DecisionTech was in a desperate situation. The Chairman insisted that there weren't too many capable executives willing to take on such a messy job given the current state of affairs at the scarred company. "We should consider ourselves lucky to have such a capable leader as Kathryn available," he successfully argued.

Whether or not that was true, the Chairman was determined to hire someone he knew and could trust. When he called Kathryn to tell her about the job, he certainly could not have known that he would be regretting the decision just a few weeks later.