



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT KOZHIKODE



Case Study

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A Stark Challenge

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Please contact the corresponding authors, if you would like to access the full case study.

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A Stark Challenge

Abstract:

The case deals about how differences in personality traits and interpersonal needs can influence strategic decision-making:

The case study revolves around Stark Industries, a pioneering technology company founded in 1965. As Stark approaches its 55th anniversary, it faces a pivotal decision - whether to invest heavily in AI software development or double down on hardware expertise for AI applications. This decision will significantly impact Stark's future trajectory and must be navigated by the leadership team: CEO Mark Thompson, CFO Laura Reed, Head of R&D Michael Stevens, and COO Sarah Lewis. Each leader brings a unique personality, disposition, and set of interpersonal needs that color their perspective.

Mark is amiable and sociable, with a strong need for inclusion that could make him reluctant to make unpopular decisions. Laura is highly conscientious and results-driven, with a high need for control that gives her a reputation for being tough but effective. Michael is passionate about innovation though prone to stress, navigating between his need for inclusion and desire to push boundaries. Sarah is agreeable and collaborative, with a high need for affection that makes her a unifying presence but could undermine her authority.

As the leadership team evaluates the AI strategic shift, their differing personality traits, needs for control, inclusion, and affection will likely create tensions. Some may prioritize social harmony over difficult changes. Others may push through with less concern for bringing others along. Resolving this pivotal decision will require each leader to leverage their strengths while being aware of how differences in disposition can facilitate or hinder effective strategic choices.

Ultimately, the case highlights how the interpersonal dynamics and psychological makeup of a leadership team can profoundly impact an organization's ability to adapt and make high-stakes decisions, even when solid data and rational analysis are available. Managing these human factors will be critical as Stark aims to transition successfully into the AI era while upholding its innovative legacy.



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