



### **CONFIDENTIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR JAMIE JACKSON**

You are the Vice President for Programming for a large software company, heading the computer game division. Your division has a broad product range—everything from high-testosterone war games like "Galactik Karnage" to complex mystery games like "Enigma Island" to kid's games like "Learn to Count Your Animal Friends." You have seven creative teams, each headed by a Programming Manager. As Vice President you coordinate and assign work, review progress and programs, handle any disputes among the managers, and act as the primary link to the higher levels of management. Right now you have a serious personnel problem. It all started with an idea you had for a new program.

Every year you have a division retreat where you and the Managers spend a weekend thinking about where you are and where you should be going. One of the sessions is a brainstorming afternoon devoted to coming up with ideas for new products. You had been thinking about what people already like to do online, and you came up with the idea that a program could combine online gambling (poker and blackjack and the like) with sports betting all in one program to simulate the opportunities people have for entertainment in a casino. The program could be linked to people's Facebook accounts so that two friends could "go to a casino" together, post updates that would promote the program, and comment on a friend's big winnings.

It was such a good idea that you wanted to work on it yourself. Sadly, your schedule would never permit it. Since one of the groundrules of the brainstorming sessions is that the ideas belong to the whole group, you were able to choose any manager to head the project. Of course, they all wanted to work on it. You gave this choice project to Allison Shore, your newest team leader. You thought she might bring a fresh perspective to the company's line of gambling games. The other managers uniformly felt that Allison wasn't qualified because she had the least programming experience and had never gambled. They had their own ideas for the program—they play poker together every few weeks (you sometimes attend).

Assigning it to your least experienced manager was something of a risk. On the other hand, the other managers were busy with existing projects. Allison had just finished "Uh Oh. . . Trouble!," a program designed to teach children when and how to contact the police or fire department, and she was ready for another assignment. Allison is creative and clever—she was one of your top programmers before her promotion—and you wanted Casino to be innovative.

This isn't the first time you've taken a chance on Allison. She joined the division almost three years ago and immediately established herself as an outstanding programmer. When a manager position opened up a year ago, she was one of three finalists for promotion. You had some reservations about moving her to management—Allison is quite young. Not only is she fairly new to the company, but you're not sure she has a mature sense of how to deal professionally with colleagues. Still, the personnel department stressed the need to bring more women and minorities into management positions. The other six managers are male, so you decided to give Allison a shot.

Her move to management has not gone unnoticed, in more ways than one. Much of the gossip and talk in

the office has focused on her sudden change in appearance. As a programmer, Allison worked around the clock and would wear the same thing everyone else wears—a pair of jeans and a t-shirt with tennis shoes. Since moving to management she's acquired a very upscale image. She now comes to work in tights, a bodysuit and long jacket, or a tight-fitting turtleneck, skirt and very high heels. The talk in the office sometimes centers on what Allison's going to wear next. What she wears isn't inappropriate for an office, it just attracts attention and that attention is serving to further alienate her from her colleagues. They seem to talk *about* her more than they are talking *with* her.

Unfortunately, your concerns about her management ability also turned out to be well founded. Allison has always been direct, some might even say harsh, in her commentary on other people's work. Once you were walking past her office and heard her talking with Bruce, one of her programmers, about a program that would teach kids geography. She practically shouted, "Your work is an embarrassment to this company!" That sort of commentary might be all right coming from a programmer, but a manager needs to provide her subordinates with constructive criticism, and at the same time keep them happy and productive. In her first year, two programmers have left Allison's five-person team, apparently because they found working with her too difficult. Bruce reported that Allison was demanding and critical of his work, and had very strong opinions, demanding that he design programs "her way." While it is common practice for managers to map out the framework for a program, programmers are usually given a fair amount of leeway within that framework to be creative (this, in fact, was one of Allison's strengths as a programmer). More often than not Allison rejected Bruce's modifications to her vision for the program. Transferring a programmer is not uncommon; personality differences are bound to crop up occasionally. But when the second programmer, Bill, quit the company so fast you didn't even know he had left, you started to wonder whether Allison has the skills this position requires.

The other managers have also complained about Allison's abrasive approach. The Casino project is suffering because of this alienation. Most of the managers consult each other and bounce ideas off of each other on a daily basis. After you assigned Allison the Casino project the other managers forwarded their ideas and recommendations. Allison rejected them all. She went to the marketing department and asked them to find out about recent trends in the gambling industry. This was not a bad idea, but you wish she'd asked you in advance. Instead, you got a call from the Vice President of Marketing complaining that you were squeezing their already hard-pressed resources. It was embarrassing for another vice president to tell you what your own subordinate was doing. If there was going to be division collaboration, it should have gone through you as a matter of professional courtesy.

Last week Allison circulated the Casino prototype to you and the other managers. Miffed that Allison didn't use their ideas or consult with them, they were probably unfairly harsh in their evaluations. Their comments included phrases like "not competitive enough," "too cutesie," "simplistic," and "boring, boring, boring." The prototype does have problems. You suspect that Allison has seriously mis-identified the target audience. She built the product around a "family entertainment" theme. While Las Vegas vacationers are often families with children, the consensus of the program managers seems to be that online gamblers will most likely be young, single men. Thus, the other managers' recommendations for standard graphics like cocktail waitresses and cigar-chomping dealers were probably wise. Unfortunately, Allison failed to consult her colleagues and produced a family-oriented product.

Perhaps this is your fault for giving her the account without adequate training. Until this project, she has been working exclusively on educational programs for children. She's good at creating programs that teach kids to play and provide entertaining, colorful graphics. Maybe she just wasn't ready for the adult market. You wish you could have helped her, but you've been very busy. Most of your time for staff counseling

has been taken up with annual performance reviews. You plan to move her back to the kids' games market as soon as this project is out the door.

You put off Allison's review in the hope that she would score a big success with Casino and you could give her a raise. Allison is currently paid \$67,000. That's a lot for someone with her length of service with the company, but it is significantly less than the other managers are paid. Most of them had more years with the company when they were promoted to management and so they started at \$69,000 or so, and continued to move up after their first year. Scott, who has been a manager for four years, gets \$82,000. The others make between \$74,000 and \$80,000 depending on their level of experience, and how much their programs have made for the company.

You did look up Allison's numbers, and the revenue per program is below average (see salary and revenue table, page 4). To some extent, this isn't her fault. Games for adults are more closely related to the company's other products (financial spreadsheets and word processing programs), which means their marketing is usually more extensive and successful. In addition, the market for educational games is smaller and the profit margins correspondingly thinner. You were hoping that Casino would compensate for this and give Allison a shot at evening out her revenue figures.

Because of tight deadlines on getting Casino to the production division, yesterday you asked Scott if he would be willing to review the program and work with Allison on it. Scott should steer her in the right direction.

You've asked Allison to stop in this afternoon to talk about the Casino program, and how you will go forward. On the one hand, you like Allison. You think she's a very good programmer, and you feel she adds something different to the mix of skills and perspectives in the division. However, there's no denying that some aspects of her performance leave a lot to be desired. If she can't shape up, it's hard to see how she can keep the job she has. You heard from an acquaintance at a software company in New York that one of their managers, a woman with solid programming and some managerial experience, is relocating to your area and is on the job market. Whether or not things work out with Allison, you're interested in setting up an interview with this woman to see whether she might be a good fit on your team.

Prepare for your meeting with Allison.

**Confidential salary and revenue figures:**

<b>Manager</b>	<b>Yrs w/ Co</b>	<b>Appointed Manager</b>	<b>Projects</b>	<b>Program Revenue</b>	<b>Salary</b>
Scott	8	4 yrs ago	Immortal Combat	\$867,000	\$82,000
Otto	7	3 yrs ago	Galactik Karnage	\$664,000	\$80,000
John	6.5	3 yrs ago	Amazon Ant Attack	\$480,000	\$78,500
Denis	6	2 yrs ago	Enigma Island	\$392,000	\$76,000
Miguel	5	2 yrs ago	Conquest: World Domination Edition	\$310,000	\$74,000
Eric	5.5	2 yrs ago	Football Fever	\$280,000	\$74,000
Allison	4	1 yr ago	International GeoGraphic Uh Oh. . . Trouble!	\$145,000 \$ 28,000	\$67,000