

Case Study: Can Nathan avoid being downsized

By Naseem Mariam

Case Study: Can Nathan avoid being downsized

Naseem Mariam
naseemm@pm4all.com

Project Management Made Easy as 123 <http://www.123projectmanagement.com>

ABSTRACT: This case study depicts Nathan's feelings and thoughts when he was downsized. It describes the actions that contributed to Nathan's downfall. Nathan learns that by avoiding these mistakes, he can ensure he is never fired.

=====
TITLE: Case Study: Can Nathan avoid being downsized
AUTHOR: Naseem Mariam, Project Management Coach
WORD COUNT: 1767 words
URL: <http://www.123projectmanagement.com/self-case-study-downsized.html>
MAIL: self04-articles@sendfree.com

Conditions of use: This article may be freely published as long as (1) the article is not altered in any way, (2) the author information at the end of the article remains intact. If you use it, please notify <mailto:naseemm@pm4all.com>

=====
Can Nathan avoid being downsized
by Naseem Mariam, Project Management Coach
=====

Nathan could not believe what he was hearing. He shook his head from side to side to clear his head and throw away this news. All he could think of was that his young wife of 5 years was at last pregnant. Just yesterday they had celebrated this with a bang. And now this ...

Why? Why did God have to be so cruel? Did He have to send bad tidings every time He gave you something good? After 5 years of married life finally his wife had conceived and they had not even informed anyone about it. Should he tell his family the good news or this news first?

Now they would be forced to return to the ancestral house and live with his parents. And he hated the loss of

independence more than anything else. The loss of privacy and the new-found togetherness be a great pain.

His boss was nice and calm and supporting about the whole thing. She seemed more upset than he was. She was raving and ranting and scolding the management for not giving him another chance. Another chance - when he had not yet enjoyed the fruits of this job: it was ironic!

Anyhow it had really been a struggle for him to keep up with this company. The frequent changes in domain areas, the constant re-learning had been tough. Every six months there was a make and break of projects. Always back to college. That too without proper teachers. This self-learning stuff was surely over-rated. Constantly having to learn new things was taxing him too much.

So maybe God really did know what was better for him. His boss was explaining: The company is going through rough times. As you are aware many of our customers have aborted their projects due to the dot com burst. So Puneet Software Systems has decided to layoff a few staff to remain competitive by cutting costs. I know that you have been improving a lot especially in the last month after your Performance Appraisal. However your past cannot be washed away. Perception of you in the minds of the Top Management is what is deciding who stays and who leaves today.

Nathan wanted to scream back at her: "Why did the company not have the courtesy to inform him earlier?" Just 2 months ago he had been offered a job in Bangalore and he had declined. "Or at least now why can they not give 3 months notice?" Asking him to resign with immediate notice was what hurt him the most.

Thank Heavens he had not yet taken out a house loan - the shame of giving up the new house would have been too much to bear! It was so indecent. What could he say to his younger brother who was earning less because he had not concentrated on his studies. Now that he had lost his job. That too in the aftermath of the dot com burst getting a job would be more difficult.

Being downsized in the midst of an industry downslide is an awful thing to happen. Especially when you are looking forward eagerly to being a new father.

What was that about 'perception' the boss was talking about? He was good. He had been a top ranking student and had got good grades throughout his school and college life. It was his younger brother who was the wastrel and lazy-bones in his family. Naresh was the black sheep of the family. He had put in minimum effort and now all he had was his own

business.

His grades were so low that he had not got past the competition. Therefore his parents and grand-parents had shelled out some money and set him up with a STD/ISD booth in Salem. That was 2 years ago. Now Naresh was getting a steady income from his business. And that too he took home a greater percentage of his earnings. That was the advantage of having your own business - less taxes.

Enough of thinking about Naresh: now lets come back to seeing what best Nathan could do to salvage the situation. What should he do to ensure that in the next company he went to he would not get the royal kick once more? He must learn more about these concepts of 'Being perceived as a valuable asset by Top Management'. He must remember to ask his boss Michelle more about it.

Nathan asks Michelle: "Can you please help me with this 'being valuable' and 'being perceived as valuable' fundas? Life is so confusing to me and I feel numb in one part of my brain. However the other part of me says that there is a lesson I must learn from this incident in my life".

Michelle was very patient and explained the following clearly and concisely. Read what Michelle had to say:
<http://www.123projectmanagement.com/self-layoff-downsize.html>

Nathan had more questions and doubts than ever. Could Michelle give a few concrete examples, please?

Being valuable

~~~~~

Nathan had moved from his low-paying government job as a Junior Programmer to join the high-profile private firm Puneet Software Systems. Nathan did realize that Puneet was predominantly into IP-related products and his experience was more in the Telecom area. However the HR Manager of Puneet had assured him that Puneet was looking to expand its domain of expertise into telecom areas. Nathan was being specially recruited to fill in the vacuum of telecommunications domain expertise that Puneet currently had.

Nathan had not taken any steps after joining Puneet to rectify this gap in his expertise and that of the projects that the company usually handled. Moreover with the dot com burst affecting all major telecommunications giants, Nathan felt his legs slipping on quick sand. In order to become valuable in your company you should find out where the majority of the projects are being handled, in which domain areas the most lucrative on-site placements occur, what are the skills and knowledge expected by the company of those

who can fill these lucrative on-site positions.

In order to become more valuable to his present company Michelle explained Nathan should have spent a few hours every week attending the in-house training sessions in the new areas. Nathan should henceforth get himself involved in self-learning groups with his peers and exchange knowledge and acquire and re-train himself in areas that the company valued.

Feel valuable

=====

During his past 2 projects Nathan had taken a back seat and allowed youngsters to take over control and command of the projects. Nathan was good. It is true he knew the stuff but he lacked communication skills - both written and oral. He would have a great many ideas but he never voiced them out during the meetings. He would later on discuss his ideas with his friends many of whom would then run over to the boss and narrate the solutions. Now the boss had no way of knowing that the solution had originated from Nathan's brain. Recognition and praise thus went to the wrong person.

The youngsters started growing too big for their boots and Nathan started getting sidelined. The team members would often consult Nathan when they faced trouble in the work assigned to them. Nathan would spend a great deal of time sorting out their problems. As a consequence Nathan's own work would often get delayed.

Nathan often would have self-doubts and lack of confidence. In such times he should practise the techniques of positive thinking and self-motivation outlined in "Project Serenity - How to gain happiness and peace".

Perceived as valuable

=====

Michelle advised Nathan that henceforth he should refer his peers to his boss, get permission to help them and then spend time solving his friends' problems. In this manner the boss will be in a better position to give the credit where it is due. Whenever Nathan solved a particularly tough problem, he could request his boss to call for a meeting. Nathan could then describe the problem and the solution to the whole team ...maybe even to the whole company. This would help in giving Nathan the image of an 'expert' and he would start being perceived as being valuable.

Acknowledged as valuable

=====

Nathan should with the permission of his boss, gather around him a few peers and discuss the current topics that the company deals with.

A note of caution is required here Nathan: In your anxiety to be perceived and acknowledged as valuable, do ensure that you project your boss in a similar light. At all points in time get your boss' concurrence and support.

Nathan could also volunteer to provide information for the Technical Home Page on the company's intranet, maybe even author a page of new synopsis of what is happening in the market / technology areas that the company is interested in. These market, technology, competitor trends analysis would require an in-depth analysis and research. Refer to "10 Steps to Research or Google a Topic" to learn how to do research quickly and effectively.

## Clear ROI

=====

Nathan, many of these techniques are very hazy and do not give a clear return on investment (ROI) of your talents and suitability for being employed by the company. To ensure that you display clear ROI, you should earn the respect and esteem of your customer.

One good report from the customer does a lot more to increase your perceived and acknowledged value within your company. Often while Nathan was onsite he had performed many commendable actions. The customer also had praised Nathan a lot. However Nathan had not asked the customer to forward a small mail to his own company. Thus it happened that though the customer valued Nathan, his own company largely remained unaware of his talents. Michelle counseled Nathan that henceforth he should remember to strike when the iron was hot: ask the customer to write a small note of his appreciation to Nathan's boss in his parent company.

Nathan had made the greatest blunder of his life when he allowed differences of opinion with a staff member at the customer's organization to escalate into a love-hate relationship. This staff member did write a few negative lines and faithfully copied it to his boss (Nathan's customer) and also to Nathan's boss in the vendor's company.

This was largely the one blemish that is very difficult to be erased. When the dot come burst came immediately on the heels of this incident, it was no wonder that Nathan found himself with a yellow ticket. Love your customer and serve him faithfully ... else you will suddenly find yourself being dispensed with.

## References

=====

1. "10 Steps to Research or Google a Topic"

<http://www.123projectmanagement.com/crm-research-google.html>

2. "How to avoid being downsized"

<http://www.123projectmanagement.com/self-layoff-downsize.html>

Copyright @ 2003 Project Dioxide Consultants (P) Ltd.

=====  
About the Author  
=====

Naseem Mariam is the editor of "Management that Soars" Newsletter & author of "Project Serenity - How to gain happiness and peace". Her writings draw life from her 18 years experience as software Project Manager. Let her guide you towards Faster All Round Success and a Stress Free, Joyous Life. Her free ebook and Newsletter tell You How. Subscribe with <mailto:projectdioxide@sendfree.com> Visit her at <http://www.123projectmanagement.com>

=====

[Get-Articles.com](http://www.get-articles.com) : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)