

Case Study #3: We're Moving to Albuquerque!

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Your Role

You are the CEO of one of New Mexico's largest not-for-profits, based in the state capital, Santa Fe.

The Scenario

You have occupied your headquarters building for more than a century. Unfortunately, that historical building is falling apart and will need a large cash infusion to remain viable as your headquarters.

With the full concurrence of the board, you have sold the building to a historical preservation charity for a rather large windfall profit. The terms of the contract allow you to remain in the building, but at the end of an eighteen-month term, you must be completely gone.

Your board has directed you to take the sale proceeds and move the organization into a shiny new building in the state's largest city, Albuquerque. Almost your entire experienced and

loyal staff of thirty-five are domiciled in Santa Fe, which is about an hour from Albuquerque.

Your board chair is the CEO of one of Albuquerque's most innovative high-techs, and you have a fabulous and trustworthy working relationship with her. Your extremely competent COO has been with the company for twenty-five years, is steeped in the lore and background of the organization, and is well regarded and trusted by the team. She lives five minutes from the old building, her children are in the Santa Fe school system, and her husband is the chief of staff of the Assembly speaker.

The Assignment

You have asked for and received two hours on the Board Chair's calendar to chat about the next steps.

To prepare for this critical meeting, you need to create a problem statement and a list of the key questions you want to discuss with her.

State the problem

List your top 10 questions and the answers that would give you pause:

Q1:

Bad answers to Q1:

Q2:

Bad answers to Q2:

Q3:

Bad answers to Q3:

11 QUESTIONS GREAT MANAGERS ASK & ANSWER

Q4: _____

Bad answers to Q4:

Q5: _____

Bad answers to Q5:

Q6: _____

Bad answers to Q6:

Q7: _____

Bad answers to Q7:

Q8: _____

Bad answers to Q8:

Q9: _____

Bad answers to Q9:

Q10: _____

Bad answers to Q10:

My problem statement:

The organization is faced with a difficult choice: stay at the center of political power, Santa Fe, or move to the center of economic power, Albuquerque. The choice must be very carefully and thoughtfully made so it optimizes the long-term health of the organization.

My ten key questions:

1. Why are we really moving to Albuquerque?
2. Can the organization survive the potential loss of many key team members, including the COO?
3. Have all the stakeholders been identified?
4. Have all the stakeholders opined?
5. Have all the stakeholders concurred?
6. How are we going to solve the problem?
7. Where are we doing what?
8. When are we doing what?
9. How long will it take?
10. How much will it cost?

My discussion

This case study is about two very distinct issues – first, clearly thinking through and debating the reason for uprooting the entire organization from the state capital to the state’s economic center of gravity, and then second, implementing the decision.

It is clear to you, and everyone else, that the move from Santa Fe to Albuquerque would be highly disruptive. This should stimulate a number of lines of questioning:

- What is the rationale for moving to Albuquerque in the first place? Does the fundamental decision make sense?
- Are there advantages to “cleaning house” (anticipating that many of your team will leave if forced to move to Albuquerque) and bringing in a whole new team?

- Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?
- Is there a third path – keeping a small team in Santa Fe and the larger team in Albuquerque?

This difficult choice should be made with a very expansive mindset. All choices and options, even some highly creative and unconventional ones, should be explored.

This decision is about much more than geography! This would be a great time to conduct a sensing and visioning exercise to line up what the board and management believe the organization should look like in five and fifteen years, and how the choice of headquarters location plays into that vision.

The actual “where is the building going to go” and “how will we move there” is important, but they are really second-order questions that could be outsourced.