

CASE SERIES 1 – EXECUTIVE COACHING/MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

CASE 1 – MEET PUG JAMES - 1

1986

San Mateo, California

“I’ve been Pearl Harbored!” Pug James yelled as he stormed into the kitchen. He threw his briefcase at the linoleum. It slid to Marcy’s feet. She jumped back.

“Honey, be careful! You’ll wreck something!”

He ripped off his suit jacket and tossed it on the table. “Who cares? I’m gonna remodel this dump!”

Marcy sighed. Pug had uttered the dreaded word that was synonymous with endless do-it-yourself home improvement projects and explosive arguments with the neighbors about noise and debris.

“What do you mean ‘Pearl Harbored?’”

Pug yanked open the fridge door, grabbed a Budweiser and grimaced; a sharp pain—a souvenir from Vietnam—radiated from his shoulder into his back.

“The company’s Jap sabotaged my sales meeting!” He popped the cap and took a long gulp.

Marcy poured generous Jack Daniels over ice. “Sweetie, wasn’t January’s sales meeting to celebrate your million-dollar order?”

“Doug Aldrich screwed me! Invited a sake-sipper to my meeting just ’cuz he got a bigger order!”

“But isn’t that great for MatraScience?”

“Doug blabbered about politics and patents and barely mentioned my order! He slobbered all over the slant eyes.”

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“Next weekend’s family reunion will take your mind off MatraScience,” Marcy said, trying to change the subject.

“Doug suckered me to join MatraScience with his techno-babble and Guadalcanal Silver Star bullshit. He let that Jap steal my show!”

Marcy bit her lip. With Pug in this mood, it was no good to defend Doug Aldrich, the company’s CEO, or to remind Pug how much he admired him. Doug had founded MatraScience in the late sixties relying on technical brilliance, entrepreneurial instincts, and appetite for risk. Under Doug’s leadership, MatraScience grew from zero to \$500 million. A well-respected company, MatraScience developed and commercialized proprietary materials and products for various industrial markets.

“Dinner’s almost ready.”

“Screw it, going out!” He grabbed his suit coat and slammed the door. The kitchen shuddered. Marcy sighed and refilled her glass.

Another evening with Jack.

Pug drove north on Bayshore Freeway to the Velvet Turtle, his favorite watering hole. The dim lighting, soft Sinatra ballads, and plush décor calmed him. He settled at the ornate bar and nursed a Bud. His eyes followed cute waitresses wearing skimpy green velvet. It was a slow evening, and there was a cooking show on the bar’s TV featured an Italian chef.

Pug signaled for the bartender. “Another Bud, and, hey, can’t you turn on a better channel?”

The bartender placed another brew in front of Pug. “Got it on PBS. All the other channels are bashing President Reagan about Iran-Contra. And we’re not un-American in this bar!”

“Good one! I’ll drink to that!”

As he stared at the TV, Pug’s thoughts drifted back to last week’s meeting with a Pacific Gas & Electric engineer.

“Pug, we like MatraScience’s technology. But until you guarantee PG&E a watertight system to protect our network, I’m staying with our current supplier.”

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“You guys never change. I can’t do this.”

“Pug, if you say you can’t do it then you’re right, you can’t do it.”

Pug slid the empty bottle toward the bartender. “Gimme another!”

He glanced up and watched the television chef roll pasta dough around sausage, pour olive oil into the pasta wrapper, and then tie each end with string. The chef massaged the roll to spread the oil.

Pug breathed out, “Sonovabitch!” He grabbed bar napkins and sketched electric cable connection points. Around them he drew a pasta-like wrapper. Now pour PG&E’s liquid cement into the wrapper, close it, and seal it with MatraScience’s patented plastic.

He leaned back in the bar stool and grinned. I solved it! Goddamn it! I can do it! I invented the perfect watertight system for power connections!

The scent of Chanel interrupted his self-congratulations. He looked to his right and beheld a genuine beauty: shiny blonde hair, big blue eyes, creamy skin, and full lips. A snug sweater dress hugged nice curves.

“Hey, you’re Miss San Jose!”

She smiled, her look direct and interested. “I was.”

He extended his hand. “Name’s Pug James. Buy you a drink?”

“Tiffanee Anderson . . . thanks.”

Gotta order something expensive, impress this broad. “Bring me Cakebread Chardonnay and two glasses,” he told the bartender.

“So, Tiffanee, subsize your life for me.”

She giggled. “Subsize? You mean summarize?”

He smiled. “Isn’t that what I said?”

She giggled again. “Well, if you want numbers, it’s ten beauty pageants and one win.”

“Guess I was interested in your other stats,” Pug said with a wink. He watched her eye his new Brooks Brothers suit, a birthday gift from Marcy. She took in the rest of him, the way ladies do when they don’t think a guy will notice.

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“Oh, I don’t share secrets,” she laughed. “So, what are your stats?”

“Six three and two hundred soaking wet!” Hey, what’s an inch or two, a little exaggeration? “So, you in school, or what?”

“Just finished my marketing degree at San Jose State. Tough finding a job right now.”

“How ’bout my company, MatraScience? We can always use new marketing talent.”

“MatraScience? How long have you worked there?”

“Almost eight years.” Her voice says job search, but those eyes say strip search. “Got promoted to sales ’cuz I got a lot done in manufacturing. Already got three patents. Now I’m in charge of solving customer problems.”

Pug took a gulp of chardonnay and pointed to the napkin drawings. “See my sausage on this napkin? It’s my latest invention.”

She looked perplexed. “That’s . . . nice. Um, could you let me know when they interview, or give me someone to contact?”

“No sweat. Gimme your number.”

She jotted it on a bar napkin. “Well, it’s getting late. Looks like my friend isn’t coming after all.”

“Right, your friend.” Pug smiled. That was what they all said when they were on the hunt.

“Thanks for the drink.” Her smile told Pug she expected a call.

“Sure, anytime,” Pug replied. He watched her walk away. That’s one fine ass!

He finished the bottle then headed home. When he crawled into bed, Marcy threw back the blanket and said, “It’s late. I was worried.”

“You won’t believe what happened!”

She rolled over to face him. “What?”

“I solved PG&E’s problem! Can’t wait till the development gang sees my idea.”

She yawned. “Get some sleep. You got a busy weekend. Finish remodeling the bathroom. I want it back.”

“I’ll get those tiles replaced in no time.” He prodded her side. “Say, how ’bout a roll in the hayloft like old times?”

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She groaned. “Honey, Jack gave me a terrible headache.” She turned away and pulled the covers around her.

Pug smiled to himself. Okay for you. I got me Tiffanee’s number.

Farm Ridge, Colorado

The James and Decker families held their annual winter reunion at Paul Decker’s farm, a two-hundred-acre spread that had been in the family for over a century. In 1938, Darin James, Pug’s father, married Paul’s daughter, Amelia Decker, and they produced two sons: Pug, born in 1944, and Rich, born in 1977. Every year, Pug pressured Marcy to accompany him to the reunion. She despised these events but always relented at the last minute.

As they drove to Farm Ridge from Stapleton Airport, Marcy complained, “Your dad makes everyone miserable at these reunions. Never a civil word.”

“Your family’s no better. If I hadn’t married you, you’d be stuck in Farm Ridge with your drunk dad. You owe me big time.”

“Oh please, who’s the lucky one? Do me favor and make sure we sit far away from your cousin Darin. Last reunion, he was worse than your dad . . . like uncle, like nephew.”

Pug laughed out loud. “Yeah, his ego’s so big, he yells his own name during sex.”

“I do enjoy seeing Rich. Aren’t you proud of how he’s matured?”

“Yeah, and with no thanks to Dad who was never around after Mom died.”

“You promised your mother you’d take care of him, and you raised him like a son.”

Pug sighed. “With his athletic ability, he coulda had a football scholarship to Colorado State. His grades sucked.”

“At least he went to community college and got some technical training. With his street smarts, work ethic, and personality, he’ll land on his feet.”

“Hope you’re right, sweetie,” Pug said.

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They arrived at the Decker farm and parked the car in front of the dilapidated old farmhouse. Before getting out, both stared ahead at its weathered shutters, peeling paint, and buckled shingles. Wide steps to the front porch sagged. The roof's lightning rods leaned at crazy angles.

Pug shook his head. "Sad. Used to be a real nice place."

A rustic milk barn and silo—in great disrepair—stood behind the house and brought back memories for Pug and Marcy. As teenagers, they'd spent many summer nights in the barn's hayloft.

At the farmhouse dinner table, they joined Pug's dad, Cousin Darin, his wife, Sylvia, Rich, and Rich's pregnant girlfriend. They washed down burgers, potato salad, and baked beans with lots of Coors beer. As they tucked into apple pie and coffee, Pug's father glanced around at the faded wallpaper on the dining room walls. He tipped his head down to examine the dull and worn oak floor. "Just look at this shit hole!" the old man grouched. His scowl, ill-fitting toupee, and thick eyeglasses matched his sour attitude. "Stupid Pecker cousins let it go to hell! Never happen if I owned it."

Marcy rolled her eyes at Pug who just grinned and whispered, "Dad's still pissed that mom died before Grandpa Decker did."

Marcy took a sip of hot coffee and grimaced, "Can you tell him to stop using the word 'pecker?' It's disgusting."

Pug threw an arm around her and raised a beer can in a toast. "Boy, could I remodel this place!"

She frowned, whispering back, "Enough with remodeling."

Pug's cousin Darin ran his tongue over piecrust clinging to his mustache. "You wait, Uncle Darin! I'll buy this farm one day!"

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“Hear that, Puggy? My nephew’s getting my farm back! Just like MacArthur got back his Philippines from the Japs.”

As Marcy registered disgust, Pug spoke loudly, “Why don’t you just do that, Ted?” Darin’s resemblance to Ted Turner: razor-thin silvery moustache, dimpled chin, and nasal voice inspired Pug to call him “Ted.” Pug stared at the ugly scar on Darin’s right eyebrow, a memento from Pug’s fist. Seething, Pug continued, “And get over it, Dad! Grandpa Decker left it to the Decker cousins!”

“They changed the old coot’s will. Shoulda sued ’em!” the old man growled.

“Yeah, like suing’ll fix everything. Changing the subject!” Pug turned to Rich. “So, what are your plans, bro?”

“Got me a production job at Appliancorp. Start in August.”

“Appliancorp’s growing. Lotsa good jobs,” Pug said.

“Rich, be sure and call if you need anything,” Marcy said. “You know we’re always here for you.”

“Thanks, don’t know what I woulda done without you guys.”

Darin interrupted, his nasal voice at its grating best, “Yeah, Rich, what have they done for you lately?”

“Helluva lot more than you ever did,” Pug snapped.

That night in bed, Marcy snuggled close. “Honey, I’m really proud of what we’ve done for Rich after your mom got sick.”

“She knew she couldn’t trust Dad. Now you understand why Grandpa changed his will.”

“I’m worried Rich is too influenced by your cousin Darin.”

“Dad encourages it, and I don’t understand why. But how do you understand crazy? Mom told me he was never the same after he came back from fighting the Japs. Maybe he’s got a case of post-dramatic stress order.”

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Marcy chuckled, “You mean post-traumatic stress disorder? That could explain it.”

“Whatever, look, next year we’re sitting with the Deckers. No more dad or Ted. They don’t give a flyin’ fig about me. Did you see how they dissed me when I mentioned my million-dollar order?”

Marcy sighed. She caressed his thigh and nuzzled his ear. “Enough about them. Let’s pretend we’re back in Grandpa Decker’s hayloft.”

“You got it, sweetie.”

ASSIGNMENT SCENARIO:

You are an Executive Management Leadership Coach. Doug Aldrich, MatraScience’s CEO, hired you to coach Pug James. Doug wants you to recommend a plan for Pug to develop his management capabilities. As an executive coach, you have conducted interviews and obtained background information from both Doug Aldrich and Pug James. In the course of these interviews, Pug revealed information described in the San Mateo and Farm Ridge sections.

Following the Coaching Ethics and confidentiality guidelines, develop answers for the following:

- What questions would you have for Doug and Pug?**
- From your interviews and analysis, what are Pug James’s strengths, weaknesses, motivations, and other defining characteristics? (1)**
- How will these characteristics impact Pug’s behavior patterns and work effectiveness?**
- What characteristics do you see in Pug’s immediate relatives that could impact his decisions and actions? If you had the opportunity to interview his father, cousin, brother, and wife, what questions would you ask? (2) (3)**
- What is your initial assessment of the Pug/Doug relationship?**

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-Assist Pug to prepare a first draft of his management development plan. (This will be co-created by Pug and you, but Pug must own the plan.)

-Based on the preliminary information presented so far, how would you coach Pug to optimize his behavior? Also, what would suggest Doug Aldrich do to assist this coaching process?

-If Pug resists the concept of a personal coach, how would you convince him to agree to this process? (4)

-What specific advice would you have for Doug any of Pug's future bosses about how to manage Pug?