“Outsourced”, a case summary

Todd is faced with a tough dilemma—move to India to train his call center replacements or lose his pension. Despite his protestations, he finds himself in India training a group of Indian natives who have no call center experience, stilted English language skills, and limited understanding of the products they are selling. How should Todd manage this team?

Todd manages this Indian call center team as if they are employees from the U.S. He gets frustrated with their lack of time sensibility, their chattiness on the phone, and their desire to have personal space. He has moved to India to train the call center and get their average Minutes Per Incident (MPI) down to 6 or below. When he begins training them, their MPI is 12:17.

Todd slowly comes to realize that he cannot just educate his call center staff on the American way, but must also be educated on their Indian ways. They have a break-through when Todd agrees to learn how to dance as his staff learns how to properly pronounce the items they sell. In addition, Todd comes up with a sales incentive program where his staff can get the actual items they sell, which he is surprised that they want. MPI falls to 7:41.

Todd primarily trains Puro as his replacement. Puro is very deferential to Todd and even takes care of his personal needs when Todd gets an upset stomach from the native cuisine. Puro works hard to educate Todd in the Indian ways and ends up showing Todd how to celebrate the holiday, Holi, which Todd finally embraces.

Todd also trains Asha to be an assistant manager. She emerges as a strong leader, stepping up to assist others and help them in their work. While he is not sure if this is culturally correct to train a female assistant, Todd empowers Asha by telling her that she is very capable of being a leader and to follow her instincts. The MPI falls to 6:01.

In the process of their working together, Todd and Asha have an affair. It must be secret because she is betrothed to someone else.

Now that MPI is down to about 6:00, which is where Todd’s boss wanted it to be before he could return home, Todd’s boss visits India to check on the operations. Unfortunately, a flood destroys the site and Todd has to move the entire operation to the roof. Thankfully, his staff and a local electrician are able to get his call center up and running, demonstrating their ability to get the MPI down to 5:57. Their reward is to find out that their call center is being outsourced to China! Puro must now move to China to train his replacement. Todd is finally free to return to the U.S.

Despite losing their jobs, the Indian staff is not unhappy about this change in events. They have been well trained and expect to find new jobs, soon, thanks to the training they have received. Todd leaves satisfied that he has emerged as an effective leader and a person who has choices in life.

Did Todd manage this situation well? What other choices could he have made?