**“What’s Wrong With the Team?”**

*What’s wrong with the team? What’s wrong with the team?* Nichole Dyer’s words repeated over and over in Henry Rankin’s head as he boarded the plane from Los Angeles to Chicago.

Rankin is responsible for the technical implementation of the new customer relationship management (CRM) software being installed for western and eastern sales offices in both cities. The software is badly needed to improve follow-up sales for his company, Reflex Systems. Reflex sells exercise equipment to high schools and colleges, as well as to small to midsize businesses for recreation centers, through a national force of salespeople. The company’s low prices have won a lot of sales; however, follow-up service is uneven and the new CRM system promises to resolve those problems with historical data, inquiries, reminders, and updates going to sales reps daily. The CEO of Reflex has ordered the CRM system installed with all possible haste.

Rankin pulled a yellow pad and pen from the side pocket of his carry-on bag and tossed it in the seat beside the window, stashed the bag in the overhead compartment, and sat down as other passengers filed past. In an effort to shut out his thoughts, he closed his eyes and concentrated on the muffled voices and low whooshing sound of the air vents. He wrote,“*What’s wrong with the team?”* three times and began drawing arrows to circles bearing the names of his team members: Barry Livingston and Max Wojohowski in L.A., and Bob Finley, Lynne Johnston, and Sally Phillips in Chicago.

He marked through Sally’s name. She had jumped ship recently, taking her less-than-stellar but still-much-needed talents with her to another company. It was on a previous L.A.-to-Chicago flight that Sally had pumped him for feedback on her future with Reflex. She had informed him that she had another job offer. She admitted it was less money, but she was feeling under pressure as a member of the team and she wanted more “quality of life.” Rankin told Sally bluntly that her technical expertise, on which he placed top importance, was slightly below her peers, so future promotion was less likely despite her impressive people and team skills.

He wrote “quality of life,” circled it, and then crossed it out and wrote “what the hell?” *Why should she get quality of life?* he mused. *I’ve barely seen my wife and kids since this project started*. Rankin’s team was under a great deal of pressure, and he had needed Sally to stick it out. He told her so, but the plane had barely touched down when she went directly to the office and quit, leaving the team shorthanded and too close to deadline to add another body.

*What’s wrong with the team?* Rankin furiously scribbled as his thoughts raced:

1. *The deadline is ridiculously short*. Dyer had scheduled a ten-week completion deadline for the new CRM software, including installation and training for both cities. He suddenly stopped writing and drew a rider and horse, then returned to his list.
2. *I feel like some frazzled pony-express rider running back and forth across the country, trying to develop, build, set-up and work the kinks out of a new system that everyone at* 3.

*Thank God for L.A*. From the outset, Barry and Max had worked feverishly while avoiding the whining and complaining that seemed to overwhelm members of the Chicago team. The atmosphere was different. Although the project moved forward, meeting deadlines, there appeared to be less stress. The L.A. team focused tirelessly on work, with no families to consider, alternating intense work with joking around. *Those are my kind of people*, he thought.

* 4.

*But there is Chicago*, he wrote. Earlier in the day, Sam Matheny from sales had e-mailed, then called, Rankin to tell him the two remaining members of the Chicago team appeared to be alternating between bickering and avoiding one another. Apparently this had been going on for some time. *What’s with that?* Rankin wondered. *And why did Sam know and I didn’t?*So, that morning, before his flight, Rankin had to make time to call and text both Finley and Johnston. Finley admitted he had overreacted to Johnston.

“Look, man. I’m tired and stressed out,” Finley said. We’ve been working nonstop. My wife is not happy.”

“Just get along until this project is completed,” Rankin ordered.

“When will *that* be?” Finley asked before hanging up.

Rankin thought about Dyer’s persistent complaints to him that the team appeared to have a lack of passion, and she admonished him to “get your people to understand the urgency of this project.” Her complaints only added to his own stress level. He had long considered himself the frontrunner for Dyer’s job when she retired in two years. But had his team ruined that opportunity? The sense of urgency could be measured now in the level of stress and the long hours that they had all endured. He admitted his team members were unenthusiastic, but they seemed committed.