

## 7

### **The calm before the storm**

The employees of the Orders Fulfillment department were having a little difficulty accepting Christal's promotion. After all, this was a group who worked well under her strong leadership and direction but who also depended on it. Their sense of security was now being threatened by this unwanted change.

"It's not like we are losing her," Justin said to Will and Amy, speaking loud enough so the others could hear him from the break room. "She'll be around—just not our immediate supervisor anymore."

"Do you think they'll appoint Charlie to take her place?" Amy whispered. "I hope so," she added, her voice trickling off as Charlie walked into the room.

"Charlie would be the most obvious choice," Justin replied, smiling at Charlie. "What do *you* think, Charlie?"

Charlie smiled back. "If they hire from within," he said, "and they probably will, then I'd take it. Sure, why not!"

John popped his head inside the break room where the group was starting to gather. "What about you, Justin? Do you have any interest in becoming the manager?"

By now, Will, John, Amy, Charlie and Justin were all standing around in the break room having an impromptu meeting. This was not an unusual occurrence in Christal's absence. The break room was where a lot of the informal conversations occurred. It was also the only place in the office to talk privately without everyone else hearing what was being said. Having six cubicles in the outer office made for very little privacy.

"Me?" replied Justin, a little embarrassed, "Oh no. Charlie has more experience than me. Besides, I wouldn't know how to manage. It would be Charlie for sure."

Just then a familiar, yet somewhat annoying laugh came from Lee Ann's cubicle. The group immediately exchanged knowing smiles.

"Personal call," mocked Amy. The rest of the group laughed as Amy shook her head in disbelief.

Lee Ann was twenty years old and had a habit of taking more personal calls during the day than customer calls. Although not an overwhelming problem in the scheme of things, it was rather difficult to ignore since she was so much louder and animated when talking to her friends. Nevertheless, it was one of many "little" problems that went unaddressed in the Orders Fulfillment department, and one that had bothered Justin enough to mention it to Megan on more than one occasion.

"Charlie, looks like you got your work cut out for you," Will replied, pointing to Lee Ann. Everyone laughed as the informal gathering broke up.

Justin headed back to his cubical, still feeling a bit embarrassed. He had never aspired to becoming a manager, and really didn't know how to respond to John's question. Yet the more he thought about it the more he began to wonder if he shouldn't start considering the possibility of taking a management position some day. *Maybe in a year or two*, he mused.

## 8

### Justin's surprise

Christal literally ran from the conference room, which was on the third floor, all the way down the stairs to the first floor, which was where the Orders Fulfillment department was located. Despite being out of breath, her excitement over arriving at a long-awaited decision energized her. She couldn't wait to see how the staff would respond to her announcement, and trusted that they would be both relieved and equally as enthusiastic about her choice of Justin as her replacement. She was sure of it.

"Department meeting in five minutes in the break room," shouted Christal, as she made her way through the maze of cubicles towards her old office. When she got to Justin, she smiled and said, "Can you come see me...now!"

"Sure thing," replied Justin, jumping up to grab his clipboard while simultaneously scanning the room for Charlie. But he was nowhere to be seen. *It must not be about the manager decision*, he figured, as he followed Christal into her office.

"Please close the door," requested Christal.

As he shut the door, he once again noticed what a great view she had of Oak Street out her window. "How do you get any work done with that view?" joked Justin.

Christal smiled broadly. "I'm glad you like the view, Justin," and then she paused. "Because I've decided that it is going to be yours. I'm naming you as manager of this department and I know you will do a great job!"

Justin's jaw dropped. It was the same look he'd had on his face three weeks ago when a Giants defender picked up a Bear's fumble and ran it back ninety-five yards for the game-winning touchdown. He was in a state of shock then and was in a state of shock now. He couldn't believe what was happening.

"But, but what about Charlie? We all assumed he would become the manager?"

Christal looked taken aback. "Justin, I've given this a lot of thought and feel that you are more of what this department needs right now. I think the world of Charlie, but I am asking you to step up and take on this position."

"Does Charlie know?" asked Justin.

"No, not yet, but he will in about thirty seconds. Are you on board?" Christal put out her hand in anticipation of a confirmation handshake.

"Yes, of course," replied Justin, still numb. "I'm just worried about how Charlie will take this, that's all. And please don't get me wrong, I'm honored to be asked and will do my best to make this work. It just surprised me." He then got up and shook Christal's waiting hand, noticing how much stronger her grip was than his.

"Don't worry, Justin, I'll be here to help you," smiled Christal, as they both walked out the door into the deserted outer office. Laughter could be heard coming from the break room where the rest of the department had gathered.

*I sure hope they are still laughing in about ten minutes*, Justin thought to himself.

## 9

### **The shocking announcement**

The group was eager to hear the news. They couldn't wait to officially celebrate Charlie's promotion. Of course, with this group any reason to celebrate was a good thing, but today would be different.

Charlie's heart was pounding. He knew this was going to be a special day for him and he wanted to appear surprised when Christal named him as the new manager. He had even prepared a little speech.

Justin's heart was also pounding, only for a different reason. Appearing surprised when his name was to be announced wouldn't be a problem since he still was in a state of shock. This was a moment for which he was unprepared, and he wasn't quite ready to see it play out. He knew the rest of the department wouldn't be ready either for what they were about to hear.

As Christal and Justin walked into the break room together, it was obvious by Christal's smile that she had something important to say. This was a special moment for her. She not only was going to name Justin as the new manager, but she would officially turn over the reins of her department as well. As thrilled as she was to announce her decision, she experienced a wave of sadness with the realization that this moment also represented an ending for her. This would be her last meeting with this group as their manager. With all the hype about her promotion and concern over choosing a replacement, she had not given much thought to this moment and the impact that it would have on her.

With teary eyes, Christal invited everyone to sit down around the table and started the meeting. "Wow, I can't believe I'm getting so emotional. I came to tell you the news about your new manager and here I am feeling sad about having to leave you. Please forgive me."

The energy in the room suddenly shifted from a buzzing sensation to a very still and compassionate mood. Charlie spoke up, "No need to apologize, Christal, we are sad to see you go too."

"She's not leaving," said Lee Ann, immediately correcting Charlie.

"I know, but she's leaving us as our manager...at least that is what I meant," replied Charlie, annoyed at being contradicted.

Justin bit his lip. Charlie was acting manager-like now, as if he needed to slowly transition himself into that role.

"I know, let's have two celebrations," urged Amy. "One to say goodbye to you as our outgoing manager, and one to celebrate Charlie as our incoming manager."

Christal immediately shook her head. "Wait a second, I've selected Justin as your new manager, not Charlie."

Christal looked around the room, searching for some kind of acknowledgement or endorsement for her decision. Instead, she was greeted with stunned silence.

Justin was frozen. He knew there would be a reaction, but he was not prepared for this awkward silence. He suddenly became self-conscious about everything. His

hands—what should he do with his hands? The expression on his face—was there one? Should there be one? Was everybody looking at him? Should he look back? Where should he look? He suddenly didn't know what to do or how to act. He could only hope something would break up this uncomfortable moment.

“Why...why Justin?” stuttered Charlie, trying to sound neutral, while masking his deep disappointment.

Before Christal could answer, Amy exclaimed, “I'm sorry, I thought Charlie was going to be the manager because he has the most experience and because he was a supervisor already.”

“Please,” cried Christal. “With all due respect to Charlie, I felt that Justin would be the better fit at this point in time. You are just going to have to trust me on this.”

Before anyone else could say anything, Christal got up and headed towards the door. “I'm so sorry that I can't stay and talk more but I have to get back to a meeting. Please know that I'm counting on all of you to make this work.” She then looked right at Charlie. “Charlie, if you want to talk, let's set up an appointment. I know this was not what you wanted to hear.”

Just as Christal disappeared, she popped her head back into the break room. “Justin, I'll talk to you tomorrow. Have a great day, everyone.”

*So much for the awkward moment going away anytime soon,* Justin lamented.

Charlie got up, looked at Justin and angrily said, “Good luck. You're going to need it,” and then stormed out of the room.

Amy jumped up and called out, “Charlie, hold on,” and ran after him.

Lee Ann shook her head and said to the others, “I don't know what the big deal is. It's not like it really matters who our manager is. We just do our jobs and go home. It's not rocket science.” And with that she got up and walked out of the room.

John walked by Justin, patted him on the arm and said, “Don't worry about it; you'll do just fine.”

Will waited for the others to leave before clearing his throat to speak. “You gotta admit, Justin, Charlie got ripped off. He should have gotten the job, and you should have said something to him when you decided to apply for it.”

“I didn't apply for the job!” cried Justin. “This was as much of a surprise to me as it was to you. I only found out about it five minutes before the meeting. How do you think I feel?”

“Well, all I can say is that it's not right, and you are going to have to work your butt off in order to get this group back together. I'm glad I'm not you,” and he walked out of the room, leaving Justin sitting by himself, at the table, in the room where his life seemed to be turning upside down right before his eyes.

# 10

## And then it got worse

Justin knew he needed to do something if he was to begin establishing himself as the new manager, only he didn't know what that something would be. What he did know was that his department was crumbling right before him. The worst part of all was knowing that even though he wasn't the one who'd created the problem, he would be the one held responsible for solving it.

He took a deep sigh and mumbled, *Welcome to management!*

For the next few hours Justin hid away in his cubicle, trying to make sense out of the day's events. He was having a rather difficult time accepting his new role and the responsibility that went with it. Truth be told, he wasn't quite sure he wanted it.

It was late in the afternoon when Lee Ann approached him.

"How come you aren't moving into Christal's office?" she asked, surprised to see him still in his cubicle.

"Oh, I will," replied Justin, "I just thought I'd wait until the end of the day."

"Well, suit yourself," she shot back while walking away, "but I don't think it's going to change anything."

"Wait, what do you mean?" asked Justin. "Change anything?"

Lee Ann stopped and turned around. "What I mean is that regardless of whether you feel supported or not as the manager, you *are* the manager, and that is the manager's office," pointing towards Christal's old office. "Hanging out in your cubicle is not doing anyone any good. That's all I have to say." And with that, she walked away.

Justin didn't know what to say or how to respond, but he did know enough to concede that she had a point. Shortly thereafter, he stood up, picked up his clipboard and headed to Christal's office. Although he wasn't ready to move in, he knew he needed to do something, even if just for show. Besides, he wasn't exactly getting much done in his cubicle, and perhaps a change of scenery would provide him with the direction he so needed.

And then it happened.

Justin hadn't gotten halfway to Christal's office when he was struck with the solution of all solutions.

*I've got it!* he exclaimed to himself as he walked into the deserted office and sat in Christal's chair. *I know how to bring the staff together and make all this discomfort go away. I will simply turn down the promotion and hand it over to Charlie! That's right. I'm going to turn it down!*

Justin was beaming. A forgotten smile took over his face again. He could begin to feel the day's uninvited tension and pressure release from his body. He was becoming tingly all over, and knew it was a sign that he was making the right decision.

He continued talking to himself. *I'm clearly not ready, let alone prepared to be manager of this department. Plus the whole staff, including myself, wants Charlie to be the manager. Why, it's the best decision for everyone! I can't wait to tell Charlie.*

The phone rang. It was Helen, Christal's new secretary, calling from upstairs to set up a meeting between Justin and Christal for tomorrow morning.

"Sure, 8:00 a.m.—no problem," replied Justin. "And one more thing," he added, "could you put me through to Christal's voice mail? I want to leave her a short message."

Justin wanted to plant the seed of his decision with Christal before they met in the morning. He knew she didn't like surprises, especially ones that might reflect poorly on her. He needed for this to go smoothly.

Then he heard Christal's familiar voice on the phone. "Hello, this is Christal. I'm out of the office right now, but please leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as possible. Beeeep."

Justin cleared his throat. "Hello, Christal, this is Justin. I'm looking forward to our meeting tomorrow morning at eight. I have an idea that I'd like you to consider. I'll see you tomorrow. Bye."

He smiled. He still had one more thing to do before day's end. He had to find Charlie and tell him about his plan. He jumped out of the chair and headed into the outer office.

"Where's Charlie?" Justin asked Amy as he peered into Charlie's empty cubicle.

With a disapproving glance, Amy replied, "He left for the day. He's pretty upset. To tell you the truth, I don't know if he is coming back," and then she picked up the phone as if to call someone.

"Well, I need to talk to him," retorted Justin as he maneuvered his way past Amy and walked into Charlie's cubical. Although slightly perturbed over her attitude, he knew it was more evidence that turning down the promotion would be the right thing. *The sooner I take care of this the better*, he thought, as he grabbed a pad of paper from Charlie's desk and wrote:

**Charlie, I need to talk to you. I have a plan to fix everything. I think you'll like it.**

**-Justin**

Finally feeling as if he were making some progress, Justin headed back to Christal's office. As he passed by Amy's cubicle again, he noticed that she had left for the day. It was only 4:40 p.m. Technically no one was supposed to leave before five, yet both Charlie and Amy were already gone.

Shaking his head, Justin thought to himself, *I'm glad I'm not going to have to deal with this*, and stepped into Christal's office, where he plopped himself down in her black leather chair for what he assumed would be the last time. He sat back and put his feet up on the desk, almost defiantly. He then looked out into the outer office from the big window in front of the desk and spotted Will and John whispering to each other over the cubicle wall, occasionally glancing in his direction. A tinge of paranoia came over him. He could not help wondering what he had done to deserve all of this sudden attention. It was supposed to have been a typical day.

Just then the phone rang. His first impulse was to let it go to voice mail, but then he thought it might be Charlie calling to talk. "Hello."

The familiar voice on the other end politely asked for Christal. Justin recognized that it was Claire from their Boulder office.

“Hi, Claire, it’s Justin.”

“Justin, hi! Hey, what’s going on over there?”

“What do you mean?” inquired Justin.

“We heard about Christal’s promotion, but no one has told us anything else. I was hoping someone would have called us to tell us who will be our new boss. You know, professional courtesy,” she said sarcastically. “Is Charlie taking over? He sounded like he was expecting to be promoted. Has it happened yet? Don’t keep us in the dark. We need help here. What’s going on?”

The thought of calling the Boulder office had never crossed Justin’s mind. Given the recent developments and his latest intentions, he thought it would be best to say nothing.

“Claire, we expect to have everything in place by tomorrow morning, and then someone will call to fill you in on all the details. There are still a lot of loose ends that need to be straightened out here. We haven’t meant to neglect you; we just wanted to have everything in place first. Really!”

“Sweet. Can you at least tell me if Charlie is the manager or if they brought someone in from the outside?”

Justin wanted so badly to confide in Claire about the day’s events and his decision to turn down the promotion, but instead stayed the course. “There’s still some negotiating going on, so I can’t give you an official answer. But I promise, you will be the first to know.”

“Okay, be that way,” replied Claire. “Whomever it ends up being, they are going to have their work cut out for them. We are having problems with Katie and Colleen again. Apparently the two of them had a misunderstanding over something Katie wrote to Colleen in an e-mail. Of course Katie says she was just kidding, but Colleen didn’t take it that way and now they are both upset with each other. We need some help now! Any ideas?”

Justin politely declined. “Claire, it’s probably best we wait on this until tomorrow when we have an *official* manager. But again...”

Claire jumped in and completed his sentence. “I know Justin, I’ll be the first to know.”

As Justin hung up the phone, he couldn’t help but wonder why anyone would want to become a manager. *It is just one problem after another! The sooner I’m out of this dilemma, the better.*

It was after five o’clock. The office was empty and quiet. Justin sat back and reflected on all that had happened in this space over the past eight hours. The innocence with which had begun the day was now gone.

# 11

## Another perspective

The short drive from DataDump to Justin's house barely provided enough time for him to think through the day's events and to decide which parts of it he would share with Megan. He knew she'd be just as surprised as he was to hear about the promotion. What he wasn't as sure about was how she would react to his plan of turning it down.

He began to rehearse. *The promotion caused more problems than it was worth, and my decision to turn it down is the only way to salvage the problem. In many ways, I'm doing the noble thing by turning it down. I'm essentially putting the needs of the department ahead of my own.* His eyes lit up.

*Yes! That's exactly what I'm doing and Megan, of all people, should be able to understand such unselfish motives.*

Justin smiled. He felt good about his strategy to resolve what he had perceived as an insurmountable problem. Now if only he could convince Megan.

Tommy ran to the window the minute he heard the familiar car door slam shut. With a big smile on his face he yelled out in excitement, "Mommy, mommy, its daddy!"

Justin managed another smile as he walked in the door and gave Tommy his traditional bear hug. "There's my boy! Where's mommy?"

Tommy pointed toward the kitchen. "Daddy, can we watch football tonight?"

In all the day's commotion, Justin had forgotten that it was Monday night. The Broncos and Dolphins were playing and he had promised Tommy that they'd watch the game together.

"Sure son. After dinner."

Megan was on the phone when Justin entered the kitchen. She smiled and, without speaking, mouthed the word, T-A-N-Y-A, so he knew who was on the other end of the line. Justin nodded back. He already knew it had to be Tanya, Megan's best friend of eight years. No one else could bring out as much animation and laughter from Megan as she could.

Justin looked back at Megan, pointed to the den and mockingly mouthed the word, D-E-N. He figured Megan and Tanya had more to discuss, and he wanted to relax for awhile anyway.

Megan covered the phone and said with a sarcastic look, "Shut up. I'll be off in a few minutes."

Justin laughed. He liked kidding with Megan and it helped lighten the moment. He never wanted to lose his sense of humor—something that hadn't been very visible lately.

Tommy was already in the den watching cartoons.

"Hey sport, do you want to watch the pre-game?" asked Justin.

Tommy's eyes lit up. "Okay."

As the two of them snuggled together in front of the TV, Justin briefly closed his eyes, only to be awakened forty-five minutes later with Michelle shaking his arm. “Daddy, it’s time for dinner!”

Feeling disoriented from his unplanned nap, Justin wearily stood up and mumbled, “Oh, okay, honey.”

The whole family was already seated at the dinner table, patiently waiting for him. It was 6:30 p.m. and he had slept through his opportunity to talk with Megan before dinner. Now it would be much more challenging to find the right moment. This wasn’t playing out like he had hoped.

“Rough day, honey?” inquired Megan, passing him the plate of chicken.

“Mommy, daddy was snoring,” exclaimed Tommy.

Megan laughed.

Hoping to divert the focus away from him, Justin replied, “Oh, let’s just say it was a rather interesting day. How was yours?”

“My day was great. I finished designing the logo for my hardware store client and met with a guy from Jay’s Potato Chips to talk about some freelance work for one of their divisions.”

“Wow, that’s fantastic,” cheered Justin.

“Thanks, but what did you mean by ‘interesting?’” replied Megan, not letting his previous comment fall by the wayside.

“Actually, there is something I need to discuss with you,” hesitated Justin, figuring now was as good a time as any. “But only if it’s a good time.”

Megan looked at him curiously. “Well, it depends if it’s good or bad news. Which is it?”

Justin carefully chose his next words, “A little of both, I suppose.”

“Then tell me the good news,” replied Megan enthusiastically.

In looking around the table, Justin noticed the kids seemed as eager to hear what he was about to say as Megan was. “Okay, I will tell you guys, but then you two need to let mommy and daddy talk alone. Will you do that for me?”

“Yes, daddy,” replied Michelle. Tommy, already bored, was on to his next project of trying to pour salt into the top of the pepper shaker.

Justin began very slowly. “Christal surprised us all this morning by selecting me to be the manager instead of Charlie.”

“No way!” exclaimed Megan. “You’ve got to be kidding me!”

“I’m serious,” insisted Justin, feeling a little impressed with himself for the first time that day.

“Justin, that’s incredible news! I knew you could do it. I’m so proud of you! Kids, daddy is now the boss at work!”

“Yea, daddy!” screamed Michelle.

“Yea, daddy,” added Tommy, trying to mimic Michelle.

Megan beamed. “Oh, this is such great news. I can’t wait to hear all about it. How is Charlie taking it?”

Justin quickly turned to Michelle, “Honey, will you take Tommy to the playroom for a while?”

“But daddy, I want to hear more. Can’t I stay?”

“I’m sorry honey,” replied Justin, shaking his head.

“Okay.” Michelle then grabbed Tommy by the hand and reluctantly headed off to the playroom.

Justin, frowning, returned to Megan’s question. “Charlie’s not taking it too well, to tell you the truth. In fact, it was a very unpopular decision,” as his voice trickled off.

“So, what are you going to do?”

“I’ve been giving this a lot of thought...and...I’m going to turn it down.”

Megan looked stunned. “You’re what? Tell me I didn’t hear you say you were going to turn it down! An incredible opportunity comes your way and you want to turn it down all because Charlie is having a hard time with it? Give me a break!”

Honey, let me explain why I think turning down the promotion is in everyone’s best interest, including mine.”

“This must be the *bad news*,” snapped Megan.

Justin nodded.

Megan stood up, noticeably upset. “You know what, Justin? I’m not ready to continue this conversation right now. I just don’t understand you sometimes!”

Angered now, Justin retorted, “You don’t understand me sometimes because you won’t hear me out!”

“Oh, I see. Now it’s my fault.” Megan shook her head and walked out of the kitchen in a huff.

Justin threw up his arms in frustration. The irony was amazing. Disarray at work, in his decision, and now in his relationship. What else could go wrong!

# 12

## Macology

Justin and Megan hardly said another word to each other that night. As they went to sleep, Justin put his arm around her as a kind of peace offering, but she turned away. She was not ready to talk to him, even if it meant going to bed mad—something they both had agreed never to do.

The following morning didn't improve his state. In addition to the tension with Megan, Justin was now starting to worry about his eight o'clock meeting with Christal. The decision that he had felt so confident about yesterday had turned into a contentious point in his marital relationship. He was torn. If it were up to him, he would turn down the promotion. But now he couldn't help wondering if that was the easy way out. Was it really the best decision for him and his family? Had he really given himself enough time to think through this decision? Despite all the sudden confusion, he did know that he needed Megan on his side in this dilemma—now more than ever. He approached her as she walked into the kitchen.

"Megan, I'm sorry about upsetting you last night. I am not thinking clearly right now and I just need to know that I'll have your support, regardless of which way things end up."

Megan's disposition softened as she smiled and looked into Justin's eyes. "Honey," she said quietly. "You can't just make independent decisions regarding your career without consulting me first. Maybe turning your promotion down might end up being the right thing to do, but I'd appreciate some input. After all, your career impacts my life just as my career impacts yours."

"I know, dear," replied Justin, happy to be talking again. "It was wrong of me to phrase it in such a way that you thought I wasn't open to feedback. I was and still am ready to hear what you have to say. Only, I can't stay and talk any more right now because I have to get to the office for my meeting with Christal."

"Can we talk about it later?" asked Megan, as Justin headed to the door.

"Yes, but I may not have the luxury to delay this decision. She is going to want to know this morning. I'll call you later." And out the door he went.

Megan watched Justin through the kitchen window as he got into his car. She really was very proud of him for being offered the promotion, even though she had barely shown it. It was upsetting that he never thought to consult her, but she was even more upset over the way she had responded to him. He was clearly struggling with his decision, and all she could do was react to it instead of helping him through it.

Meanwhile, as he drove to work, Justin found himself agonizing over his pending meeting and his sudden ambivalence about turning down the promotion. He was already halfway down Maple Street before realizing that he had no idea how he had gotten there. It was the words coming from the radio that finally caught his attention. "We're back with Dr. Mac, our special guest this morning. Call us at 555-WKBT if you'd like some Macology with your coffee. He's here 'til nine!"

*Dr. Mac? Dr. Mac? Where have I heard that name before,* he wondered.  
“Hello, caller, you’re on *Breakfast with Bobbie and Jay*. Do you have a question for Dr. Mac?”

“Yes, I do. Good morning Dr. Mac. My name is Linda.”

“Good morning to you Linda,” said the friendly and confident voice on the radio.  
“Ask away.”

“Well, I’m the volunteer coordinator at my organization, and my job is to oversee the volunteers and to coordinate their assignments. A couple of days ago one of our younger volunteers, maybe eighteen or so, came in with a very noticeable nose ring plus a huge tattoo on the back of her neck. Now, don’t get me wrong, I don’t mind...”

Dr. Mac gently interrupted her and asked a few questions. As their conversation shifted from what was wrong to how to address the problem, it occurred to Justin where he had heard Dr. Mac’s name before. He was the guy who wrote that advice column Megan had shown him on Sunday.

“This is *that* guy,” he said out loud.

As Justin continued to listen, he couldn’t help but wonder what Dr. Mac would do with *his* dilemma. Although initially just kidding, the more he thought about it, the more he realized that getting a second opinion from a management guru might not be such a bad idea. *Hmm?*

Just before the show went into commercial, the radio announcer repeated the station’s phone number. Justin impulsively inserted the number into his cell phone and hit the send button just as he pulled into DataDump’s employee parking lot.

“WKBT Chicago, do you have a question for Dr. Mac?” the voice on the other end asked.

Surprised by the immediacy of the response, Justin began stumbling with his words, now fearful that other DataDump employees might be listening.

“Sir, you are not on the radio. I am the station manager and I am selecting the callers to pass on to Dr. Mac. Please, just tell me the specific question that you’d like to ask Dr. Mac.”

Feeling relieved, Justin said, “I was going to ask him if I should take a promotion I’ve just been offered, that’s all. It is not that important...I really don’t need to talk to him.”

“Oh, that’s a great question. We are getting too many complainers this morning, if you know what I mean. Your question will add a nice mix. Hold on, sir.”

Justin’s heart was pounding. “Oh, but...” and the next thing he knew he was on hold. His meeting with Christal was less than ten minutes away and here he was about to go on live radio from his car in the parking lot.

*This can’t happen,* he thought to himself. And then suddenly he heard Jay, one of the co-hosts, come on the air. “Dr. Mac, we’ve got a caller who wants your advice on whether or not he should take a promotion. Personally, I don’t know why you’d ever turn one down.”

“That’s because you’ve never been promoted,” joked Bobbie, the other host of the show. “Go ahead, sir!”

Justin tried to disguise his voice. “Ah...well...yes, I just wanted to know your thoughts on when it is a good idea to take a promotion.”

“And your name is?” asked Dr. Mac.

“Just...um, just Paul,” stumbled Justin.

“Okay, *just Paul*,” laughed Dr. Mac, “tell me a little more about your situation.”

Justin carefully chose his words, trying hard not to reveal too much. “Well, I was unexpectedly offered a promotion the other day, and I’m not sure it is in my best interest to take it, that’s all.”

“Paul, do you know why you were selected for the promotion?”

“No.”

“Do you value the opinion of the person who promoted you?”

“Yes.”

“Paul, are you worried that someone you know might hear this conversation on the radio?” inquired Dr. Mac, perceptively.

“Yes.”

“Okay, then let me do most of the talking and you just answer as best you can. Paul, does this promotion involve a position that you are capable of taking?”

“I think so.”

“Then, what’s the problem?”

“It’s not going over too well with my coworkers.”

“So let me see if I got this. You are worried about taking the promotion because your coworkers are not being very supportive of the idea. Is that what you are saying?”

“Yep.”

“Paul, let me ask you something. If you turn down this promotion, what do you think the odds are that your organization will come back to you with another promotional opportunity in the near future?”

“Probably not great.”

“Paul, listen to me. Do you want the promotion or not?”

“Yes, but ...”

“Because to be real honest with you, it sounds like you are more concerned with what other people think of you than what you think of yourself. Your coworkers won’t be deciding for you whether you take the promotion. You will. And, I might add, we are talking about a promotion that you ultimately want, that your boss thinks you should have, and that you are capable of taking. Please don’t take this wrong, but this decision isn’t about your coworkers, it’s about you! Moving into a management position involves making a lot of decisions that will not always be popular, but that are in the best interest of the organization. Get used to it, son. This is not about looking for acceptance. This is about stepping up to the plate and taking on a challenge. If you want to move into management, then take the promotion and give it everything you’ve got. Your opportunity is right here and now.”

Justin was moved by Dr. Mac’s response and knew he was right. This was his moment to step up to the plate and he didn’t need anyone else’s approval to do so. He was going to take the position!

“Thank you so much Dr. Mac,” said Justin, now feeling enlightened and energized. “You are absolutely correct. This is an opportunity that I’m not going to pass up. But can I ask one more question?”

“Go ahead.”

“Do you have any advice for me? I’ve never been a manager before.”

Dr. Mac paused before replying. “Paul, this may not be what you were expecting, but it is the best advice I could give you. Start keeping a journal. Write down your thoughts, feelings, and, most importantly, any and all insights you gain about yourself and about becoming a manager. Believe me, there will be a bunch of them.”

Dr. Mac’s advice, or *Macology* as the radio hosts preferred to call it, was exactly what Justin needed. Instead of dreading his meeting with Christal, he was now looking forward to it. Justin thanked Dr. Mac one final time and hung up. He didn’t want to keep Christal waiting.