You’ve been appointed as the acting manager for the day. As your manager focuses on wrapping up a pile of proposals she’s on the hook to submit by Friday, you are overseeing field workers—supervising, checking their work, and making sure everything runs smoothly. Today, however, everything seems to be going wrong. You know that some things will need to change, at least while you’re still in charge, but what are they? Think about how you would respond to this scenario, and view the back of the card to find feedback.

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| SUBJECT 1: “NOT MY FORTE” | SUBJECT 2: “DECLINED AND REASSIGNED” | SUBJECT 3: “ROLE REHEARSAL” |
| The product development manager, Tim Forte, is upset that yet another publication is in jeopardy of being delayed. He tells you that editing has been the bottleneck each time, but he can’t afford to miss his deadline. Theresa’s editing team retorts, stating that, for the third time, her team received copy all in one large submission. As she told Tim before, she needs to receive copy in sections. Otherwise the work overloads her team, requiring her to bring on temps to assist and pull all resources off other projects to focus on Tim’s publication. She is unwilling to risk other projects to tend to Tim’s self-created urgency. They need a solution, and fast. How do you manage this conflict? Why have you chosen your approach? | Juan comes on-site twice per month, and stays for three to four days at a time when he travels. He’s found that a lot of changes occur that are not communicated to him until he arrives. Because of this, his current project has been invalidated since the standards he used to create his draft have since been updated. To quickly turn the project around, it has been reassigned to a local staff member who has had the benefit of full involvement over the course of the project. Feeling isolated from the team, and as if the past six months of work and travel were for naught, Juan comes to you to contest his project being reassigned and asks that he is kept in the loop with major changes that might impact his work. How do you manage this conflict? Why have you chosen your approach? | Bethany is the best systems engineer on staff, and has recently been promoted to Senior Engineer. With her new role, she is required to lead meetings and attend quarterly conferences to represent the latest endeavors of the team. Bethany is incredibly shy and soft-spoken. She gets by in her meetings by allowing her PowerPoint decks to do the majority of the presenting for her. However, with her first quarterly conference around the corner, she is terrified. She is very qualified and knowledgeable for the task, if only she could get her thoughts out. She comes to you for a solution before she books her accommodations, or simply backs out. How do you manage this conflict? Why have you chosen your approach? |
| FEEDBACK:  A number of approaches could be taken to resolve these issues. Some might include a change in the composition of one or both of the teams. Perhaps Theresa can assign a lead editor to work directly with Tim’s team to ensure they stay on schedule and are prompted in a timely fashion—this personal and attentive approach may help alleviate surprises later. You may even consider acting as mediator, allowing them to solve their problem by coming to a mutual agreement. Tim may choose to resolve the issue by getting Theresa’s team set up on the online shared workspace used by his team, which allows the editor to be tagged on commentary, questions, and submissions that require their prompt response. | FEEDBACK:  You could take several approaches to mitigate the situation, such as calling on a majority rule vote. However, the results may be skewed in favor of the employee who is on-site regularly and thus more familiar with the voting team members. Structural changes may help, such as improving on technology that supports video conferencing and virtual white-boarding during all team meetings. It might also be helpful to identify a common opposing force, such as the failure of the national standards committee to ensure updates are communicated well in advance of their amendments taking effect. In the interim, you may help all parties to remain productive by having Juan and the local staff member act as a team, with Juan as a lead being supported directly. | FEEDBACK:  It might be difficult to suggest an approach that could change the social or working environment within the organization to accommodate the needs of all parties. For instance, you can’t change the structure of these conferences any more than you can rally on Bethany’s behalf for a different option for her presentation. You do have options, though. For example, you can consider a change in composition of the team by sending one of her team members with her to assist with the presentation. |

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