

SC rules against builder in project-hiring dispute

OPINION

Worker repeatedly discredits his coworkers

I'm a manager with five direct reports, including Raffy (not his real name), the most senior person in the group. The trouble is his tendency of belittling every move of his junior work colleagues. At every opportunity, Raffy would come in to my office to complain about many trivial issues like reporting how long they take their coffee or meal breaks. At one point, he came to my office complaining about one worker's tardiness. Fortunately, his co-workers don't know anything about his complaints. How do I handle the situation without antagonizing Raffy? — Pink Star.

There are two possible reasons for Raffy's treatment of his colleagues. One is attention-seeking. It is possible that he wants a raise or a promotion even if he knows he doesn't deserve it. He could also be deflecting the focus away from him because he can't prove his worth. Incompetent people do that so the attention is removed from them.

Which one is the most likely cause of Raffy's actions? I'd like to believe that Raffy is blaming or criticizing others as a cover-up for his own inadequacies or mistakes, as a sort of defense mechanism. He's trying to muddy the waters by diverting your attention to others.

"Blaming others," according to Arash Emamzadeh in *Psychology Today* (2023) "is more common in those who are experiencing negative feelings and are unable to regulate their emotions."

REMEDIES

What should you do? Every time that Raffy comes to you to complain, cut him off right away. Tell him that you can arrange for a private meeting with him in your office or in conference room to discuss all the things you've assigned him. Seek an update of what he has accomplished

so far. Make this a habit whenever Raffy complains about his colleagues, so he'll get the underlying message. Then proceed as follows:

One, acknowledge all the information that he's giving you. While you appreciate the help he's extending to you, emphasize that you don't have enough time to verify all the information. In this age of fake news and disinformation, say that you abhor receiving exaggerations and untruths.

Two, talk to each one of your direct reports. Probe for their version of events without divulging that the complaints came from Raffy. This is what I would call a quick but casual engagement dialogue to explore the workers' issues or challenges in performing their jobs. The objective is to address their immediate concerns before they become major issues.

Three, have a bias for concrete work performance. Remain steadfast that as long as there are no workers crossing the line as defined by the company's code of conduct, you're willing to ignore minor issues, as long as they deliver concrete results. Let him know that you're very particular about meritocracy.

Say that taking coffee breaks is not necessarily a bad thing as long as the workers are trying to solve work issues even away from their work stations.

Four, arrange for a weekly department meeting. The ideal approach is end-of-the-day reporting. If that's not possible or practical, require all your workers to submit a weekly one-page accomplishment report highlighting the tasks they have completed. This report must contain the weekly goals, status (achieved versus pending), timelines, estimated budget spent and the challenges encountered. Assign each worker to deliver an overview of all reports on a weekly rotation basis starting with Raffy, as the most senior.

Five, assign special projects to each worker every week. These may include waste elimination projects, cost efficiency initiatives, or anything to do with making their work easier. Require each worker to achieve at least 15% improvement from baseline levels provided by human resources, accounting or purchasing. These tasks should keep everyone busy.

Last, emphasize that cooperation is required from everyone. Teamwork is imperative even in the context of constructive competition. No one should be declared a sacred cow, regardless of their length of service in the organization. Everyone must follow the same route and be judged in accordance with uniform parameters or performance standards applicable to all workers.

REPUTATION

Emamzadeh might describe Raffy's defense mechanism as a "feature of mental illness" and recommended that "seeking therapy may be helpful as well." However, I will not advise you to do that unless Raffy has become combative and disruptive to his co-workers. Rather, require all workers to undergo a certain personality test conducted by a third-party service provider under the pretext that you're assessing them for a possible assignment.

Take positive steps to help improve Raffy's reputation. You can start by recognizing his accomplishments and perhaps offer him up as a case study for doing an excellent job. Catching people like Raffy doing a good job is a difficult proposition but not exactly impossible. You can start by looking at Raffy's small wins and congratulate him on those.

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THE Supreme Court (SC) has upheld an appeals court decision that ordered a construction firm to reinstate five workers after it had failed to prove that the terms of their hiring was on a project basis only.

In a 13-page resolution released on Feb. 17, the tribunal said Spraycrete Corp. did not establish that it had hired Mario Dugang, Jose Ramos, Hermenejildo Tac-an, Jr., Vicente Remoto and Bernabe Rellesiva for project employment only after it left them on floating status in 2015.

"For the proper characterization of the employment status, it is important to determine the fact of a notice on the duration and scope of the project, which must have been made at the time of the hiring," it said. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**

TESDA to provide more livelihood programs for women, OFWs

THE Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) said on Wednesday that it plans to offer more upskilling and livelihood programs to women and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) this year.

"We plan to empower our women industrial trades to provide them more opportunities for wage and employment," Aniceto D. Bertiz III, deputy director general of TESDA, said at a briefing.

He said retooling and upskilling will encourage its trainees to find high-quality employment in the Philippines instead of working overseas.

Mr. Bertiz said the TESDA Women's Center has trained more than 10,000 women since it opened in 1998.

"TESDA also recognizes the need to help retool and upskill the more than one million OFWs who were displaced and repatriated during the pandemic," he said.

The agency also plans to set up 18 innovation centers to provide training in information communications technology and other diploma courses.

TESDA was placed under the Department of Labor and Employment's supervision in September.

In December, the Department of Migrant Workers said it will provide livelihood programs for job-seekers who fell victim to human trafficking schemes.

The unemployment rate improved to a three-year low of 5.4% in 2022, the lowest rate since 5.1% recorded in 2019, before the coronavirus pandemic.

"By developing industrial skills in these non-traditional trades, women are given the chance to be more competitive in these industries mostly dominated by men," Mr. Bertiz said. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**



PLDT targets over 1,000-terabit international capacity by 2027

PLDT Inc. is aiming to breach 1,000 terabits of international capacity in the next five years by investing in subsea cables that will improve its customers' online experience.

"They (investments) also help boost the country's digital economy including the proliferation of fintech (financial technology), help create more jobs, and attract interested global tech giants or hyperscalers to invest here," said Albert Mitchell L. Loecin, PLDT first vice-president and head of enterprise and international business groups, in a press release.

The company said the rollout of the new cables is meant to meet the Filipinos' demand for international network capacity.

"[They] are meant to further advance the country's emerging digital economy, attract global hyperscalers, and future-proof its infrastructure," PLDT said.

Since its launch, the Jupiter Cable system has tripled the company's international capacity, it added.

PLDT is also on track to reach 100-terabit capacity by end-2023 after the Asia Direct Cable system finishes the construction of all landing sites and installation of submarine cable.

PLDT has also announced another cable system, Apricot, which is expected to be in service by mid-2025.

The \$80-million Apricot will be raising the company's total capacity by more than 130 terabits per second and will be reinforcing its links to Guam, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore.

"Together with our massive investments in data centers and newer technologies, these international cable infrastructures signify our commitment to provide customers faster and better digital services and help steer the country towards becoming a preferred digital hub for the expansion of tech giants and hyperscalers," said PLDT Vice-President and Global Capacity Strategy Head Gene C. Sanchez.

As of end-September 2022, PLDT has 11 data center sites and more than 1,091,000 kilometers of domestic and international fiber footprint.

Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has a majority stake in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Maya weighs raising fresh funds, sources say

MAYA, a financial technology firm in the Philippines, is considering raising about \$150 million from investors to boost its growth, according to people familiar with the matter.

The digital payments and banking company is working with financial advisers in a fund-raising deal that could bring its valuation closer to about \$2 billion, the people said, asking not to be identified because the matter is private. A round could help pave the way toward a potential initial public offering for the PLDT Inc.-backed company in the coming years, the people said.

Maya has drawn preliminary interest from prospective investors, including existing backers as well as other financial institutions and funds seeking to tap into Southeast Asia's growing economy, the people said.

Last year, it raised \$210 million from investors in a funding round that valued the fintech firm at nearly \$1.4 billion. The round was led by the Asian venture capital unit of US investment firm Susquehanna International Group, which was one of the earliest and largest backers of TikTok owner ByteDance Ltd.

Considerations are preliminary and details such as the size of the deal and valuation could still change, the people said. Representatives for KKR and Maya declined to comment.

Maya is an all-in-one money app, offering banking and payments services including e-wallet, savings, credit and cryptocurrency, among others, through its PayMaya Philippines and Maya Bank arms, its website shows. Maya Bank won a digital banking license in 2021 and launched the following year. It had one million registered customers and P10 billion (\$181 million) of deposits as of October, according to a press release.

Formerly known as Voyager Innovations, Inc., Maya was founded as a digital arm of PLDT, the Southeast Asian nation's biggest telecom company by market value, according to PLDT's annual report. Subsequent investment diluted PLDT's ownership to a noncontrolling stake, the report shows.

Along with PLDT and SIG, investors in Maya include EDBI, First Pacific Co., KKR & Co., Chinese technology giant Tencent Holdings Ltd., and the World Bank's International Finance Corp. — **Bloomberg**

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