

# CHANG-MAN

## A Real-World Management Case Study by Marcus Srianan

Seven years ago, when I was a young manager at the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government, there was a “unique” employee who worked on the fifth floor of the Fritz G. Lanham Federal Building in Fort Worth, Texas. He wasn’t my employee and worked in another division, but I came to know him through his notoriety and my brother. Let’s call him “Chang” for the sake of anonymity. Where I come from, it’s not uncommon to add “man” after a male friend’s name. Chang was more of an associate than a friend, but nevertheless, we called him “Chang-Man.” Chang-Man was highly intelligent and received a J.D. (Juris Doctor) degree in law from a top U.S. university. He was also a brilliant, self-taught programmer who wrote code as a hobby. His first major job didn’t involve those two disciplines, however. It was a U.S. Government agency that offered him a job and subsequently hired him to work as a leasing specialist.

Chang-Man’s division managed real estate deals and contracts for other agencies, and was primarily involved with finding and securing office spaces that belonged to building owners from the private sector (lessors) and arranging for them to be occupied by government agencies from the public sector (lessees). One aspect of Chang-Man’s job was to negotiate rent payments between the two parties. It was an important role: fairness and transparency were upheld to ensure that tax payer money wasn’t being wasted on exorbitant rental prices, while at the same time, private building owners received a fair rate for their assistance with providing government employees a place to work.

Another aspect of Chang-Man’s job wasn’t so spectacular. As required by his supervisor, he spent hours per day visiting his agency’s intranet, searching for real estate data and entering the information into Word documents to be printed and filed. This was an incredibly tedious chore and there was room for error, as the ability to copy and paste information from the intranet was inexplicably locked out. As you can envision, the job put great strain on the eyes and required much sitting. Unsurprisingly, Chang-Man was disillusioned with his sedentary work and began complaining to his peers. And, Chang-Man wasn’t the only one. Reportedly, 150 employees in his division were doing the same job and criticized the purpose of it, which no one seemed to have an answer for; however, there weren’t many who dared quit this vapid profession because it paid more than \$50,000 per year to start. Like his colleagues, Chang-Man also had no intention of quitting. He liked the money and he loved the city he was working in. Unlike his colleagues, though, Chang-Man decided to do something about his predicament and went to his manager to discuss the menial task he had to endure on a daily basis. Expecting a productive encounter, Chang-Man was deflated when his manager simply replied, “That’s how we do things around here.” Unsatisfied with his boss’s answer, Chang-Man took things further, but before we move on to that, there’s another side of Chang-Man that you should know.

Behind Chang-Man’s brilliance and the advanced education he possessed was an irritable, tempestuous personality. He was a drunk who frequented bars during work on a daily basis

and made relentless (yet failed) attempts to pick up women during his disoriented escapades. To the chagrin of many who witnessed his disorderly behavior, he was terrible at drinking and even worse with women. Through his exploits, he gained the ignominious reputation of being a mean drunk and a crude, unskilled flirt. Unfortunately, he couldn't purge himself of his vices and came up with an idea so that he could spend even more time pursuing his two favorite things.

One day, Chang-Man decided to put his hobby to use: programming, that is. He spent hours working on a program that would do his work for him. After several sessions of intense programming (at work, of course!), he had done it. His program was able to capture specific information from the agency's intranet and auto-populate an Excel spreadsheet with the necessary data. All Chang-Man had to do now was come into the office in the morning and log in to his work computer with his government credentials and password. He would then be officially in the system, and for all the agency knew, at work. Once in the system, Chang-Man would activate the program, and voila! The program would continuously work while he was away drinking and cavorting to his drunken heart's content. When he was done with his out-of-office activities, all he needed to do was come back to the office at the end of the workday and log out. It was as simple as that.

Chang-Man had the world in his pocket. He was getting paid for work that he wasn't physically doing and his coworkers didn't suspect anything. Booze and Texas beauties were plentiful and so were the hours that he had to play with. No more sitting around for Chang-Man. It was all fun and games. Once, I even saw Chang-Man in workout clothes going to the gym that we had in the building. Maybe he realized that one must be fit to survive all of that drinking and socializing!

It wasn't before long that Chang-Man, to his nefarious delight, realized that his program worked even better than he had intended. In seemingly no time, he had a pile of completed Excel spreadsheet hard copies on his desk that exponentially outnumbered anything that even the most capable leasing specialist on the fifth floor could churn out. He was elated at the capability of his program and began sharing what he had done with my brother, and you guessed it, me. He didn't tell anyone else for fear of getting into trouble for not physically being in the office for the required eight hours. Chang-Man ended up with a stack of completed work that was so phenomenal he couldn't contain himself and decided it was time to show his boss. He even estimated how effective the program was with the statistic that, if implemented department-wide, it could reduce the number of employees in the office who had to do the job from 150 to just 12 individuals. What a game-changer!

As Chang-Man walked toward his boss's large office suite with his admirable bundle of papers in hand, he couldn't help but smile to himself knowing that he would now have not only alcohol and the thought of girls to fill his day, but he would also be full from all of the praise and acceptance his supervisor would no doubt heap on him. This moment would be especially noteworthy for Chang-Man because his supervisor, like many in the organization, had qualms about his employee's ability to get work done like a real U.S. Government official. How could there be any doubt in the manager's mind now?

**YOU ARE CHANG-MAN'S MANAGER. It's time to put your skills to work by answering the questions below.**

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Is it unethical for Chang-Man to have a computer program perform his duties while he is away from the office? Why?

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2. Would you do the same thing if you were Chang-Man? Why?

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3. Do you think that Chang-Man should be punished or praised for what he did? Why? How will you punish or praise him? Why?

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4. Should Chang-Man have consulted with you before creating his program? Why?

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5. What will you do with Chang-Man and his program?

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