**Cases for Small Group Discussion**

**Case 5–1. Presentations and Technology**

Jessica Dunham paced as she spent the last few moments before her board presentation, trying to calm down. She had prepared a PowerPoint presentation and had practiced many times. It was no different than many PowerPoint presentations she had done in college, but this time it was on the job and in front of her boss’s boss!

She walked into the room. Everyone was seated and ready. Jessica had started the projector earlier and made sure everything was working properly. “Good morning, everyone,” she began. Just then, the lights flickered. She looked at the projector in horror. It had shut down. She quickly restarted the machine, and it warmed up within one minute . . . of silence. Jessica was embarrassed and even more anxious now.

“Let’s try this again,” she said with a smile. “Good morning, everyone,” she said. “I have a presentation prepared for you today summarizing our port logistics.”

Jessica pushed the slide advance button on the remote. Nothing happened. She pushed the button again and again, frantically. “Well this doesn’t seem to be working.”

Jessica stepped in front of the projection. The projector blinded her temporarily, but she was able to advance the slide with the arrow buttons on the keyboard of her laptop computer. “This exhibit shows our historical traffic patterns prior to the opening of dock 43.”

Jessica looked at the screen in horror; the exhibit had shrunk to the size of a page of typing paper. When the power had surged, the projector had reset at its highest resolution! Jessica turned beet red. “Excuse me just a moment, folks,” she said.

Jessica spent the next minute and a half scrolling though the menus to reset the resolution setting for the display. “OK, now let’s review the traffic patterns . . . the blue lines indicate the traffic prior to the opening of dock 43, and the red lines show the traffic patterns after the opening.”

Jessica looked at the screen again. The red lines were absent from her display. For the next four minutes, she apologized for the delays as she reopened her linked data file that had also closed when the power flickered.

For the remainder of the presentation, no mishaps occurred, but Jessica felt the damage had been done. She returned to her office and hung her head in her hands. Her boss showed up two minutes later. “Builds character, huh, Jess?” she said. “Same thing happened to me about a year after I started. I learned quickly that one of the hazards of counting on technology is that technology can let you down. Ever since then, I have a paper handout backup, just in case.”

“That was so embarrassing! I’m surprised I wasn't fired!” Jessica replied.

“No, you didn’t show the board anything they hadn’t seen before, Jess. Don’t worry about it. Learn from it! Take a deep breath, go get a latte, and then get back to work!”

**Case 5-1 Questions**

1. What can we learn from Jessica's negative experience?

*Jessica’s boss is right—technology can and will fail. Since business audiences are typically sympathetic and consist of people who have had similar problems with technology while speaking, it is wise to maintain composure and even use humor as you attempt to fix the problem.*

1. How would you structure a “paper backup plan” as Jessica’s boss suggested?

*E-mailing everyone a copy of the PowerPoint file ahead of time is one way to ensure that the audience sees the material. Distributing copies of the slide deck immediately before speaking is another option. The advantage of the second choice is that audience members will be less likely to skip the meeting.*