

# Silent Struggles: The Human Cost of Excessive Corporate Demands (A, B, C)

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**Abstract.** Lily Reid was a bright and ambitious 26-year-old who joined Veriamos Technologies (VTI) in September 2024. She stepped into a demanding role on Project Vanguard, filling in after the sudden exit of another member, Ace Mathew. VTI, a global tech company aiming to be the “world’s most trusted technology partner,” was already struggling with the project. Frequent changes, tight budgets, high pressure, and people leaving the team made things extremely tough. Lily had just finished her MBA and was eager to prove herself, but soon found herself working 18 to 20 hours a day. The pressure was intense, and she was clearly exhausted physically and mentally yet organizational demands continued unabated. Just three months later, Lily died suddenly from a heart attack while working late into the night. Her death left many questions. What went wrong? How can a company allow this to happen? And now, how should VTI respond? This tragic incident raises questions about workplace culture, employee well-being, crisis communication, and real corporate responsibility?

**Keywords:** workplace culture, employee well-being, crisis communication, corporate responsibility, reputational risk.

**Declaration:** This is a fictional case, one of three with the same title, intended for classroom use only. All details are fictive; any resemblance to real persons or organizations is coincidental.

## VTI Corp.

VTI, founded in 1984 by entrepreneur Madav Bell, grew from a small startup in Square Shoulder, Texas, into a major global player in consulting with global presence and offices in Namibe (Angola), Melbourne (Australia), Nyala (Sudan), Ibiza (Spain), Hyderabad (India), and Tirana (Albania). A part of the “large six” companies, rivalling Accenture and Deloitte, VTI offered an extensive suite of services. The company’s workforce grew to over 200,000 employees with operations in 150 countries, headed by Maxwell Creed (Exhibit 1). The landscape was intense with challenges including shrinking margins, rising costs and evolving client demands, with some of them internalizing centres of excellence for functions that were once outsourced leading to added pressure of timely delivery and talent selection.

VTI’s organizational culture promoted collaboration, diversity, and continuous learning, with a conscious emphasis on work-life balance and employee wellness despite the demanding environment - tight deadlines, high

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client expectations, and continuous innovation of the consulting industry. Long hours, frequent travel, and the pressure to deliver projects at a relentless pace can lead to burnout, stress, and health issues and therefore, VTI invested in employee well-being benefits (Exhibit 2), including free counselling and mandatory recharge weeks after big projects. Nevertheless, turnover remained high and many employees still reported persistent stress and chronic fatigue.

### **About Lily Reid**

Lily Reid exemplified resilience and capability, having navigated both personal and academic milestones at only 26. Raised in a small town near Bucharest, Romania, Lily faced adversities early in life. After losing her father at a young age, her mother, a schoolteacher, was a constant source of strength and wisdom.

She graduated top of her class with a Master's in Management from Università Bocconi. Her professors recognized her brilliance, demeanour, and prioritization as she managed multiple leadership roles as president of several student clubs along with a Teaching Assistant's post while being involved in authoring research papers, community service, administrative support part time jobs and internships. Her achievements extended beyond academics as a national swimming champion and Valedictorian, drawing a reputation from both peers and mentors.

Lily demonstrated interpersonal thoughtfulness: remembering birthdays, bringing homemade soup to unwell friends, and supporting friends and family, regardless of schedules. At the time of joining, she was newly married, necessitating a temporary long-distance arrangement. Her transition to VTI marked her first extended period away from home, introducing emotional challenges. Living apart from her mother felt like severing an invisible thread that connected them. Her new position at VTI was a pivotal step; substantial to accommodate her in an already large team and prominent enough to springboard her career. Lily's past experience gave her expertise in risk advisory and management, yet, stepping into the new role, she sensed an unspoken challenge beyond the usual complexities of a large project or settling in a new role with a new team.

### **Project Vanguard**

Project Vanguard was among one of the most critical assignments VTI had ever taken on. The clients were a government entity and a major global financial corporation, known for high expectations and tight timelines. VTI was hired to build an AI-driven system to transform client management and regulatory compliance. Success would open a profitable new market and lead to future contracts; failure risked severe reputational damage and financial loss. VTI had never taken on something of this scope or scale and was willing to commit substantial resources on the project win.