

# Little by little, indifference sank the leader of Texaco

In October 2000, Texaco CEO Peter Bijur made a big decision: He agreed to sell the company to Chevron.

At the time, Bijur was widely hailed for steering the oil giant through high-profile racial discrimination litigation in 1994. After tape recordings surfaced of Texaco managers making racist comments, Bijur responded by suspending the executives, apologizing publicly and announcing new anti-discrimination policies.

But his response to the Chevron deal proved his undoing. Rather than engineer a smooth transition, Bijur seemed detached. Within months of announcing the deal, Bijur's behavior led observers to question his leadership. His use of the corporate jet raised ire, and he authorized almost \$2 million to renovate Texaco's suite at the ritzy Carlyle Hotel in New York.

Concern mounted at Texaco's 2000 Christmas party. Bijur told colleagues that he wasn't excited about relocating to San Francisco—Chevron's headquarters—after the merger. His comment irked employees who were worried about losing their jobs.

In early 2001, Bijur missed some important meetings. When about 50 executives from both companies convened to discuss the deal, he instead traveled to Switzerland for the World Economic Forum. Weeks later, he skipped another key meeting to vacation in Florida.

Texaco's board of directors grew increasingly alarmed at Bijur's actions. Fed up, the board stunned Bijur by firing him in March 2001.

— Adapted from ["Texaco Insiders Assert Behavior Played Role in Bijur's Departure,"](#) Thaddeus Herrick & Nikhil Deogun, [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com).