

Ever-Ready Security: Teaching Notes

This case focuses on management decision-making in difficult situations. In the first case, the manager (Marsha) must evaluate the actions of an employee. In the second, the manager herself is under scrutiny for possible unethical behavior. A goal of this case is to expose students to the process of decision-making and to understand that decisions in a real business context are rarely black and white. They also need to understand, however, that decision-making in these situations must be careful and deliberate.

Stage 1:

Learning Objectives

Stage 1 focuses on managing employees in difficult situations, something all management students will face. This case explicitly explores how to solve problems and make decisions regarding employees in ambiguous situations.

1. (Work individually). Assume you are Marsha and you just talked to Steve. What information do you know? What information do you need to know? How can you get this information?

What we know

- Customer is not happy and may drop MarTech
- There is a problem at the client site
- Boxes and Pallets may be contributing to the problem

What we don't know

- Is Steve sleeping?
- Steve's past performance record
- Has Steve been adequately trained?
- What is the company's discipline policy?
- Has Harley-Davidson had trouble with our employees in the past?

2. (Work as a team). How would you handle Dennis' concerns? What actions—if any—would you take with Steve?

- Examine Steve's performance history and talk with his immediate supervisor.
- What is the official company policy if an employee is sleeping on the job? Is there a policy?
- Has Steve been properly trained?
- Ask Steve if he has ever slept on the job. Sometimes employees will be honest. In that case, terminate based on the admission.
- If Steve has an acceptable performance record, discuss the situation with him and counsel him on the company's policy. Discuss the actions that will occur if it happens again.

Stage 2:

Learning Objectives

Stage 2 shifts its focus away from Steve and toward Marsha, but the focus remains on management decision-making. To what extent are managers justified in pursuing the company's best interests?

This case also requires students to evaluate other's actions using an accepted ethical framework—Stockholder theory, Stakeholder theory, and social contract theory.

Suggested Answers to Questions

1. (Work as a team). Discuss the issues around Marsha's decision to hide the camera. Using the attached theories of ethics, decide whether or not Marsha's actions are ethical.
 - Answers here will vary, depending on the ethical theory used.
 - Instructors should explain organizations and individuals should evaluate the ethical framework that they feel is best for them, and then stick to it over time.
2. Now imagine you are Marsha's supervisor. Write a memo to Marsha, evaluating her handling of the situation at Harley-Davidson.
 - Memo should be professional in style and content.
 - Memo must evaluate Marsha's actions as appropriate or inappropriate, describe the specific actions that will be taken, and justify the action.
3. (Do as a concluding class discussion) Final thought question: Assume the video camera illustrates that Steve is actually sleeping on the job. Do you terminate?
 - If the evidence only comes from the video recorder, you should not terminate. Instead, put policies in place that make it clear another incident will result in termination.
 - Company may actually terminate if Steve was actually sleeping on the job.
 - If Marsha did not know there was a policy against recording employees without their consent (or if there isn't a policy!), then counsel her and explain this is unacceptable behavior. Put policies in place to prohibit it happening in the future.
 - If the video recorder action did not result from ignorance, then there is a problem and she should be disciplined.
 - If a policy is in place that she knowingly violated, you might terminate.

Master list of learning objectives for the Ever-Ready Security problem

Participants in this problem will:

1. Be introduced to a difficult management situation based on a real world situation.
2. Learn to define what they know and don't know in an ambiguous management situation involving an employee and an angry client.
3. Practice forms of business communication, including writing memos, talking to clients and addressing concerns with employees. In such communications, it will be important to describe specific actions that will be taken, and to justify decisions in writing.
4. Be introduced to three theories of business ethics, and have practice applying them to a situation.
5. Discuss a manager's options, including when he or she is justified in pursuing a company's best interests.
6. Be introduced to problem-based learning procedures, including writing learning issues, discussing difficult cases in small groups, and writing collaboratively.
7. Learn the importance of company policy in guiding managerial actions and decisions.
8. Practice discussing when an employee can or should be terminated.
9. Practice ways to sensitively question employees about their own job performance.