

You have a new engineer in one of the teams that you manage. It's nearing the 90- day probationary period and the team leader has come to you with a very unfavorable rating for the engineer. The team leader explained that although the new engineer graduated two years ago and supposedly came with experience, that his performance is less than the sophomore co-op student in the team. Now is the time to cut him loose. But, just this morning you learned that this new engineer is marrying the CEO's daughter in a few months.

What will you do?

You've been promoted to managing a department that has been acknowledged as one of the company's better performing units. After getting acclimated you start to realize that reports vs. results don't jibe. By the actual results, the department is actually one of the poorer performing departments. The previous manager is a good friend, and when you confronted him with the discrepancy, he admitted that he'd been fudging the numbers because financially, since his wife was downsized from her company, he really needed the big promotion that he just got. On the heels of that news, you just learned that top management is assessing which departments they are going to downsize this year because of poor performance.

What do you do?

Your management has told you that you will share in the incentive award from the customer if the project you are leading is completed early. Later, while finalizing the last major deliverable, your team informs you that the deliverable meets the requirements in the contract but will not provide the actual functionality the customer needs. If this deliverable is later than an additional 4 days, the project will not be completed early and the incentive award will be lost. You could really use the \$7,000 that would be your portion of the award.

What do you do?

The business is still dragging through a rough patch and management is planning yet another round of cutbacks. You've been told that they plan to lay off the poorest performer on each team. Your part of the plan is to identify the poorest performer in your group – even though you've built a team with some of the best quality and service numbers in the company. Upper management and HR will communicate the actual layoff message (you don't have to be the bearer of bad news this time). You've been cutting some slack for one of the weaker performers because you've had such a high performing team. While he's usually a strong performer, he's struggling with some problems in his personal life that are affecting his work: he just closed on a house, his firstborn child has been sick, he and his wife are expecting twins shortly, and his father recently passed away.

What do you do?

You are a new VP of HR at a heavy equipment manufacturer. Responsibilities include the safety department, and as such the Safety Manager reports directly to you. The Safety Manager has 14+ years with the company, starting as an engineering technician and moving up through the ranks. He is experienced in safety, holds several national certifications and oversees a revitalized safety program that has 2+ years' outstanding safety records in numerous plants. He is well regarded by management and hourly workers alike. You just received a call at home from the Safety Manager. He said that he'd been involved in a traffic accident as he was headed over to pick up his children from his wife. He shared that they'd been going through a contentious divorce. He described making a left turn in front of oncoming traffic, which was hard to see in the rain and because of a blind knoll at that intersection. Thankfully no one was hurt. He went on to explain that he'd stopped and had a few beers with a friend before heading to the house. At the accident scene he was given a sobriety test and was at .082. State law considers anything .08 or higher as DUI. All eyes will be on you and how you handle this situation. No doubt the rumor mill will soon be abuzz.

What are you going to do and how will you explain your decision to the president?

You are entering your second year working at All Is Good Family Practice. Dr. Wanna Dogood is the founder and primary physician. There is one other doctor in the practice. The practice is a primary health care provider serving over 2,000 patients in a rural county in South Carolina. Although the practice can no longer accept new patients due to capacity constraints, revenues are not keeping pace with outgoing financial obligations. A closer look by the accountant reveals that patients are not being billed in a timely manner and some services were never billed at all. Concerned over the well being of the practice, you and the other doctor met with Dr. Dogood and requested a change in the current office manager. Dr. Dogood's response was: "I know that Peter is having problems keeping up with his office management responsibilities since the practice has grown so large, but, he is the last of my original crew and I will not betray his loyalty."

What are you going to do?

You are one of the most junior lawyers in a prestigious firm. Productivity and billable hours are an important piece of the business focus. You've so far proven yourself an effective lawyer and efficient researcher. Clients have given good feedback about working with you. All this was relayed to you as good news. Then it was pointed out that you have the fewest billable hours in the firm. You were a little unsettled and decided to seek the advice of one of the youngest partners in the firm. She was rather flip about the issue and said that it was easily resolved by adding an extra hour or two onto each bill. She said that it would be a more realistic reflection of how much time it should take to do the work that you have accomplished so effectively, in less time.

What do you do?

You are a local banker. A valued customer, Mr. Elrod, is applying for a loan to upgrade some vital equipment. You recently overheard a conversation at a cocktail party. Two of his largest customers were discussing their frustration with Mr. Elrod and recent late deliveries and quality issues. They seemed to be planning a switch to a competitor. Part of their discussion is speculation that his business problems are being compounded by his increased use of alcohol. The overheard comments do not reflect the information that Mr. Elrod has provided as support for the loan. In fact Mr. Elrod has cited large orders from the two customers you overheard. Do you engage his two customers in a conversation on the subject of Mr. Elrod?

Do you confront Mr. Elrod with the information you overheard?

You work for a successful mid-size manufacturing company. Recently you have been promoted to Regional Sales Manager for the company's new operation in Mexico. The General Manager of the Mexican facility has been handling sales for the nine months of operation since the new plant was built. You are calling on a major potential account. During the conversation, the Purchasing Agent implies that he is considering giving you their business, which would be a sizeable increase in sales for your company. He indicates that the decision is dependent upon "personal consideration" and seems to think the GM has made similar arrangements with other customers.

What do you do about the obvious request for an "under the table" bribe? What about the indications that this has been the practice of the General Manager before your arrival?

You have been named Plant Manager for a major manufacturing facility. It is a significant career move for you and one of the most visible positions in the Company. Shortly after you arrive, you learn that your predecessor has inflated the plant's results by seriously cutting maintenance programs and spare parts. It is clear you will have to report major increases in costs or suffer serious production losses in the near future. This will obviously be a very poor result compared to the results reported by the previous manager who has now been named Vice President for the Division. You also know that most people believe he will soon be named to a corporate position, putting him in line for CEO in 2-3 years. His reputation as a "darling" of the current CEO seems to be well deserved.

What do you do?

Rotary's Four-Way Test

The Rutland Ethics Toolbox Approach

Goodwill
Better Friendships
Beneficence

Weigh the Options

Truth
Fairness

Check the Impacts

Goodwill
Better Friendships
Beneficence

Be Your Hero

Decision/moral judgment
(Confidence comes when answers converge)

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A Decision Framework

For ethical decision making – a systematic approach

1. Identify Issues and Stakeholders
2. Analyze alternatives using the Four-Way Test
3. Justify (confidence comes when answers converge)
4. Decide / Act

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