

# CASE REPORT WORKSHEET

Please answer each of the items on the form below. Certain cases will be adapted for use in training. If your case is selected for use, you will be contacted for your permission to use it and, if permission is given, for more details. The case prepared for final use will be written so that all people involved, including yourself, will be anonymous.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Work phone \_\_\_\_\_

Describe a challenging situation you have faced or are currently facing as a supervisor. There are several reasons why the situation may be challenging:

- It was unusual.
- Even though it was usual, you were not sure what to do about it.
- The demands or conditions were complicated.

There could be other reasons. The situation could be a problem or an opportunity. It might involve an individual or group you manage directly, or someone you do not manage at all. Use the reverse of this page or attach additional paper if you need more writing space.

1. Identify the people who were involved: use job titles (no names) and describe each person's age, gender, years in current position, and/or any other relevant characteristics.

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2. Describe the nature of the situation. What is going on? What is happening? What is the performance issue?

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3. What was your role? What did you do, and what happened?

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4. What was the conclusion, or what is the current status?

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Return to \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_



# Analyzing a Case: A General Strategy

A case is a story that describes a problematic incident, event, or situation. It typically reports in-depth information about certain aspects of the situation while under-reporting other aspects, and its conclusion is commonly left open-ended. The mission of case analysis is to make sense of the given material and to identify appropriate actions for handling the case situation.

Successful case discussions begin with an analysis of the key issues in the case. The analysis then serves as the basis for defining the most desirable outcomes and considering what options are available. This process usually results in a diversity of opinion as participants view the case situation from their unique perspectives, stressing different values and promoting different outcomes. Such diversity of opinion is the strength of the group case exercise. Participants should value these differences, recognizing them as essential to learning, and make a special effort to encourage new opinions about the case. As a result, the case exercise will become an even more profitable learning experience.

In case analysis, participants also evaluate the different opinions about the case and use their evaluations as the basis for forming a common opinion. By working together in this way to build group consensus on case solutions, participants gain a deeper understanding of how they can constructively deal with real-life leadership issues. Included below are case analysis guidelines that constitute a seven-step method for reaching group consensus. These steps provide participants with a common source of direction for addressing case issues, and also appear in the form of a handy Case Analysis Worksheet at conclusion of this section (see page xvii).

## Case Analysis Guidelines

### **Step 1.** *What are the key issues or problems of the case?*

Any case may suggest several interpretations of what the focal concerns are. It is helpful to begin by identifying as many different interpretations as possible. Have each participant state why he or she identified the issues or problems as key.

### **Step 2.** *Prioritize the problems.*

Participants should focus on the key issues of the case. This may involve selecting one of the issues already raised or creating a new statement that identifies the problem. In some cases, there may be several problems at work, in which case participants may wish to simply rank the problems in terms of either potential importance or timing of impact.

**Step 3.** *Consider whether it is necessary to determine the "cause" of the problem.*

In some cases, it is important to determine what caused the problem in order to identify the appropriate solution(s). In other cases, the cause of the problem is not as important as what to do about it. Therefore, when working on a case, always ask whether it is necessary to decide what the cause is.

It should be noted that speculating on the motivations of the individuals in a case seldom does more than sidetrack a case study. By trying to determine why a person acted in a certain way, participants can easily fall into unproductive discussions that revolve around guesswork instead of focusing on the situation at hand. Managers and supervisors often must respond to actions (or lack of actions) made by the people with whom they work, and reflecting on the motivations of others is, in this regard, only a diversion.

**Step 4.** *Brainstorm the options available to the leader.*

There is always one option: Do nothing. However, there are usually several ways to respond to a problem, and helping participants identify those options is an important part of case discussions. Participants should be encouraged to use their best brainstorming skills to determine what the options are.

**Step 5.** *Evaluate the options.*

Each option will have advantages and disadvantages. In management and human resource issues, there are several criteria that may be useful for evaluating different options, including:

- The power of the option to solve the problem
- The impact of the option on organizational performance and/or morale
- Legal or regulatory liabilities and requirements
- Cost of the option
- The ability of the person(s) involved to carry out the option (in terms of skill, authority, or basic motivation)

**Step 6.** *Select the optimum solution*

The ideal solution will produce the best outcome at the least cost. In management situations, this may not be possible. Therefore, selecting the best solution may involve balancing competing opportunities and constraints with an optimum solution that produces satisfactory outcomes on as many criteria as possible.

**Step 7.** *Describe how the solution should be implemented.*

Create a plan or "script" of what the manager or supervisor should do to implement the solution.

# CASE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

1. What are the key issues or problems of the case?

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2. Prioritize the issues or problems.

1) 

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2) 

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3) 

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3. Is it necessary to identify the cause of the problem?

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4. Brainstorm the options available.

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5. Evaluate the options:
- |         | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---------|------------|---------------|
| • <hr/> | <hr/>      | <hr/>         |
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6. Select the optimum solution.

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7. Describe how the solution should be implemented.

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# CASE 1

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## How Come They Make More Than Me?

Fran Jefferson began her job as the supervisor of the Training Department of Metro Bank and Trust Company almost four years ago. She was generally pleased with the four trainers and one secretary in her unit. Indeed, Fran took pride in her ability to create a high morale and high performance unit. This was particularly pleasing to Fran because they were constantly busy and barely able to keep up with the volume of training expected from them.

Then, early on Wednesday morning, Fran's secretary, Judy Martin, knocked on Fran's door and asked to see her. Fran liked Judy and considered the secretary to be one of her "stars." Indeed, in an effort to develop Judy's talents and abilities, Fran had gone out of her way to give Judy special assignments, including her in all the major planning activities of the department and entrusting her with the administration of certain departmental programs, such as tuition assistance and evaluation follow-through. By now, Judy functioned more as an administrative aide than as a secretary.

It was clear that Judy was upset about something as she seated herself in the chair next to Fran's desk. Slowly, Judy placed a job-posting application form in front of Fran. She would not look her supervisor in the eyes.

Fran was surprised, to say the least. As far as Fran knew, Judy liked both her job and working in the Training Department. In turn, everyone else in the department liked and respected Judy.

Fran looked over the form and said casually, "So you want to post for the executive secretary job in the Branch Management Division." She paused. "Could I ask you for some additional information, Judy? I'm kind of surprised."

Judy looked at her clasped hands, thinking. Fran waited.

Finally, Judy looked up and said: "I noticed in last week's job posting that the executive secretary position is graded as a 14. Now that's two grades higher than my job!"

She caught her breath. "You know my friend Mary Johnson works over there. She told me that half the time the secretary sits around doing nothing."

Judy continued, gathering some anger in her look and resentment in her voice. "Look, Fran, you know how hard I work, how hard we all work, around here. I mean, I'm always busy. I don't see why I should work in a job graded at a 12 and work twice as hard and yet not be paid the same as that secretary. The job requirements for the job are just a littler higher than mine, and the merit raise you gave me last month hardly helped at all."

Fran listened; then she replied: "It sounds to me, Judy, that you're feeling angry because you think you should be paid more for the work you do and that you want to switch jobs rather than put up with things as they are. Am I right?"

Judy nodded her head in agreement.

Fran knew, though, that the Metro job evaluation system was up to date and that the executive secretary position to which Judy referred did require additional background experience, skills, and responsibilities beyond what was needed in Judy's current job. Because her secretary was such a good employee and a nice person, Fran was quite concerned. She felt strongly that moving to the executive secretary job would not be what Judy really wanted, and she hated to lose Judy, especially if her decision was based on faulty reasoning and the move would not be good for her.

Fran tried to figure out what to do.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. What are the reasons given by Judy Martin for wanting to post for a position in another department? What points are accurate and which are debatable?
2. How should Fran respond to Judy's request to transfer?
3. How should Fran respond to Judy's salary complaints?

# CASE 2

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## "She's a Smart Enough Broad"

The young man glanced at the nameplate on his desk after closing the file cabinet drawer: *James Washington, Center Manager*. He leaned against the cabinet for a moment, smiling and thinking.

James really liked the way that title sounded. And why not? He was only 24 years old, had just completed the company's Management Associate Trainee Program, and had just assumed the manager's job at the Northview Servicing Center. He was eager to do a good job in this first assignment, and there was a lot about the job that he liked. However, there was one thing he didn't like, and he could see her through the glass partition of his office, out on the service center's main floor.

His problem was Dorothy Rogers or, more exactly, the way he felt about her. In his opinion, she was both pushing and resisting him.

Dorothy was something of an established figure at Northview, having worked there for over 12 years as an assistant manager. She was now 59 years old and had dropped hints occasionally about retiring. "If only....," James thought to himself.

He remembered the first time he met Dorothy, about six weeks ago. James had just learned he was being promoted into the Northview manager's job. He went to visit the service center, to meet the personnel and begin the transition process with Hank Waters. Hank was the current manager and was being moved to manage a larger branch of the company, closer to his home. He had been at Northview almost two years.

After showing James the facility and introducing some of the sales and service representatives, Hank had walked James to Dorothy's desk and introduced them. Although she was very pleasant and nice, James watched rather uncomfortably as Hank tried to pass along an assignment to her regarding a customer account investigation. Six weeks later, their exchange, which follows, remained clear in James' memory.

HANK:

By the way, Dorothy, can you follow up on the Williams' account problem we talked about earlier today? I just got word from downtown that—

DOROTHY (interrupting in a soft yet determined voice):

Now, Hank, you know that if I do that for you, I won't be able to take care of the budget reconciliation report you have me do each week. Don't you think you can take care of it yourself?



HANK (pausing a moment, obviously thinking):

Well, yes, I know you're busy. I was just hoping that you could—

DOROTHY (jumping back in, this time with a certain accusatory tone in her voice:

Look, Hank what do you want me to do? I can't do both. You know I'm busy.

(She stares expectantly at Hank; James looks at her desk, which is neat and clean.)

HANK (pausing again, biting his lower lip):

Well, you know...OK, you may be right. Let me go ahead and do it.

DOROTHY (nodding in agreement):

That's better, I think. Don't you?

Hank had seemed relieved to end the conversation. He walked with James back into his office. Dorothy went to get some coffee.

"She really runs this place," Hank told James. "I hate to impose. She knows so much about all the operational and service matters of this center."

James nodded his head. "I guess she must be pretty important."

Hank hadn't reacted as he sat behind his desk.

James moved back to the chair behind his desk. He continued to look at Dorothy as she finished working with her customer. He thought back to his first few weeks on the job. At first, Dorothy had been fine and, in fact, very helpful. This was perfect because not only did James still have a great deal to learn about Northview's operations, he also had a lot of work to do elsewhere. For example, much of his time was spent outside the service center, meeting existing customers, doing sales calls, attending training and fulfilling similar obligations. In the month that he had been at Northview, he had spent probably no more than a total of five hours with her.

Unfortunately, most of that time with Dorothy had been spent sorting out and listening to a problem between her and Senior Service Associate Bonnie Johnson. Bonnie was Dorothy's age, but that was about all the two women seemed to have in common, for Bonnie was rather quiet and reserved. James had expressed his interest in Bonnie taking a more active role in working with the other service associates, but Dorothy had not liked that idea, thinking that James was trying to take away some of her job duties. Consequently, she started fighting with Bonnie over any little detail.

James learned about this bickering from comments and meetings with both Dorothy and Bonnie, as well as from some of the center's other service associates. Last Monday, after what seemed like a week of nonstop arguing, he had called them both into his office.

"Look, you two," he had told them, "I'm really getting tired of all this squabbling. I expect both of you to cooperate and function as a team. I'm the one running the show here. If this fighting doesn't stop, I'll have to put you on probation. And if it doesn't stop after that, I may just fire you."

Shocked and silent, both had left his office without barely a glance in his direction.

After that meeting, Dorothy became quiet, but seemed unmotivated. She appeared to have settled into a low-energy and low-output mode. She would do what she was supposed to do, but nothing more than that. And James had overheard her complaining to other employees, both at Northview and elsewhere, about a number of things, including the company, the service center, and James. He had thought to himself, "She's just a negative person. Sure, she's a smart enough broad. She knows how far she can go. But don't expect her to be of any real help."

Upon remembering those thoughts, James leaned back in his chair, rubbing his eyes. He could not argue with that estimation of Dorothy, only confirm it. His mind turned to what had happened at closing yesterday. The memory was so vivid it was as if the events were taking place at that very moment.

The last customer had just left and the doors are being locked. Everyone is busy closing their stations when suddenly Dorothy brings out a small portable television, makes herself comfortable at her desk, and turns the television on, clearly intending to watch it.

James, seeing her do this, is dumbfounded. He thinks to himself, "What in the hell is she doing? If my boss comes here, I'm in big trouble." He remembers the recent memo from headquarters, demanding more productivity and application to getting the work done.

He walks over to her desk. She smiles as he approaches and says, "Oh, it's OK, James. We do this every so often. Hank said I could watch it when I had to stay and finish up routine work, as long as I wouldn't let it interfere with the work."

James feels pushed to the limit. He decides not to say anything to her and leaves, certain that at this point she's testing him, trying to find out how far she can go. She is challenging his authority again, he feels, and this time he must do something dramatic.

James was still trying to decide what to do as he watched Dorothy finish with the customer and return to her seat.

### CASE QUESTIONS

1. Is there a problem(s) here?
2. What is (are) the problem(s)?
3. What should be done?

# CASE 7

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## Mary Corey

### Background Information

Mary Corey recently completed her fourth year with Statewide Services Corporation. In her position as customer support specialist, she consistently received high performance evaluations—until recently. Indeed, her most recent evaluation, completed three weeks ago, rated her as "less than satisfactory." Her supervisor, Helen Rowe, wondered why this previously strong employee had fallen so quickly.

Helen had just returned from a meeting with her boss, Betty Alden, when again the subject of Mary came up. Betty suggested that Helen look through Mary's past work-records to try to find some clues about what happened and what they should do now.

Helen closed the door to her office, sat at her desk, and pulled Mary's personnel folder from her desk drawer. As she flipped through the materials in the folder, Mary's story came into better focus:

About six months ago, around Christmastime, Mary started taking longer lunch breaks. Given the cramped quarters in which Helen's Customer Support Department worked and the demanding routines they had to follow, it was easy to notice her stretching her regular lunch period by 10 or 15 minutes. Once she even stretched it for a full 25 minutes. Since it was the holiday season, Helen took no specific action. However, her occasional remarks reminding Mary of the lunch break schedules would produce an uncharacteristically evasive, defensive response from Mary. On at least two occasions, she nodded off to sleep at her desk after returning from lunch.

In January and February, she was 10 to 20 minutes late for work on six different days and called in sick on four other days. It was during this time that Mary's dealings with her co-workers deteriorated. Normally quiet yet sociable, Mary became increasingly short-tempered and given to periodic outbursts of anger and belligerence. Since Mary, 36, was a single mother of two teenage girls, almost everyone in the office assumed there was something going on at home.

On February 23rd, though, things took a disturbing turn. Mary left for lunch at her usual time, but did not return. She called in three hours later to say she had gone home because she had suddenly become ill. Her speech seemed slurred, somehow not quite right. She returned to work two days later, with a doctor's note explaining she had been sick with a stomach flu.

Nonetheless, the pattern of lateness continued. Two weeks later, Helen gave Mary her first written disciplinary notice regarding her attendance and punctuality. During the discussion, Mary confessed to Helen: "I know I've been a little different recently. I'm just having some problems at home with my children." She didn't elaborate, and Helen didn't probe.

For the next few weeks, Mary was on time every day and rarely left her desk during working hours. Her level of performance improved, as did her interaction with co-workers.

By April, however, Helen noticed Mary slipping back into her negative habits of lateness and irritability. Helen began to notice something else in Mary's after-lunch behavior: She seemed to have real difficulty completing her work, making decisions, and solving problems. On one occasion, there was a big argument between her and several co-workers. Mary went home, claiming she was "too upset to work." She continued coming in late to work and was absent on two successive Mondays. However, after each absence, she produced a doctor's excuse.

In early May, Helen issued a second written warning, this one concerning not only Mary's punctuality and attendance, but also her deteriorating work performance. At this time, Helen made it clear that Mary's continued employment was on the line: "I don't know what's going on, but you're in danger of losing your job. I've tried to be understanding, but I'm losing my patience. You need to get straightened up and soon, or I'll have no choice but to let you go."

During the following weeks, Mary again improved her productivity and performance. She was obviously concerned about losing her job. By mid-July, it was time for her formal performance evaluation. Although her evaluation was "less than satisfactory," Helen did note that there had been some improvement in all areas recently.

Then, last week, the bottom fell out. On July 23rd, Mary returned from lunch 45 minutes late, glassy-eyed and weaving slightly, fumbling with things, and smelling strongly of peppermint. She sat at her desk for a full 20 minutes, rummaging through drawers, moving paper, nodding, spilling things, and creating quite a distraction among the other employees.

Helen came to her desk: "Mary, what's the matter here? Something's wrong, and you don't seem able to work at all. Are you ill? Can you work? Are you drunk? Tell me right now!"

Mary slowly looked up, taking awhile to focus on Helen. After what seemed like a minute or so, during which time she appeared to be again listening to Helen's remarks, Mary burst into tears. She grabbed her purse, pushed and stumbled past Helen, and left.

The next day, one of Mary's children called in, saying she couldn't work because she was "in bed sick." Helen checked and Mary had only three days of accrued sick leave left available to her.

She did not return to work until today. She went to the ladies room for an hour. When she emerged, she went into Helen's office and asked for an immediate transfer to some other department "where the pressure isn't so great." She seemed very agitated and would not look Helen in the eye. Helen told her to return to her desk and pick up on her work as well as she could until Helen could look into things more closely.

It was then that Helen met with her boss, Betty Alden. They were trying to decide what to do.

In thinking about where things stood now, Helen knew that Mary's presence in the unit was becoming a source of contention and disgruntlement. Everyone knew that she had some kind of problem, and most people thought it was due to drugs or alcohol, or both, although no one had ever personally seen her use or abuse either. Since her work was now so erratic, the other employees in the unit had to regularly back up her work by either finishing it or correcting it. She seemed to have no remorse about her conduct and could not presently be counted on to make an effort to correct it.

Helen wanted to fire her. As she explained to Betty: "When she's here, she fights with everyone, and I'm never sure when she's coming to work or how long she'll stay. She's hopeless. I hate to do this, but she has screwed up just too much."

Betty, as unit manager, could see that a previously valued and productive member of her department had for some reason, fallen well below accepted work standards. Both Betty and Helen believed there must be some serious, extenuating circumstance affecting Mary, although they didn't know for certain what it was. Betty was concerned whether there could be any legal problems in firing someone in this condition. Betty reminded Helen that the Company did have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and wondered whether they should try to involve Mary in the EAP before taking further action.

### **CASE QUESTIONS**

1. Can Helen terminate Mary without running into legal problems?
2. What should Helen do now regarding the Employee Assistance Program? Simulate how you would make a referral to the EAP if you were Helen.
3. Should Helen have acted sooner? If so, how?

# CASE 9

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## They Came From Docu-Max

### Background Information

All six typists in the secretarial and correspondence pool were overjoyed when the long-awaited announcement was finally made: Their department would be getting the new Docu-Max Automated Production system. This word-processing system was the best in the field and would make everyone's job easier.

Beverly Marshall, a typist who had entered the department 18 months ago, had worked with a Docu-Max system at her former place of employment. She was particularly looking forward to the semi-private workstations each typist would receive. An attractive 28-year-old mother who had returned to work after her youngest child began school, Beverly liked her work and got along well with her co-workers.

Installation of the system began the week following the announcement, on Monday, and was expected to take a full week to finish. The Docu-Max Corporation assigned three of their installation technicians to do the job. The technicians were men in their mid-thirties. Once the basic plans are agreed to, these men work without any on-site supervision from Docu-Max.

The installation process required the technicians to assemble the workstations and supporting terminals as well as to route and hook up the various electrical and cable systems that made the system work. Consequently, the technicians had to maneuver and climb around the office as people were trying to do their jobs. Just how disturbing this activity could be became apparent to Beverly on Monday when two of the technicians spent a lot of time working around her desk. Initially, Beverly exchanged friendly conversation with them, but by the afternoon, their constant comments and interruptions were becoming annoying. Beverly was glad when the day was over.

On Tuesday, the situation became unbearable. At about 9:00 a.m., the two technicians walked in with coffee and stood near Beverly's desk. She smiled, said "Good morning," and tried to go back to work.

Speaking casually, without lowering his voice, one of the men began telling the other about the incredible time he had the night before with a woman he "picked up" in a bar. Beverly could hear every word as, for about ten minutes, he described his sexual encounter in explicit detail. The other man laughed along and offered a variety of suggestive comments. Beverly tried her best to pretend that she was paying no attention to them.

The men finally started working. They spent an hour stringing cables around Beverly's desk. A number of times one man or the other touched Beverly as they maneuvered the cables and the equipment around her desk.

Just before lunch, they began trading comments *about Beverly* within her hearing. "I'd sure like to try a repeat of last night with her," said one, laughing.

"Do you think she'd be good in bed?" asked the other.

"Are you kidding? She wouldn't have to be, 'cause I'd do all the work," replied the first.

One of the men moved his ladder next to Beverly's desk. He climbed to the top, looking down at Beverly the entire time. As he opened the ceiling tile, he said, "Hey doll, why don't you go out with me tonight and let me show you what sex is supposed to be about?"

Beverly quickly got up and went to the ladies room. There, she ran into June Boston, one of her co-workers. Beverly was very upset and told June what had been going on. They spent some time talking about the situation.

Shortly thereafter, on her way back from a meeting, Mary Bowers, Beverly's supervisor, passed June's desk. June was telling a co-worker about Beverly's story. Mary heard the gist of it.

Walking back to her office, Mary reflected on the past two days. She had noticed that the installers were unusually busy around Beverly's desk, but she had not realized how serious things were. When Mary reached her office, she sat down at her desk and wondered what she should do.

### **CASE QUESTIONS**

1. Is this a case of sexual harassment? Does the company or supervisor have any responsibility in this matter?
2. Mary Bowers knows she must act on the problem.
  - (a) What should she do in regard to Beverly?
  - (b) What should she do in regard to the installers?
3. Should Mary have acted more quickly? If so, in what way?