

9. Case Study: Charlie

Charles (Charlie) Peterson is the manager of the State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office in Midville, a city of 62,000 in a southwestern state. Charlie supervises an office of seventeen workers. In all, there are six driver-inspectors, who test license applicants, seven clerk-typists, a business manager, an administrative assistant, an executive secretary, and an assistant branch manager. The task of the branch office is to test and certify drivers and to register automobiles in an eight-county area surrounding Midville. Normally, about 500 people visit the branch weekly. Charlie started in the DMV as a driver-inspector and worked his way up to his present position.

Many people in the community think that Charlie is a "great guy." He is a member of the Rotary Club, the Elks, served as a chairman of a Red Cross Blood Drive and is a member of the board of directors of the United Way, and was appointed by the city council to a vacant seat on the Midville Recreation Commission. Charlie is a humorous, outgoing guy who is often called upon to act as master of ceremonies for community programs in Midville. He enjoys these activities very much and never seems to be able to say "no." He is married and has two children who are away at college. His wife is also quite active in community affairs.

With all of Charlie's activities in the community, there have been some problems that have come up recently at the DMV branch. The following conversation took place in the lunchroom one day:

"When I first came here, I really liked Charlie a lot," Dave Stone, a driver-inspector, said. "He seemed to care about me and I thought I could talk to him. But I have changed my mind. Now I don't trust him at all. That 'nice guy' facade he wears is phony."

"I went to him about a problem I was having with one of the clerks in the headquarters at the capital. He smiled and said, 'Janis, I'll look into this right away. Is there anything else wrong?' But I never heard anything about it," Janis Hill, a clerk-typist, complained. "I went to him again and it was the same old story, big smile and no response."

"He told me that he was going to recommend me for a branch manager's position in the Hamilton office," added Lynn Holstein, another driver-inspector. "I went in to see him about the opening one day. He put his arm around me and told me that I was very qualified. He said he'd call the state personnel director that very afternoon with a recommendation. I submitted my letter of application and my resume. I didn't hear anything from personnel, so I gave them a call about three weeks later. They told me that the opening had been filled and that they never received Charlie's recommendation."

"But Charlie always has that big grin on his face and he's always doing something for the community. It's really hard to be mad at him. Now, I just ignore him if I can," Dave sighed.

In recent weeks, the state headquarters had been putting pressure on the local office to provide detailed reports of local income and expenditures and about the number of citizens who use the branch. Charlie had been through a number of "crackdowns" before so he really did not take it

too seriously. He delegated much of the responsibility for submitting the reports to Carolyn Davis, his assistant manager, and Tim Thompson, his administrative assistant.

"Don't worry about these things too much. Just submit a weekly report to the 'bosses.' No big deal," Charlie told Carolyn and Tim on his way out of the office to a committee meeting.

Carolyn and Tim followed Charlie's guidance and submitted the reports as requested. A couple of irregular matters came up in the reports, but when Carolyn tried to talk to Charlie about them, he just said, "Look, you guys are doing a great job. Just go ahead and follow through on this."

About four weeks later, members of the state auditor's office were waiting for Charlie as he came into the office on Monday morning.

"Mr. Peterson, the state auditor thinks he has evidence of criminal mismanagement of this office. Nearly \$7,200 has been reported missing by our report. The auditor is thinking about seeking an indictment from the grand jury in Midville. As of this day, you are suspended from your position, this office is closed and we advise you to find an attorney."

Charlie, visibly shaken, slumped in his chair. "I just don't understand how this could happen to me. All of my employees love me."

Problem-Solving Discussion Worksheet, First Discussion

Problem: _____

State the problem.	
List the harms related to this problem.	
List potential causes of the problem.	
List the criteria (standards) you will use to evaluate the worth of the solutions.	
List the possible solutions to this problem.	
What solutions do you believe will remove the causes and thereby reduce the harm. Apply your criteria and reasoning to these solutions.	
Provide the research findings you have in relation to the problem.	