

Extra credit
Due Date: 11/17/2015

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Part III • Exercises: Developing Three Essential Skills

Mini Case Study 3: Age and the Workplace

My name is Ben. I am a senior accountant at a retail company in San Francisco. Although I am looking forward to my retirement as I am 58 years old, I still feel enthusiastic about my job and my company's internal growth goals. I particularly enjoy working with colleagues in their 20s and 30s since I believe my experience adds significant value to both my team and organization.

Although my colleagues often go out socializing, it does not bother me that I am never invited to go along. I simply figure that I am probably too old to enjoy the same kind of social activities that they enjoy.

I was sitting in my office one day when I overheard Paul, a junior accountant, complain about needing more "hands-on" time with a new software package they would soon be using in the office. Paul said, "I just need to play around with it some more . . . That little get-together we had to talk about this software was not enough." For the first time I realized that during those social gatherings the team actually discussed work issues.

I decided to talk to my manager about being left out of—what I interpreted as—an informal meeting. My manager said, "Don't worry, Ben, we were just discussing the possibility of getting a new software package. We are not even sure if we are going to implement it in our office yet. Since the software is kind of complicated and you are retiring soon, there is no need for you to learn it."

I felt left out. I confess that I am not computer savvy and learning new technology is a slow process for me, but I feel strongly that I should have been given the chance to learn it. What else was going on that I did not know about? Although I did not want to learn new complicated software packages, if I were to just keep quiet about it, I would soon be completely left out of everything because of my age.

Case Questions

- As a manager, should you exclude older workers from training that you judge unnecessary or difficult for them? Give reasons for and against your answer.
- How should Ben respond to this situation? Substantiate your answer.

Mini Case Study 4: Religion and the Workplace

My name is Rubi. Growing up a Muslim girl in the United States, I always took my religion seriously and felt very blessed because of it. My parents are hardworking immigrants and together we run a family business.

During my first year of college, our family business was not doing very well, and I wanted to be more economically independent. I decided to apply for a job and sent my résumé to different small businesses in town. I was invited for a job interview at a family-owned restaurant for the position of cashier. During my interview, I felt comfortable with my answers and made it clear that prayer service was important to me. Later I received a phone call from the manager telling me that the job was mine if I wanted it.



The following Monday, I arrived early at my job to show that I was a serious and committed employee. As usual, I was wearing an Islamic headscarf, or hijab, when the manager pulled me aside and said she needed to talk to me. "Rubi, do you wear your headscarf every day?" I told her that as part of my religious convictions I wore my hijab daily to which she responded, "You should have told me that during your interview. I am afraid you are not in compliance with the restaurant's dress code, and I am sorry but I can't allow that to happen."

Since I was wearing a headscarf during my job interview, I assumed my manager knew that I would always wear one. I didn't think that making such a small exception was too much to ask of my employers, but since they had already agreed to let me take breaks for prayer service observance, I did not know what to do.

Case Questions

- Can an employer demand the implementation of a dress code that goes against someone's religious convictions? Explain.
- How should Rubi respond to this situation? Substantiate your answer.

Mini Case Study 5: Disabilities and the Workplace

My name is Peter. After a car accident at the age of 25, getting used to using a wheelchair was no easy task for me. I went through a hard time before realizing that self-pity or pity from others would never get me anywhere.

Because of my disability I sometimes feel the need to prove my self worth so I work hard at everything I do. It makes me feel good to know that I am able to do things very well. I graduated summa cum laude from business school and accepted an amazing job offer as an analyst in a manufacturing firm.

After my first year in the office, I was getting along with everyone and felt comfortable about working there. When the time came for my first job evaluation, I felt confident that I would receive positive feedback, but I was also interested in hearing about the areas in which I could improve.

Matthew, my direct supervisor, called me to his office and started going over his evaluation of my performance. He seemed a little uncomfortable, but I figured that giving and receiving feedback can be awkward sometimes. He complimented my work and praised my professionalism and work ethic. He was about to dismiss me when I thanked him for those comments but asked, "So, what are some things I could work on?" He replied, "You know, Peter, we really appreciate your work here. I think you've done really well considering the hand you've been dealt. Just keep up the good work."

I was pretty surprised by that comment. What did he mean? That I was doing well, considering I had a disability? I know he meant well, but that final remark really bothered me. I wanted to say something, but I didn't. And the last thing I wanted to do was to put people on the defensive.

Case Questions

- Why is Matthew hesitant about giving Peter negative feedback? List at least three reasons and explain why.
- Why was Peter so offended? How should Peter respond to this situation? Substantiate your answer.