

Value-Based Decision Making

Situation #1

One of your new employees, Sue Johnson, is very enthusiastic about her new job. She likes her work very much on one of the customer teams. It is challenging and allows her to apply much of the knowledge she gained during her studies. Her relationship with her fellow team members is friendly but she does not go out of her way to have informal conversations with them during working hours.

She takes her work very seriously. If problems come up, she stays after normal business hours to come up with a solution. She usually completes her part of the project work several days ahead of schedule. This irritates some of her colleagues. She often asks for additional work from you, her manager, in order to stay busy. She has actually asked some of her team members if she could help with their assignments. She was turned down quickly.

After five months with the team, one of the other team members (Stefan) has asked to see you about a problem their team was having. Stefan tells you that several of the team members are having a problem with Sue. According to him, she is irritating everyone with her “know-it-all” attitude. They really do not want to work with her. “She’s always ‘coaching’ everyone and telling other people what to do.”

You tell Stefan that it is hard for you to understand this because Sue is such an excellent worker. She has done everything the company has asked her to do. Stefan says, “she is disrupting the morale of the team, which is resulting in lower quality of work.”

You tell Stefan that you will have a meeting with Sue to discuss the situation with her. You ask Sue for a meeting and tell her that while her technical performance is outstanding, there are some questions about her work as a team member. When she asks for specifics, you tell her, “To be specific, certain members of your team have complained about your “know-it-all” attitude and how you try to tell them how to do their job. You are going to have to be more patient with them and not publicly tell them how to do their work. This is a good group and their work has been more than acceptable. I don’t want these problems to interfere with the team’s performance.”

She replies: “Let me make a few comments please. First of all, I do not think I have ever publicly criticized their performance to them or to you. When I first started finishing my work ahead of them, I offered to help them with their work but I was told very strongly to mind my own business. So, I concentrated only on my part of the work. What I have found out is that I think the team is setting a much slower pace than they are capable of. They are mostly interested in the music they are bringing on CDs or discussing the local football team – sometimes for an hour at a time. They take very long breaks and sometimes they leave early. This was not the way I was raised or trained.”

What are you going to do?

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Situation #2

A friend, who is also one of your employees, comes to you confidentially to ask for advice. She has just been offered job with another company and wants to know what you think she should do. You know that your own department has been given three months warning – unless business improves, there may have to be a downsizing. Your friend's input on the project is critical – you really cannot afford to lose her now. But if you tell her the facts, i.e., there is a good chance that she may not have a job in three months, you will probably lose her. Even if she stays, the information may get out and demoralize the rest of the team.

You have been told to keep the possibility of the downsizing to yourself. The last time this happened, the information did get out and some of the best employees left for other jobs.

What do you do – tell your friend the facts of the matter or not?

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Situation #3

You and your team have been working with your client for over a year designing a new system. This has been a great project for the company and it is really showcasing the talent of your group. Everyone has been working long hours for the last two months to finish the code – you are running about a month behind schedule.

A great deal of the delay is due to client changes but some of the delay is due to internal problems within your department. Your employees are very tired and the morale is beginning to slump. You have promised everyone that you will shut the office down a day early, on the 23rd, for Christmas holidays. You know everyone has made plans.

On the 22nd your client calls and has asked for one code change to be completed before the beta software is delivered on the 28th of December. You hang up the phone. Your client said that if you can get this change done, they would be very appreciative and the one-month “delay” would be forgotten.

What do you do?

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Situation #4

You have a small staff of administrators who work in your department in addition to the customer teams. Ingela, a single woman, has always been a very loyal employee to the company. In 20 years of service, she has held several different positions. However, she has never quite proved to be able to do any of these jobs. While she is very kind and supportive of all other employees, she is very slow and unable to grasp the newer technologies. You have had several conversations with her – each ending in tears on her part. You know that she is six years from retirement. Her life is all centered on her job.

Costs are increasing. Ingela's work could nearly be eliminated by new computer equipment. It is obvious that there is no other position, which she could take.

What do you do?

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Situation #5

You and your Team have been working on a project for eight months. Personally, you have been working with this customer for several years on various projects – long before Volvo IT came into existence. You know that the customer has not really accepted the “change,” i.e., they still view Volvo IT as an internal supplier rather than a separate company with profit and loss responsibility.

It has been a good but sometimes “rocky” relationship during the project. The IT Service Manager, Fred, is very demanding. He is continually pushing the limits of your Team on the scope of the project. Since many of them have worked with Fred for a long time, you believe they have probably “given in” to many of his demands – to keep the peace or because that is the way everyone has dealt with Fred in the past.

As you prepare to meet your Team for a project review, you see that these demands have resulted in more than a “creep” in the project scope – it has now turned into a major project overrun.

What do you do?

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Situation #6

A friend of yours, who also works in the same department, just had lunch with you. She told you who had just been selected for the new project – it had been announced while you were at a doctor's appointment that morning.

You had really wanted to be on the Team because the work you have been doing for the past two years has been quite boring and your assignments have not tested your skill level. You knew when joined the department that you would have to work your way up but the news is upsetting to you.

During the afternoon, you look at the list of project team members. That's when you notice that, once again, all the team members are men. This isn't the first time – the last five major projects have been all-male teams as well. Walking through the department, you do some quick math – 65% percent of the department members are male and 35% are female.

What do you do?

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Situation #7

It's been a tough project. Losing two members of the team about half way through the project did not help the situation either. Their replacements are still not been able to catch everything up yet. Everyone is feeling the strain.

The team is meeting tonight to put together the client presentation for tomorrow afternoon. This is the first time that you have been able to get everyone together in six weeks. Team members have brought their parts of the presentation. You are putting the various pieces together. After you have the presentation in order, you beam it up so that everyone can see the status of the project – overhead by overhead.

When you finish, you turn up the lights. You don't have to tell them – you see it in their faces. This is not good work – in fact, it is lousy...

What do you do?