

# The walt disney company



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THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY 2 What forms of interpersonal power are evident in the case? Provide evidence to support your answer.

The story and the individual case of John Lasseter and Walt Disney Company present an overlapping use of power. There are some portions in the case wherein a coercive power is being applied; for example, when the executives of Walt Disney, after John Lasseter pitched a great proposal to use computer in producing cartoon movies, decided to terminate his employment for the reason that he was being too creative. We all know that coercive power, as opposed to the reward power, by and large, is a way of reprimanding or castigating someone for nonconformity or showing differing interests to another, especially someone with a higher position. " It complements legitimate power, but in a negative way because compliance is achieved not out of respect, but out of fear. Examples of coercive power include labour union strike threats, denial of promotion or pay raise and litigation."

(Rasheed, n. d.). John Lasseter, for the big bosses and other employees, was a threat to their abilities and therefore could most likely surpass their creativity and eventually take the spot light away from them. Also, they thought that his creativity and innovative lines of attack will create a disagreeable encounter for a target. The second type of interpersonal power being applied on John Lasseters case is the expert power. An expert power may be defined as, " Having expert knowledge about a subject that others value and do not possess themselves can give someone the upper hand in communication." (Rasheed, n. d.). In this case, the expert power is being manifested by Lasseter's profound knowledge regarding animations. Further, his expertise on animation was not limited to the traditional, obsolete forms of animation but he even initiated the incorporation of computers in the

process of making animated movies, which totally changed the way animation in both Pixar and Disney work. His extensive control over the animation productions of both Pixar and Disney suggests the expert power that John Lasseter possessed.

2. In what ways do the two faces of power appear in this case?

As mentioned earlier and as we can recall from the passages of John Lasseter's case, there are two types of power involved: coercive power and the expert power. Coercive power is being manifested through the executive and other big bosses' decision to terminate him because he jeopardizes the standing of those with higher positions. Because of their personal interests, they made sure to preclude a newcomer from overriding them; they took action in order to preclude the approval of his proposal. But because he was too artistic and very good in animation and cartoons, this gained him the expert power that gave him the complete control over both Pixar and Disney. His knowledge is testament and an unequivocal manifestation of his expert power.

### THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY 3

3. Does the firing of John Lasseter from Disney Studios and the events leading up to his firing demonstrate the ethical use of power? Explain your answer

This issue is a complicated one since the description of the phrase "ethical use" is very erratic. It does not settle in a single direction. In other words, the implications of the ethical use of power are not completely contingent with how the word "ethical" is literally defined. In various cases, if something is being done for a good cause, no matter how bad the process or brutal the undertakings might become, it is still considered an ethical use of power.

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Now, how do we classify Lasseter's case? While there is no settled description for an ethical use of power, we have to understand that a power-related act that handles or regards someone randomly and subjectively or gaining the upper hand at the expense of another is absolutely not ethical. The termination of Lasseter, including those related events that led to his termination, was clearly unethical. If we might relate to this case, in Law, if someone benefits at the expense of the other without due perfection of a particular contract is an unjust enrichment or we can say, an unethical enrichment. The same with Lasseter's case, the people in high position used that advantage in order to debar Lasseter from taking their places. If that is the basis of the termination, it merely suggests an organizational politics.

4. Did the firing of John Lasseter indicate the existence of political behaviour in the Disney organization?

Absolutely. The basis of decision to terminate him was not grounded on a legal perspective; it was purely political in nature. The cause of his termination was brought about by personal interests. Had he not been as creative as he really is, Lasseter's case would have gone in a completely different direction. The administrators of Disney were simply egoistic and scheming. The personal conflicts, the tacit rivalry for power and control and the strategic impact are executed by the administrators to gain the complete power and control over the situation. This they have done to serve their personal interests.

5. Describe a situation, from your experience, where political behaviour in an organization contributed to the benefit or detriment to you or someone else. Political behaviour is ubiquitous. In school alone, hostile competitions and conflicts are very rampant. In a classroom, a teacher gave a very low mark

to one of her students whom she saw as someone who always differ to her authoritarian-type of teaching. Not only that, she even threaten the student to exclude from the list of the class who will be eligible to proceed to the next grade level. We see that because of the teachers grim desire to impose her personal goals, she promoted her self-serving interests at the expense of others, which I think is the primary cause for there being an organizational conflict because the organization is highly politicized.

#### Reference

Rasheed, N. (n. d.). Six different types of interpersonal power of communication. Ehow.

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