

# Lisa benton case study analysis essay sample

[Business](#), [Leadership](#)



## LEADERSHIP ISSUES/TOPICS/PROBLEMS

In Lisa Benton's case, there are several leadership issues concerning her Product manager Linton, the Associate Product manager Scoville, and Vernon, the Group Product Manager for Air Fresheners. Benton met her supervisor, Deborah Linton, just in her first day, because she had not met her during the interview process and this first meeting shows different lacks in Linton's leadership style. From the beginning, Linton made it clear to Benton that she did not like MBAs because they are arrogant. However, Linton's inability to contain herself shows a prejudice against MBAs that is not professional and is also on the opposite side of the current company policy about hiring and promotions (D. Goleman "What makes a leader"). Further, the fact that Linton did not set Benton's goals and tasks shows that she is not interested in establishing a (working) relationship with her (L. Hill "Building effective One-on-One work relationship"). Benton's working situation gets worse when she starts working with Scoville because her tasks become clerical, repetitive, lack much responsibility, and don't have much direction. Further, these tasks show Linton's inability to "pull the triggers that activate employees' strengths". Moreover, not making time for Benton, Linton isn't able to understand what kind of learner Benton is and how help her get better results (M. Buckingham "What great managers do"). Hence, Linton wasn't able to inspire and motivate Benton that is one of the hallmarks that differentiate a manager from a leader (P. Kotter "What leaders really do"). Even though Lisa Benton is struggling with her current boss, she possesses a couple important leadership qualities that make her a great employee. Lisa can be characterized as a person with a heightened sense of drive. During

her time with Right-Away Stores, it is mentioned that Lisa had a “roll-up-your-sleeves” approach to getting things done which ultimately led her to be the first woman manager in the company. Without drive these types of things would not be accomplished.

Further, Lisa’s strong cognitive ability skills led her to become a Harvard MBA, while also allowing her to successfully introduce a non-merchandising service with Right-Away. Also, Lisa’s experience and practical knowledge were the key factors that led to her employment offer from the Home Care Division of Houseworld as the assistant product manager. One associate told her she was the kind of person Houseworld wanted and they liked her enthusiasm. Also, though Linton’s review of Benton was informal, she did note Lisa’s quick learning of how the company worked, along with her written communication skills.

While Lisa has great written communication skills, her verbal skills are not as strong. After a few encounters with Scoville, the associate product manager, Lisa lost her temper. When Scoville challenged a few of her assumptions Lisa became very frustrated. After Scoville audibly yelled at Lisa in front of the entire floor, she decided not to yell back at him however voiced her opinions of him and his outburst later to another colleague. Lisa can enhance self-regulation techniques so she is more equipped to handle this type of situation in the future.

Even with a high sense of drive and the necessary cognitive abilities, Lisa seems to lack self-confidence. Although she was considered very successful in her internship at Right-Away, she denied their job offer because of growing

concerns about assuming too much marketing responsibility too fast. She was more intrigued by Houseworld's reputation for providing excellent marketing training. Another incident that points to her lack of self-confidence is after Benton's very informal review she felt the results were inconsistent with who she really was. Lisa obviously felt she was unable to be her true self and let her real personality come through.

Another leadership area Lisa lacks is the desire or motivation to lead. While it is a common misconception that leaders are only considered those in the boss's position, it is essential for employees to be leaders and effectively manage their superiors. Lisa is obviously having some problems with her superior Deborah Linton. Linton made it clear she was not fond of Harvard MBA's right from the beginning, and expressed that her busy schedule at the moment would keep her from having much time for Lisa.

Lisa continued to feel disappointed that Linton did not make time for her. She began feeling like a "fifth wheel." After six weeks had passed, Benton still had no idea what her goals and objectives were. John Gabarro and John Kotter state, "If the relationship between you and your boss is rocky, then it is you who must begin to manage it." Instead of depending on Houseworld and relying on Deborah Linton to forward Benton's career, she should assume leadership and responsibility of her own development and find ways to understand Linton as a manager and her preferred work style to get the information she needs to progress.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT AND  
RECOMMENDATION**

Poor relationship with her boss and coworker had put Lisa Benton in a frustrating and dissatisfying situation. She also felt that she had not gotten the marketing training that attracted her to joining Houseworld. Worried about her future career, she was confused whether to ask Vernon to switch her to another brand, to call Kingston and join his company, Right-Away, or to stay in her current position and try to make her work relationship with her team better. Staying in her position might be the toughest decision to take for several reasons. First, Benton should deal with her manager's animosity and ignorance towards her. In addition, she might also have to run into her coworker's condescending and irritating attitudes. However, by staying in her position, she could develop a good reputation as an employee and future leader. She could demonstrate her loyalty to the company and her ability to manage work relationships with her difficult manager and coworker. If she switches to another brand, Benton might get the training that she always wanted and she could focus on her career development without interference from Linton and Scoville.

Further, Vernon might be more likely to give her his support to switch to another brand. However, this option might have a negative impact on her reputation. Taking this option could make the other employees feel envious and this could alienate her superiors. Also, this will likely make her seem as someone who was not able to manage her work relationships with her boss and to manage conflict. Another option was to ask Kingston to join Right-away stores. By joining this company, Benton could get a more comfortable job with higher salary and a more challenging job. However, there would be a lot of responsibility that could be a problem for her private life. Some other

problems are that this company is not glamorous and she would be the only female manager. Further, in view of the advantages and drawbacks on every option and Benton's future career and leadership development, we recommend that she stay in her current position. ACTION PLAN

Now that Lisa has determined that her manager, Linton, does not seem to care about her professional development, she needs to start managing it herself. The first step she needs to take is to document her first few weeks in her current role. She needs to sit down and start a journal of all of the tasks she has been asked to do by Scoville and Linton, as well as record the amount of time each task has taken. Once she has documented her work, she needs to compare the work she has performed with the responsibilities and goals outlined in the Assistant Brand Manager job description. With this information, she needs to approach Linton and request a formal appraisal. During the meeting, she needs to communicate specific goals and their timelines to Linton. Once she has communicated these goals, Benton needs to give Linton an opportunity to address her requests by giving her two weeks to create a development plan. After the meeting and before receiving an official development plan, Benton needs to document what was understood during the meeting by emailing Linton and requesting that she confirm that she either understood the next steps that will be taken to address Benton's concerns or that she understood something else.

If Benton does not receive an official development plan with specific goals and their timeframes within two weeks, then she needs to approach Vernon and ask him to manage her relationship with Linton. Although Vernon has

already noticed that Benton and Linton do not have the best working relationship, he does not know how much this has affected Benton's professional development. Hence, Benton needs to have a private meeting with Vernon in order to debrief him about the quality of projects she has been working on and the progress she has made thus far in her current role. She needs to prove her statements by showing Vernon her journal logs and the confirmation email that Linton sent her. Once Vernon sees that Benton's relationship with Linton is not productive then he can step in to moderate the situation. It is in Vernon's best interest to make sure that his managers are developing top talent and have a developmental approach towards this end. If Vernon cannot reconcile Benton's working relationship with Linton, then he can start the process to transfer Benton to another group. Although a transfer might be a lengthy process, it is imperative that Benton takes the aforementioned steps so she can start this process. Further, if Benton wants to eventually become a successful Product Manager, she needs to take control of her own career path at Houseworld.