

Management principles of conflict



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What Customers Don't Know Won't Hurt Them, or Will It?**Case No. 2–Organizational Behavior**

This case mainly deals with topics covering decision making, and describes behavioral and decision making of an employee in the case called Elena of a rental car company. This is fiction-based case. She is being questioned by another employee from the company's legal department concerning a car that she had rented earlier and that car was somehow involved in an accident without her being in the knowledge of the accident in the first place. In the case, it is then explained that she did realize that there was something wrong with the vehicle but even with that knowledge decided to rent the car anyway which amounts to telling a sheer lie (unethical business behavior and/or practice).

Another interesting topic for discussion covers the Attribution Theory[1]. It tries to explain the ways in which we judge people differently, depending on the meaning we attribute to a given behavior. It suggests that when we observe an individual's behavior, we attempt to determine whether it was internally or externally caused. It raises questions such as whether Elena is to blame for her unethical behavior or whether some external factors for example her supervisor's unethical attitude and situations at the rental office are to bear the blame and/or responsibility, creating genuine discussions in greater detail covering many aspects and components of the Attribution Theory.

Last but the least, Elena is used to lying to customers, in that she has been renting damaged cars and/or vehicles- Escalation of commitment will be relevant. Will she accept her faults and give up the practices in the end; it

seems rather hard for her as she is determined to get what she wants-even at the cost of her being totally wrong.

Questions for Discussion

Q. 1. Using concepts from reinforcement theory (a theory that says that behavior is a function of its consequences and that this theory also recognizes that the organization's rewards reinforce the individual's performance) explain why Elena might be motivated to lie to customers. With reinforcement theory in mind, do you think that Elena will confess to the legal representative? Why or why not?

Answer 1: Reinforcement theory[2] (a theory that says that behavior is a function of its consequences and that this theory also recognizes that the organization's rewards reinforce the individual's performance OR Positive theory of Reinforcement[3] is the act of rewarding desired behavior; or the actual rewards; such as praise or bonuses, given each time the desired behavior occurs) as well as Operant conditioning[4] (OR the Operant behavior[5]-of Psychologist B. F. Skinner- that appears to operate on or have an influence on the subject's environment) argues that behavior is a function of its consequences. She deliberately lied because she was sure of receiving positive reinforcement or positive results for doing so. Her supervisor was the main and regular support for her to behave in such a manner and this therefore also shaped her mind that by doing so she will eventually move up the ladder of management in the company. Taking in to account her past behavior, she will continue telling lies and not face the truth as feels rather strongly that she will not be able to get promotion that will in turn hinder her future management target of becoming higher up in the firm.

Q. 2. How might the rental office's climate influence Elena's behavior? What factors contribute to the current climate? What steps could you take to improve the ethics at this office?

Answer 2: The whole climate and the situations were based on lies and deception and to conduct business of making money at all costs. The unethical behavior of the supervisor with short sightedness was the main reason behind the overall bad perspectives at the firm which in turn was creating conditions that would no doubt eventually bring the closure sooner or later of the firm. Steps to improve the situations and climate at the firm should begin by replacing the supervisor with someone who believes in business ethics and straight business practices. The firm should also start operating with a customer-centric mentality as well as creating conditions and practices to obtain long term relationships with the customers in order to obtain sustained and regular business orders.

Q. 3. Do you blame Elena for her behavior or do you attribute her behavior to external factors? How do concepts from attribution theory fit in?

Answer 3: Of course, it has to be yes that as per the case Elena made her own mind and choices and therefore will have to face the wrath of the law eventually, and that all end results will be borne by her. She originally felt compelled and under some sort of pressure naturally to listen to her supervisor to lie to be able to feel safe at work but then it became daily routine for her to lie and behave unethically. Attribution theory covers the aspects. External factors such as her supervisor's behavior and attitude and the working environment did contribute substantially towards her being in such a state of mind. However, behavior of an individual caused internally has to be under the control of that particular individual, as per the definition of the Attribution theory.

Q. 4. Consider Elena's personality. Would you predict that escalation of commitment will occur (and she will lie to the legal representative), or will she decide to come clean? Explain your answer.

Answer 4: Escalation of commitment[6] (distortion that creeps in to decisions in practice is a tendency to escalate commitment when making a series of decisions. Escalation of commitment refers to staying with a decision even when there is clear cut evidence that it is wrong). It is envisaged that the Escalation of commitment will occur and most probably she will give the false information back to the legal department. She has already made her mind up to straddle up the management ladder, no matter what happens and at any cost, even giving up her respect eventually. To achieve ones goals at any cost even unethically should not be considered a success in all respects.

Q. 5. Do you think Elena would make a good leader some day? Why or why not? What factors might this depend on?

Answer 5: well, sooner or later she will have to face the facts and figures of the business ethics and then that might make her a right person to take up management challenges. However, for the time being in her present role, she is content with following the wrong business rules and ethics in all respects.

Q. 6. What emotions might Elena be experiencing? How might Elena's emotions[7] affect her decision to tell the legal department manager about the incident with Mr. Reynolds?

Answer 6: Elena is most likely facing and probably unknowingly exhibiting a number of

negative effects on her and in her general life, which is a mood state that is displaying her stress level, anxiety and to some extent irritability toward her

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customers. She could have created -or is creating- the situation in which the customers' lives might have been in danger. It is hoped that she will eventually come to her senses and realize her mistakes and wrong doings and give up for good the unethical practices.

End Notes

1 Robbins/Judge, " Organizational Behavior", 13th Edition, Pearson Education, 2009, Pages 175-176

2 Robbins/Judge, " Organizational Behavior", 13th Edition, Pearson Education, 2009, Pages 225, 234, 236

3 Gary Dessler, " Management-Principles and Practices for Tomorrow's leaders", 3rd Edition, Prentice Hall, 2004, Pages 302-303

4 Robbins/Judge, " Organizational Behavior", 13th Edition, Pearson Education, 2009, Page 90-91

5 Gary Dessler, " Management-Principles and Practices for Tomorrow's leaders", 3rd Edition, Prentice Hall, 2004, Pages 296

6 Robbins/Judge, " Organizational Behavior", 13th Edition, Pearson Education, 2009, Pages 185-186

7 Robbins/Judge, " Organizational Behavior", 13th Edition, Pearson Education, 2009, Pages 285-293

[1] Robbins/Judge, " Organizational Behavior", 13th Edition, Pearson Education, 2009, Pages 175-176

[2] Robbins/Judge, “ Organizational Behavior”, 13th Edition, Pearson Education, 2009, Pages 225, 234, 236

[3] Gary Dessler, “ Management-Principles and Practices for Tomorrow’s leaders”, 3rd Edition, Prentice Hall, 2004, Pages 302-303

[4] Robbins/Judge, “ Organizational Behavior”, 13th Edition, Pearson Education, 2009, Page 90-91

[5] Gary Dessler, “ Management-Principles and Practices for Tomorrow’s leaders”, 3rd Edition, Prentice Hall, 2004, Pages 296

[6] Robbins/Judge, “ Organizational Behavior”, 13th Edition, Pearson Education, 2009, Pages 185-186

[7] Robbins/Judge, “ Organizational Behavior”, 13th Edition, Pearson Education, 2009, Pages 285-293