

Experiential essay

Business



Introduction Communication ability is one of the most important abilities that the humans have. Since the moment when the humans started to use communicational channels, the civilization started to develop rapidly. Communication influences almost everything people do in their lives.

The scope of the paper is to evaluate the influence of communication theory on the interpersonal dilemma experienced in the past. The story is about communication dilemma at the workplace, its start, development, and logical end. Communication Dilemma A dilemma that I experienced has to do with my place of work at a life-insurance company. In 2008 I had a values' conflict that eventually made me quit. In 2007 I began to work as an agent in a young but very promising team selling life-insurance policies.

It was a recently opened agency in our town and we all came there at the same time. I began my education without any previous experience in the area and liked literally everything. The excellently equipped and decorated office was near my apartment, the promised pay outs and commissions sounded fantastic. Our director seemed like an excellent person and leader and he was a role model for me. His name was JK.

This job was like a dream. Our education included field experience so we had to involve our friends and relatives as potential customers at the beginning. Everything was fine so any second thoughts about this company and possible outcomes for me never crossed my mind. I was doing fine with the clients and my personal sales grew up. Our agency developed rather rapidly and our head office was satisfied with our progress and results.

The climate in the office was excellent. We were like a family – young, beautiful, confident agents of the fast-growing company. My career as an agent was over and I was raised to the unit manager. I was supposed to find, interview, hire, teach and help agents in my group. I began to learn how to be a superior and it was a fantastic experience. My salary doubled and then tripled so as I said it looked like a dream.

JK was good to me and we had no disagreements in work and personal area. However I began to notice that JK had some peculiarity in his behaviour. He added little lies to his speeches with clients and eventually I noticed that he did the same to us, his unit managers. It was strange at first and I did not want to believe that it could be serious. So I did not pay proper attention to such behaviour and was calm as usual. I did my work as always.

I did not leave my practice as an agent to be always on top of the situation on the market when my new and already experienced agents asked me questions and challenged sometimes with tricky ones. I had meetings with clients constantly and somehow began to slowly deplete my clients' base. There was no time to work in full in this direction. I did not pay attention to this process because I thought that everything would be just fine with my current work. After a while the economic situation changed and people began to realize that life-insurance was not the most necessary thing for now.

The sales went down and JK gathered all unit managers in his office and said that head office was really unhappy with the current situation. We were obliged to do more sales at any cost. It was the beginning of a series of

constant problems that occurred lately and led me to the dilemma that left me no choice. One day I went to JK's office and asked his advice on how we all could improve the results. They were still poor so I wanted to get help from such an experienced and confident leader.

He said that there were no restricted moves in sales so I should even lie to clients about the guarantees that company could give for the future. Our programs were calculated for decades from now. What was I supposed to think? Should I lie to my clients to make more sales? I asked him if he was serious. He said " yes" without any doubts. It was the second bell.

The ethical problem with honesty concerning people who trusted us their savings began to clarify. I tried to talk to my colleagues. It was a quiet conversation in the office's kitchen with Lora and Susan. We all were from the core of our first team and were rather close. I asked them about the current situation in their groups. The situation was the same as with my agents - the sales were very low.

They said that they had talked with JK and were very surprised with his solution. We discussed other ways of solving the issue with sales and decided to act like always. We had to be clear with clients and ourselves. It did not help. We had to do something to improve this situation. JK said that the head office wanted to fire one of unit managers since the sales were low and they wanted to cut expenses.

We talked to him all together and he offered again to do everything what was necessary to make sales. The situation was crucial; we did not want to lose the job so we began to work with clients using all methods to achieve

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our primary goal – sales. JK had the power to save us all since he had good relations with the head office. It was not in his authority to tell us to lie to the clients on the current situation with the company which was not that good as before. He never ordered us to lie but let us understand that he could do anything. It was unethical but that was the reality.

I understood that his “ little lies” before were not that innocent as it looked like at first glance. It was the manifestation of his hierocracy and duplicity. I was never proud of my actions with clients but I loved the job and money was not the last thing in the “ stay-list” of advantages. The situation became worse. I began to lose my agents. My colleagues were in the same situation.

Our head office checked our results on a weekly basis and week after week results were more and more disappointing. Firing some of us was a real prospective as the outcome of the situation. I began to realize that I almost did not have any clients. There were friends and relatives still but I did not want to talk to them concerning this issue since it was like to ask a favour from a person who could not say “ no” to me. It was a very difficult time and then I understood that I could not lie to people anymore. I went to JK and we had a conversation that showed his second side in full.

He yelled at me that I was a bad manager and agent since I gave no results. I objected that if there was a solution to avoid lies and raise sales I would do anything to make it happen. He answered that my friends and relatives still did not have insurance. I said that it would not happen and I would not lie to them to make my current situation with sales better. JK smiled and said that this was not his problem.

I believe that it was the end of my career as the insurance unit manager. There were no consequences for Lora and Susan. They did what they had to do and the situation changed after a while. I quit the position of unit manager and I became the insurance agent as it was at the very beginning. After a while since my clients' database was depleted I left the company.

I decided never to lie again to myself and started to look for another job. It was an outstanding experience for me despite the negative aftermath. Basically I learned that I should always be clear with my consciousness to be able to deal with everything else on the highest level. Based on the course of study learned in the University I can say that I will do the same in the similar situation. I will never lie again to people whose trust I had earned so hard with my professionalism and knowledge. These principles are the basis for my career and life.

Conclusion Considering the situation, the following conclusions can be drawn: the dilemma fits into the boundaries of social exchange theory of George Homans (Heath & Bryant, 2000) that supported the decision to leave when worth of the work became negative. According to the theory (Heath & Bryant, 2000), worth of relationships (in this case, between me and my boss) equals to rewards for my efforts minus costs need to be "paid" to gain rewards ($\text{worth} = \text{reward} - \text{cost}$). It can be noticed in the previous section that cost "paid" for gaining the reward started to grow substantially - it was necessary to lie to people in order to get the desired outcome. Therefore, the relationships got 'negative sign' in the equation. Worth of the relationship determined the worth of the entire job and was the main factor in the decision to quit it.