

Managing aids



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Introduction

In the situation with Frank Deloio, a middle manager who had AIDS, Jean Langone Smith had one of the greatest tests of her career. She was encountered a case of the type which so many managers can come across, as one in every 250 Americans has been diagnosed with the plague of the twentieth century, yet the situation is so delicate that few books can help a person in managing position to sort out the ethical issues that relate to it.

Managing AIDS: Issues To Confront

In a sense, managing a person diagnosed with AIDS is similar to managing any other person who has been diagnosed with a different terminal illness like cancer or tuberculosis in the final stages. However, AIDS is a special social phenomenon due to the stigma associated with this contagious disease. It has come to symbolize the bohemian lifestyle of the homosexuals and prostitutes, and many people feel that a person is to blame for having incurred such a condition. Besides, despite the medical professionals' assurances, there are still fears that a person with this condition may infect somebody in the environment, which makes the removal of such a person from the group desirable for some.

One more issue that was associated with AIDS in Frank's case was his frequent absences. He in some ways had to use Jean and others to be able to pay for his disease. The employees at DEC had to put in extra time and carry the extra workload to compensate for his frequent treatments. Besides, people were not even informed about the reason of his absences, and thus had a reason to believe that he was merely using them to take time off work to attend to his personal matters.

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Utilitarian Perspective

If Jean had viewed the happenings from a utilitarian perspective, she would merely be concerned with the consequences of her decisions, and in evaluating those consequences, her primary focus would be the amount of happiness or unhappiness of the people that would result from it.

Thus, dismissal of Frank Deloio seems a plausible option. If he had been fired for his illness, the company would have to replace him with a different person who would most likely be able to handle the responsibilities, devoting more time to them. Then all the employees would be happy, as they would be relieved of their extra responsibility. As for Frank, he would be less important, as his troubles are those of a single person.

Deontological Perspective

From a deontological view, it is necessary to do what is right regardless of the consequences. The view taken and the practical steps depend on the stance adopted towards what is right or wrong.

Thus, if the right thing is standing by the sick person, then the right thing is to help Frank in his predicament, sharing his responsibilities. One could say that a sick person is not able to care for oneself, and thus it is correct from the ethical standpoint to share the benefits available to other people to help the sick one.

On the other hand, if one adopts the view that the ultimate good is efficiency, then Frank's dismissal is a viable option as he is clearly in the way of the company's success. His replacement with a different person would contribute to the efficient functioning of the company as a whole.

Fairness to AIDS-Infected Person

Fairness means dealing with people honestly and in accordance with principles. In this sense, the manager's obligation consists in dealing with employees fairly, without bias or prejudice. Thus, a person suffering from AIDS should be dealt with in the same manner as any other person who is suffering from a serious health disorder. This also means that the manager should induce all the employees to treat the one infected with AIDS in the same manner.

Thinking about Rights

Maintaining the rights of a person requires the adherence to a certain set of principles. For instance, the sick person has the right to confidentiality, and this is what Jean has been trying to do for Frank. Besides, Frank was also entitled to company's medical insurance, and the full coverage of the costs associated with his illness. Regarding a case from this perspective involves the maintenance of a number of basic principles, but there is always the danger that something might fall through the cracks. For instance, if the person is not entitled to a change in job responsibilities, this will not be pursued by the manager as it is not part of the sick employee's specified rights.

How Jean Did

Jean, although unprepared to deal with a situation like that, lived up to the challenge of solving organizational problems in her department. She was not reached by the AIDS programs to the extent that she could derive her knowledge of what she could do from that source, and thus she was acting based on her own ethical judgement.

Jean went far beyond what was necessary according to the formalities at the company. She assisted Frank in adjusting his responsibilities to suit his current health conditions, and even had an idea to coin a new position designed for him where he could emphasize his technical skills, without putting pressure on him that he could not handle. When his health deteriorated, she relaxed his responsibilities even further. This raised her authority with the personnel, allowing people at the company to see that she was ready to go beyond what was prescribed by the rules to accommodate her employees.

In a way, her own ethical perspective was changed: if previously she looked at the people as professionals, restricting her relationship with them as a purely business one, now she could show that she was ready to see them as unique individuals that are important not only as cogs in the machine.

Perhaps the clear-cut nature of the case that involved helping a sick person helped Jean to make a leap from a strict and formal manager to a life-and-bloodpersonality. If Jean had been confronted with a more ethically ambiguous case like accommodating the frustration of person in the middle of a divorce, she would be more tempted to think along the lines, “ They have to cope with their problems on their own”. Facing a situation of someone hopelessly ill changed her behaviour and views.

Conclusion

Jean did well as she preserved the rights of a sick person, acted fairly, and was good at maintaining the basic principle of helping a sick person. Jean's actions were also right from the utilitarian perspective in a sense. Supporting an employee in need helped her to uphold her image in the eyes of others,

as well as the image of the company. The employees at DEC were able to draw the conclusion that if they fall ill with AIDS, they can probably expect the same sensitive and insightful treatment.

This idea is going to boost their morale in the long run, and increase their loyalty for the company. The case made headlines, which is going to serve as positive publicity for DEC, elevating the corporate image. It is perhaps unfair to suspect Jean of such a motivation being her primary driver, but this serves to show that her actions gain support from both deontological and utilitarian perspective.