

Mutiny in the Manufacturing Department

Topic: Labor Relations

Characters: Alan, a lead supervisor in a manufacturing department
Bob, an inexperienced group supervisor, directly under Alan
Coot, a veteran employee within Bob's group

Alan, a lead supervisor in the manufacturing department, has just received word of an altercation between one of his junior supervisors, Bob, a recent college graduate, and Coot, a veteran machine operator.

Bob's group had been working on an order for a major customer. Bob had set up a work schedule and job assignments which Coot, through experience, knew would not get the order out on time. Coot suggested a different sequence which Bob dismissed without discussion. The group began the order using Bob's setup, but Coot switched everyone over the minute Bob left the area. The order was finished, on time, without further incident. Bob later discovered the "mutiny," however, and had a loud confrontation with Coot in front of the entire group.

Alan has reviewed the two work schedules and, indeed, Bob's assignments would not have gotten the order out on time. Since the customer uses a Just-in-Time inventory system, such a slip-up would probably have cost Alan's company any future business with the customer.

On the other hand, Alan knows that a failure to support Bob will cause an immediate loss of credibility throughout the entire department. Bob needs the freedom to make his own mistakes if he is to develop and gain experience, but at what cost to the customer?

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