

Mutiny in the Manufacturing Department Teaching Notes

What Are the Relevant Facts?

1. Alan must deal with an inexperienced junior supervisor, Bob, who has had a job order corrected behind his back by an older worker, Coot.
2. Coot's setup finished the job by the date promised the customer.
3. Bob's setup would not have gotten the job done in time.
4. Failure to support Bob will undermine his credibility.
5. Supporting Bob may result in more mistakes harmful to customers.

What Are the Ethical Issues?

1. What are Alan's responsibilities to customers?
2. How should these responsibilities be balanced against Alan's responsibilities to develop supervisors and to ensure discipline?
3. Should a manager allow a customer and possibly the firm to be hurt in order to develop subordinates' experience and abilities?

Who Are the Primary Stakeholders?

- Alan
- Bob
- Coot
- Other supervisors and employees in the department
- The company and its stockholders
- Customers

What Are the Possible Alternatives?

- Short-term:
 1. Back Bob and discipline Coot severely.
 2. Chew out Bob and make him apologize to Coot.
 3. Attempt to compromise, in private, and hope neither Bob nor Coot holds a grudge.
 4. Chew both employees out and transfer one of them out of the group.
- Long-term:
 1. Let Bob continue to make his own decisions and, perhaps, mistakes. Require Bob to solicit

input from veteran employees in his group (including Coot). Monitor Bob's decisions closely (in effect, doing both his own and Bob's job at the same time).

2. Quietly ask Coot to keep an eye on Bob, and report back to Alan if he has any future concerns.

What Are the Ethics of the Alternatives?

• Utilitarian

1. What will be the costs to the company and to customers of letting Bob continue to make his own decisions? What will be the benefits to Bob's personal development and long-term value to the company? How do the short-term alternatives impact these costs and benefits?
2. What will be the costs to the company of disciplining Coot when he, in fact, saved the order? What are the costs of not disciplining Coot? What are the costs of letting employees know that supervisors can be ignored?
3. What will be the costs and benefits of publicly resolving this issue in favor of either party?

• Rights

1. Does Coot have a right to do his job so as to accomplish the company's goals? Does he have a duty to use his extensive experience to benefit the department and the company?
2. Does Bob have a right to be backed up by his superior if he is following proper procedures (though perhaps making poor decisions)? Does Bob have a right to learn his job without constant second-guessing from his supervisor and his employees?
3. Does Alan have a right to expect his subordinates to try and work out differences before they blow up into department wide issues?

• Justice

1. Which parties will benefit and which will suffer if Alan supports Coot? If he supports Bob? Is this distribution of benefits and burdens fair?

What Are the Practical Constraints?

1. Union rules or Standard Operating Procedure guidelines may force Alan to take certain disciplinary actions (which may influence how he handles other issues).
2. Any decision will need to be based on the current personal relationship between Bob and Coot. Alan needs to decide if they can work together and be somewhat supportive in the future.

What Actions Should Be Taken?

1. What should Alan do in the short term?
2. What should Alan do in the long term?
3. What would you do? Would this choice be appropriate in all situations for all individuals?
4. Which ethical theory seems to fit the situation best?