

## Oh, Salesmen Teaching Notes

### *What Are the Relevant Facts?*

1. The car dealership where Jim is a manager is big on regular training for sales personnel.
2. Mary is a novice salesperson and the only female selling cars.
3. Mary is upset that she has been regularly attending the training seminars while another, experienced salesperson (Tom) slips them, and she wants Jim to resolve the problem.

### *What Are the Ethical Issues?*

1. How much responsibility does Jim have towards the company, to ensure that the emphasis on training is taken seriously?
2. What is Jim's responsibility towards Mary? She is the only female salesperson, and he doesn't want to do anything that would further hinder her fitting in. But like any employee, she has the right to have her complaint taken seriously.
3. What is Jim's obligation to the other salespeople? If they have good sales records, can he question their attitude towards training? Is allowing some salespeople to *skip training fair* to conscientious employees and the company?

### *Who Are the Primary Stakeholders?*

- Jim
- Mary
- Tom (and possibly the other salesmen)
- The company

### *What Are the Possible Alternatives?*

1. Jim could do nothing. Maybe Mary will forget about it.
2. Jim could lie and tell Mary that he'll speak to Tom about it. Then, if she comes in tomorrow, he'll say it's all taken care of.
3. Jim could talk to Tom and get his side of the story.
4. Jim could survey the sales staff and ask them about their perception of the value of the training.
5. Jim could issue a memo to the salespeople telling them that attendance would now be taken at seminars and anyone not there would be disciplined.

6. Jim could pass the problem along to his manager and let him worry about it.

### *What Are the Ethics of the Alternatives?*

- Questions could be based on a "utilitarian" (cost-benefit) perspective:
  1. Which alternatives provide the greatest good for the greatest number?
  2. What are the actual costs and benefits? For example, what would be the cost of ignoring Mary's complaint, or of lying to her? What would be the cost of confronting Tom? What might be the benefit of surveying all the salespeople? (If they all say the training is a joke, how might management react?)
- Questions could be based on a "rights" perspective:
  1. What right does Jim have to question the attitude of a successful senior salesman like Tom? Further, what right does Jim have to insist on continual training if even good salespeople think it's a joke?
  2. What right does Mary have to question what may be the "status quo" in this dealership? And what rights might she have as far as fitting in? In other words, does she have the right to expect Jim to help make her integration into the work force easier?
- Questions could be based on a "justice" perspective. For example:
  1. Which alternative would ensure the most equitable distribution of benefits and burdens amongst the stakeholders? Who would benefit most (or be burdened) with each of these alternatives? On what moral basis can Jim treat some salespersons differently from others with regard to attending training sessions?
  2. Who benefits and who must count [?] the benefits of doing nothing?

### *What Are the Practical Constraints?*

1. Jim must remember that the mere fact that Mary is the lone female may create friction between her and the others (and if she is the "tattletale," it may

- be even worse). However, if her complaint is ignored, she may understandably be upset.
2. Tom (and other salesmen) may understandably be irritated if their traditionally excellent performance is questioned.
  3. Management might not be too thrilled if they are told that their ongoing (and expensive) training is seen as a joke.

*What Actions Should Be Taken?*

1. What should Jim do? Why? Which alternative seems to make the most ethical sense here?