

Dr. S. Krishnakumari published a case study titled **“Handling Mistakes and Building Confidence: A Lesson in Effective Leadership and Employee Development”**. This case study is used for second year MBA students for Human Resource Management course.

CASE STUDY 7

Satish was a Sales Manager for Industrial Products Company in City branch. A week ago, he was promoted and shifted to Head Office as Deputy Manager - Product Management for a division of products which he was not very familiar with. Three days ago, the company VP - Mr. George, convened a meeting of all Product Managers. Satish's new boss (Product Manager Ketan) was not able to attend due to some other preoccupation. Hence, the Marketing Director, Preet - asked Satish to attend the meeting as this would give him an exposure into his new role.

At the beginning of the meeting, Preet introduced Satish very briefly to the VP. The meeting started with an address from the VP and soon it got into a series of questions from him to every Product Manager. George, of course, was pretty thorough with every single product of the company and he was known to be pushy and a blunt veteran in the field. Most of the Product Managers were very clear of George's ways of working and had thoroughly prepared for the meeting and were giving to the point answers. George then started with Satish. Satish being new to the product, was quite confused and fared miserably.

Preet immediately understood that George had possibly failed to remember that Satish was new to the job. He thought of interrupting George's questioning and giving a discrete reminder that Satish was new. But by that time, George who was pretty upset with the lack of preparation by Satish made a public statement "Gentlemen, you are witnessing here an example of sloppy work and this can't be excused".

Now Preet was in two minds - should he interrupt George and tell him that Satish is new in that position OR should he wait till the end of the meeting and tell George privately. Preet chose the second option.

Satish was visibly angry at the treatment meted out by George but he also chose to keep mum. George quickly closed the meeting saying that he found in general, lack of planning in the department and asked Preet to stay back in the room for further discussions.

Before Preet could give any explanation on Satish, George asked him "Tell me openly, Preet, was I too rough with that boy?" Preet said "Yes, you were. In fact, I was about to remind you

that Satish is new to the job". George explained that the fact that Satish was new to the job didn't quite register with him during the meeting. George admitted that he had made a mistake and asked his secretary to get Satish report to the room immediately.

A perplexed and uneasy Satish reported to George's room after few minutes. George looking Satish straight into his eyes said "I have done something which I should have never even thought of and I want to apologies to you. It is my mistake that I did not recollect that you were new to the job when I was questioning you". Satish was left speechless.

George continued "I would like to state few things clearly to you. Your job is to make sure that people like me and your bosses do not make stupid decisions. We have good confidence in your abilities and that is why we have brought you to the Head Office. For everybody, time is required for learning. I will expect you to know all the nuances of your product in three month's time. Until then you have my complete confidence". George closed the conversation with a big reassuring handshake with Satish.

QUESTIONS:

1. Was it at all necessary for George to apologies to such a junior employee like Satish?
2. If you were in Satish's place, how would you to respond to George's apology?
3. Was George correct in saying that Satish is there to correct the "stupid mistake" of his boss and George?
4. Would you employ George in your company?
5. Did Preet make a mistake by not intervening during the meeting and correct George's misconception about Satish?

6. As an HR man, how would you define the character of George - bullying but later regretting? Does his attitude need to be corrected? 7. Would you be happy to have George/Preet as your boss?

SOLUTION:

1. Yes, it was necessary for George to apologies to Satish. Even though Satish is new to the Head Office and is much junior to George, in order to keep up the morale of Satish, George

should apologies. This will not only reassure Satish's attachment towards the company but also motivate him in learning things faster.

2. If I were in Satish's place, I would think George and promise him to learn things well within the given time.
3. The word 'stupid mistake' creates confusion. George only meant that Satish should not make the top-authorities feel that they have made a wrong decision by promoting Satish. What George wanted was Satish's support. Hence, the bosses expect Satish to work according to the policy (both written and unwritten) of the company.
4. Yes, I would employ George in my company. The ability of one to realize his mistake is truly appreciable especially if he is in a much senior position.
5. Not really. It was alright for Preet to remain quiet during George's talk. But he made it a point to remind him after the meeting.
6. George is a natural task-oriented leader. He becomes people - oriented only when stimulated. When he is into a task he does it with full dedication. He is a trustworthy person. He has to enhance his soft-skills by making himself an equally task-oriented and people-oriented leader.
7. Yes, I would be happy to have George or Preet as my boss. A general comment: Satish's boss should have familiarized Satish with the formalities of the meeting with George.