

Unit 6 - Leadership Skills Case Studies

1. Putting Theory Into Practice

SCENARIO

Vincent Battaglia is a new manager and is trying to do his best. He also has a good amount of education. He knows about the theories discussed in chapter 16. He is trying to identify how these theories could work in real life for him. His seven-person staff has important work to do for the company, plus he wants to maximize his own and his staff's performance.

CRITICAL THINKING

Discuss how Vincent can use any or all of the management theories of Maslow, Herzberg, and McClelland, and the expectancy and reinforcement theories. Can these approaches meld and reinforce one another or are they in conflict? Create your own fact scenario or several of them for Vincent's situation. Consider how there would be differences if his line of work for a retailer. Also consider the amount of resources available to Vincent for his staff, and how this would affect him and his management situation.

2. Management by Leaders or by Teams

SCENARIO

Traditionally, we tend to think of managers as leaders and, thus, we look up to them. This may imply a hierarchy where the leader is on top and issues the orders; everyone else is below. It also may imply an authoritarian approach that flows from the leader knowing and having all the answers.

CRITICAL THINKING

How well do leaders work with one another? Can you think of reasons why managers may cling to a leadership style that focuses on one individual—the hero—and denies the ability of a group to work together to achieve? Do these ideas have any relationship to the struggle for equality?

3. What's "Free" Isn't Always...

SCENARIO

Retirees from Sears continue to protest a 1997 decision by the retailer that makes them pay towards life insurance they'd previously received for free. The company announced its new policy, which applies to most employees who retired after 1977.

Sears says that at least 84,000 people were affected by the change that will drop death benefits to \$5,000 by 2007 unless retirees kick in their own funds to help keep benefits at their previous levels. The reason? Sears sliced its benefit costs to become more competitive, according to then-chairman and CEO Arthur Martinez.

Retirees thought they had the insurance for free, but Sears says no. The company had a clause in its description of retiree benefits that allowed it to modify them and the retirees saw that description when they signed up for the insurance, Sears says. It points out that only three of the top 20 retailers provide life insurance after retirement.

CRITICAL THINKING

This organizational conflict between Sears and its retirees seems to be "no win" situation: the retirees lose benefits or lose money. Although Sears loses favorable public opinion it wins higher profits. Can you identify anything that would have helped Sears or its retirees in this standoff situation?