



Developing Associates

Overview

This situational dilemma was designed to explore the impact of the Values on decision-making at our company. The dilemmas presented in the cases were developed with our culture and business situation in mind. This was done to closely simulate the types of challenges that associates throughout the company experience on the job.

Instructions

The situational dilemma is intended to stimulate discussions about the Values in small group settings. Take 10 minutes to read the situation and answer the discussion questions. Spend the next 15 minutes analyzing and discussing situational dilemma as a group. Keep in mind that there isn't always a "right" answer to the dilemmas posed in the scenarios; the value generated by the situational dilemma is often in the richness of the discussion that takes place.

Our company is known for a rigorous recruiting process that selects the “best and brightest,” places them in challenging roles and expects them to “act like an owner” and drive business results. This has led to a fast-paced environment filled with highly analytical and entrepreneurial people and a 20% plus growth since our beginning in 1995. Historically, associates have experienced rapid change in their roles and responsibilities. They thrive in this constantly changing and highly competitive environment.

Now, recognizing the slower economy and increased scrutiny by regulators, we have chosen a “managed growth” strategy. This means that business growth opportunities are analyzed more carefully, costs are managed more closely, and associate headcount growth will stay flat or possibly even decrease. Consequently, new job opportunities for internal associates will continue to decline and associates will be expected to stay in their current roles for longer periods of time.

Chris is an outstanding performer and has spoken to his manager on many occasions about his expectations for an expanded role. Chris’ manager, Jordan, sees Chris as a valuable contributor operating at maximum capacity. He believes Chris to be very good in his current role but, at the same time, thinks he tends to rely on his “tried and true” core skills at the expense of experimenting with new, innovative approaches or ideas. Chris feels that he has much more to offer than he has been asked to give, and due to the limited opportunities that have been made available to him has not been able to expand his capabilities as he would wish. His peers see him as a trusted teammate who is a strong, clear communicator who consistently lives the Values, and know him to be actively involved in the local Habitat for Humanity organization.



At this time, Jordan feels he just doesn't have the time to address Chris' needs and aspirations with all the many projects and priorities he is juggling himself. It's difficult to focus on development of anyone at all when he is having a hard enough time keeping his head above water. In any case, he doesn't see any near-term opportunities for stretch assignments that complement Chris' skills. However, he recognizes that he needs to do something to develop and challenge Chris.

As a team, familiarize yourself with the Values, reviewing all the Behavioral Descriptors. Keep these in mind as you discuss the questions noted below.

Discussion Questions:

- *What Values and Behavioral Descriptors are addressed in the case scenario?*
- *In what ways could the Values and Behavioral Descriptors be used to guide the decisions and situations presented in the case?*

Review "Jordan's Options" on the following page. What should Jordan do?



Jordan's Options

Time Limit: 10 minutes

Which option should Jordan take to be in the greatest alignment with the Values?

1. Reassure Chris that he recognizes both his abilities and understands his concern. Candidly explain to him that business conditions have changed, and he doesn't believe there will be many opportunities in the near term.
2. Assign Chris a stretch assignment that may not complement his skills. Acknowledge to Chris the concerns about taking on this additional work, but explain the benefits of staying challenged and engaged.
3. Discuss the situation with other managers and actively seek out new roles and responsibilities for Chris. Tell Chris about the limited choices available, but inform him of the commitment to help him identify other opportunities.
4. Review his own list of responsibilities and challenges, and identify ways in which he could either delegate one of his key projects to Chris, or collaborate with Chris on a project that would provide increased exposure to broader challenges, resulting in development for Chris and accelerated results for the company. Commit to providing proactive coaching to ensure Chris is successful.
5. Have a career discussion with Chris, outlining the current state of the business and the limited opportunities available. Reinforce that Chris is a valuable associate that he doesn't want to lose. Agree that each of you will aggressively look for other internal opportunities, while continuing to discuss if or when Chris should begin an external job search.

Agree on an option before proceeding. You may combine elements of the options provided to create a new option, if desired.



Analysis and Discussion

Option 1 may communicate to Chris that Jordan is too busy to be concerned about him. It does not model the company's commitment to *develop and challenge associates* and to promote the best people.

Option 2 is possibly a good one if the project Jordan can assign to Chris has high visibility, does not negatively impact business results, and will *develop and challenge* him. It must also be perceived by Chris as being a *reward for performance and results*. Jordan must be sure to address Chris' capacity concerns and not overwhelm him.

In Option 3, Jordan is *taking an integrated approach* by seeking opportunities for Chris outside his department. He is also *communicating openly and honestly* by trying to *develop and challenge* Chris.

In Option 4, Jordan addresses Chris' desire for *development and challenging assignments*, and at the same time demonstrates *humbleness* by acknowledging that he can't do everything himself. This approach also allows Jordan to be *collaborative*, to *elevate* and *empower* Chris, and to *take an integrated approach*.

With Option 5, Jordan is *communicating openly and honestly* and connecting with Chris as an individual, not just a "high performing associate." Associates, even strong performers, should be treated with respect if they decide it is in their best interest to leave the company. However, every effort should be made to support Chris' continued growth internally. His loss would compromise the Value of "Best People."

Follow-Up Questions:

- *Based on your team's discussion, what Values are addressed in the case scenario? Identify the specific behaviors or actions that led you to your conclusions.*
- *What challenges have you faced, or are you currently facing, in living these Values?*
- *What can you do to more consistently live these Values on a day-to-day basis?*