**MGT 301 Case Discussion**

This page is distributed to students.

We needed some summer help in our office so we hired three students. One is the son of a really good friend of ours. His name is Ken. He's a rising senior in high school. He's worked several weeks. At first he was doing some filing and consolidating of folders, recycling old stuff, etc. When that ran out, we moved him to helping us with putting together cases for our promotions. Specifically, any time a faculty member goes through a promotion, we send out letters to people who review that person, and one step is that the reviewers compare that person to a group of their peers (between 9 and 15 other faculty members out there). In the end we get all of those reviews and pull together a big packet.

One piece of that packet is a summary of all of the people that the faculty member is compared to. It's a brief bio of all of the comparisons (who they are, where they work, what their research is, etc.) It basically entails going on the internet and doing some research. It’s a task my assistant (Sarah) would have done otherwise, but was the kind of thing you can give to a teenager (nothing confidential and just looking stuff up on line).

We have 7 people up for promotion. There were a total 91 people he needed to look up. Ken was working alone in an office for about 5 hours a day for a total of about 8 days on this, hence 40 hours. He was working on his laptop. He's been wearing headphones while working.

While I was on vacation, Sarah wrote and said that she had been asking Ken to send her what he had done. She said she would go in and ask him if he had any questions and he would say "no, it's going great" as he worked away on his laptop. But when Ken was about to leave for a vacation and she wanted to see what he had done. She asked him and he didn't send anything, so I wrote to him. Finally, after he had left on the last day, he sent her his "work." It was a short bio on the 7 faculty members getting promoted. Someone could have done that in about an hour. We gave the task to another intern, and he finished all 91 bios in 18 hours.

It's a mess. I don't really fault Sarah at all for giving him the task of doing the bios. It's pretty simple stuff. She didn't really have any idea that he simply wasn't doing it (it's really shocking to all of us that he did this). My biggest worry with this kid is that if I don't do anything he will think this activity is OK. And it's not.

I emailed him and asked him if that was all he had. No response. He was gone for 2 weeks. Showed back up today (thinking this was his last week). I've given him a few things to do this week.

My question is this - do I inform his parents of this. Basically the guy blew off what we told him to do, and (must have) just sat in the room and watched videos, or played games, or done something. He did tell me today that "I guess I was a little confused as to what I was supposed to do." But never told anyone that, never asked for assistance, and still charged 30 hours of time. If I tell his parents, they are going to be pretty upset with him. Mainly I want to tell them to get their advice, because he needs to be told that his performance was really unacceptable, and that if he does this in the "real world" he will lose his job. His parents are awesome people.

Then again, I would be getting him in trouble with them. And I could just say nothing, let this week run out and never hire him again.

**MGT 301 Case Discussion**

This page contains kindling questions for the case discussion (not distributed to students).

* Should Mike (the writer) tell Ken’s parents?
  + How do we separate the personal versus professional aspects of this case?
  + What are the legal/ethical issues involved in communicating with Ken’s parents?
* Who is at fault in this situation?
  + Ken: Should he have asked for help if he needed it?
  + Sarah: Should the assistant have checked on Ken’s work more regularly?
  + Mike: Does he have a responsibility to teach interns how to do the job?
    - Should Mike apologize for not training or assigning proper supervision?
* What was Mike thinking when Ken didn’t respond to emails and update requests?
  + What are some reasons why employees would not respond?
    - Are there any “good” or “acceptable” reasons?
  + How should Mike have handled this situation?
* How are differences in expectations across generations relevant (Mike is 55, Ken is 16)?
  + What are some challenges in managing people who are different from you?
  + What are some related communication challenges?
* How could project management have been improved in this case?
  + Weigh the benefits of interim reporting and check-ups versus autonomy?
  + How could Mike have ensured that expectations were clear?
  + Should Mike have provided a “warm-up” project? If so, what type/scope?
* How could this be managed as an opportunity to coach or train Ken?
  + What are common aspects of work that new employees may not understand?
    - Related to organizing and handling tasks?
    - Related to dealing with uncertainty?
    - Related to asking for help or clarification when needed?
    - Related to double-checking, proofing, external quality reviews of work?
* How could improvements to selection have avoided this problem?
  + What are some characteristics that employees in Ken’s position should possess?
  + How can Mike ensure that selection on these characteristics is legally defensible?
* Should Mike fire Ken?
  + If so, how do you go about it? What are some potential consequences?
  + If not, what does giving Ken a second chance communicate (to Ken and others)?
  + What level of discipline is appropriate for a paid intern?
  + What are some other disciplinary options? Are any more appropriate?
  + Does any of this change based on Ken’s age (16 years old)?
* Can (and should) Mike try to determine what Ken was doing for those 40 hours?
  + Can Mike (legally) check Ken’s computer?
    - Reminder: it was company network/electricity, but Ken’s machine.
  + Should Mike (ethically) check Ken’s computer?