

Case Study

1. The Exotic Melons:

You are the manager (Worldwide Sales Cock and Bull Melons) in a Dubai-based company that deals in selling exotic fruits. Cock and Bull Melons are a special variety of melons that can be cultivated only on the sandy dunes surrounding the Cock and Bull oasis in the Sahara desert. Worldwide demand and supply have been quite stable so far at 100 melons a year, with the supply being just sufficient to cover the demand. Cock and Bull Melons have traditionally been sold to the sheikhs in the Middle East, and Hollywood and Bollywood actors and actresses. Their exorbitant prices take them out of reach of common people.

In January 2002, the research centre at Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), India discovers that Cock and Bull melons can cure the fatal MarGaya syndrome in pregnant women, which kills both the mother and the child. Also, it can cure the fatal MaraGaya syndrome in diabetic patients. Both these symptoms are very rare. Unfortunately for you, in May 2002, the MaraGaya syndrome strikes 2000 people in America and the MarGaya syndrome strikes 1000 pregnant women in Sweden. 100 Cock and Bull melons are required to cure the 1000 cases in America while 100 are required to cure the Swedish problem. You know that the patients in both the countries cannot afford the high cost of Cock and Bull melon treatment. You also know that the revenues from treating patients would be much lower than selling them to sheikhs and film stars. You are in a real dilemma. What would you do?

A common misconception of a student, or a person not steeped in the world of business is to presume that such solutions demand a black or a white answer. Fortunately for them, most cases, and dilemmas are anything but black and white. Most case studies and financial dilemmas require a modicum of lateral thinking, which when viewed through the subjective eye of a seller wanting to maximize on profits, is quite difficult. It is inherent in human nature to aim towards gaining a constant influx of profits, to fit a higher status quo in society. However, it is also human nature to lend a helping hand to people in need. And this situation asks for both. I would propose a charity to profit ratio of 30-50-20%. This means, that I shall be allocating 20% of my harvest to sell for charity and donate the entirety of the profits and money gained from this percentage of the harvest. For the 50%, I shall sell my crops for the general annual sale, to guarantee enough resources to support the harvest next year. They also shall be covering the expenses of the crops, like their preservation and transport duties. These crops shall have prices that have already been fixed based on sales and sale value in the previous years. And as for the final 30%, I shall be selling these at the price of my choice, and the profits that I incur from this percentage of the crops shall go towards the sustenance of my lifestyle and living conditions. In this form, I shall not be hurting anyone or completely capitalizing on the profitability of Cock and Bull Melons, and shall also be contributing towards the eradication or at least decline in the severity of the MarGaya syndrome worldwide.

2. Confidential Information?

Mr. SecretKeeper is a Corporate Head (HR) in a company. He is very nice and gets along well with all people. People often consult him for help and advice. One person (named “Mr. A”) approaches him for a job because he is right now jobless. Mr. SecretKeeper takes the guy's qualifications and asks him to come after a week however, since no job available. He keeps frequently postponing the job offer. Mr. A keeps visiting the HR head, Mr. Secret Keeper, often and becomes his close friend.

Then, one day, Mr. A confides with the HR Head “I was in prison for 18 years for a crime that I had not committed. With two years remaining of the sentence, I ran away from jail. Even now, police is in look out for me.” Mr. SecretKeeper tells the person to go home and that he would give him a job. However as soon as he leaves, Mr. SecretKeeper calls up the police and gives the details of Mr. A and asks them to arrest Mr. A.

Because of this betrayal of trust by the HR head, people in the organisation have started losing faith in him. A senior person in the office complains to the VP that the Mr. Secret Keeper has “broken faith”, so others could not come to him.

Assume that you are the VP of the company. What would you do about the situation?

The word of a person doesn't belief the decision of an entire judicial body. People aren't convicted for public good, without a clear examination of evidence. Cases stand in court for months, even years to allow for a clear examination of the scene or case of crime, to allow for a fair, and well thought solution. The judge or jury ruling on such a decision, does so after a lot of careful consideration and cross-examination. On first thoughts, just the word of a person is clearly suspect and needs much more analysis than just their claim. In a case such as this, it would be in the applicant's best interest to have completed his sentence and showed this record to the head and letting them decide for themselves about the legitimacy of his claim. However, according to this case, the applicant hasn't even completed their sentence, and by all means, is a fugitive. The decision taken by the HR head is completely right, and was in the best interests of the company. Harboring a fugitive, or being negligent enough to not realize it are both extremely bad looks for the company, and the HR head's actions are completely justified in such a case. As for my actions as the VP of this company, I would address this supposed 'break in faith' in front of all the employees of my company, and present all the facts to them. I would make them realize that while the decision made by the HR head may not have been in the best interests of the applicant, but it was definitely in the best interests of the company. Such a display of quick-mindedness and civic duty is required in every employee of every company and Mr. A displayed it flawlessly. The decision taken by the court to convict and by the applicant to run away are between them, and need to be dealt with between the both of them. Our company doesn't have any place here, and we must keep the faith of our clients by being as transparent and clean as possible.