**Case Study Analysis of**

**Waco Manufacturing**

CIS 410-50

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**Executive Summary**

Waco manufacturing is a supplier of custom-machined auto parts. During the third quarter review an area manager (Saltz) expresses frustration with an engineering manager (Barber) over his team’s slow work of product designs. The engineer manager claims he’s tried, but gets no response from the engineering design team (McCoy, Frank, & Gogan). When McCoy, Frank, & Gogan are contacted by Saltz, they are caught off guard about the importance of the project and say that this was never communicated from Barber.

Waco’s employee location tracking system has no record of Barber and the design team meeting at the same time and place. The issue truly is with the engineering manager not conveying the importance of the designs to his team.

We might want to entertain the idea that the three engineers all have it out for their boss and are working together to make it look as though Barber is shirking his management responsibilities. We could even support this theory by drawing connections to common social observations as singling out misfits (Barber in this case).

*“All kinds of organizational scapegoats serve similar functions – people in roles everyone “loves to hate,” convenient “troublemakers” and misfits,” and people who are “just not playing the game.” They provide a focus for unconscious anger and sadistic tendencies, relieving tension in the wider organization and binding it together.”* **-Morgan, pp. 225**

Although this could be an entertaining, the idea of three employees working together, plotting against their manager is a complex explanation. This is not the simplest explanation, so it is not the most likely.

There are many “possible explanations”, but we need to follow the most likely reason that is supported with empirical evidence. *That explanation is that Barber hasn’t communicated the importance sufficiently to McCoy, Frank, and Gogan because they never all met at the same time.*

Using *Occam’s Razor*, we will shave off irrelevant complexities and boil down to the most likely explanation. It is obvious that the engineers’ story and their manager’s (Barber) story do not align. Someone is lying and the tracking system data seems to support McCoy, Frank, and Gogan’s account.

Sure, there are many other possible explanations, such as Barber not wearing his badge during a past meeting, or not feeling the need to have all of them meet synchronously, or any other explanation an imagination can concoct. *But the fact of the matter is, the data doesn’t support Barber’s story and even if there was an explanation, his team wasn’t working sufficiently on the project and reflects poorly on Barber’s leadership skills.*

*“Of particular importance here is the fact that many of our most basic conceptions of organization hinge on the idea of making the complex simple.”* **- Morgan, pp. 220**

To be sure, acceptance of the tracking technology isn’t truly the issue here. If Barber removed his badge because he disagreed with the principle of being tracked, it still wouldn’t explain why his team was behind on the work. The acceptance of this technology is not at issue, but rather the data that it provides in a case against poor leadership skills of Barber.

(Executive Summary Cont.)

The necessary course of action is to have one meeting with Barber, Saltz, McCoy, Frank, and Gogan altogether. In that meeting Barber will be asked for a sufficient explanation for why they never met and why his team is behind on the designs. Depending on the outcome of the meeting Barber’s position in the company may need to be reevaluated, but at the least a plan for how to move forward and get back on schedule must be developed.

**Introduction to the Problem at the Waco**

This case analysis will be an analysis of the **behavior** of Barber and Waco’s use of monitoring technology.

The problem at Waco is not an issue with acceptance of employee monitoring technology. It is not an issue of some elaborate scheme between the three design engineers to make their manager look bad. It is not (likely) any other combination of complex possibilities, or at least it isn’t until it is proven to be.

Occam’s razor, and other Heuristics theories explain that the simplest explanations are more likely to be the correct one than a complex one. The simple explanation is that Barber failed to meet with all three design engineers at the same time, which resulted in failure to communicate the importance of the designs.

This case analysis will focus largely on the behavior of its actors, but first we must see if our assumption that Barber failed to meet with the composite design team simultaneously is true. The first course of action is to meet with all three engineers, the engineering manager, and the area manager to discuss the disconnect of expectations and reality for effort on the composite designs. From there we will learn what Barber has done to communicate with his team and their perception of what is going on.

Next, we need to decide what to do with the team and how to move forward to meet the deadlines for the composite designs.

***The rest of this cases analysis relies on the assumption that:***

1. That the data showing employee location was complete and accurate.
2. Barber did in fact fail to communicate the importance of this project to his team
3. Barber lied when he said, “I have repeatedly met with Sherman McCoy, Telly Frank, and Wanda Gogan, the engineers assigned to this project.”

**Barber’s Perception and Behavior**

Barber clearly says to Saltz that he has met with McCoy, Frank, and Gogan repeatedly. Either this was not as a group or it wasn’t the case.

If Barber repeatedly met with the engineers, surely there should be at least one meeting with all of them in the same room at the same time. The location monitoring data doesn’t support this, so the simplest explanation is that Barber lied about meeting repeatedly with his design team.

It would be easy to assume that Barber wouldn’t lie because he would have to remember that he is being monitored.

*“Their productivity can be measured and updated every minute of the day. In some offices and manufacturing situations the latest online productivity statistics of individuals or groups may be displayed continuously as a constant reminder of how well or badly one is doing against expectations.” -* **Cash, pp. 312**

But if this tracking was only behind the scenes and not used in normal operations Barber may have forgot about it when he felt pressured to lie. When Barber told this lie, he likely didn’t think that it could be proven false by the system that monitored their every move.

*“...the last thing a fish is likely to discover is the water it is swimming in.”* **-Morgan, pp. 209**

Analyzing Barber’s behavior and why he told this lie can be done through the lens of the ***Theory of Reasoned Action,*** this theory:

* lays out the links between an individual’s attitude and feelings about a behavior
* says an individual’s behavior is influenced by how others perceive the behavior (Subjective Norms)
* Behavior intention, which is the likelihood of performing the behavior
* And the behavior described by an action, its target, the context, and the time

By analyzing Barber’s behavior of lying to Saltz through the lens of Reasoned Action we might closer understand why he decided to lie.

**Behavioral Beliefs:** Barber likely saw two options. One, to lie about meeting with his team, while the second is to tell the truth. Barber has his own beliefs about the possible actions. He likely chose to lie because of his own perception of the two options in comparison to one another. He may very well have thought that lying, although a moral fault, would be less professionally damaging that telling the truth. If he were to tell the truth, he may not have to fault morally, but he would seem inadequate as a manager and leader, and would likely reflect poorly in his quarterly evaluation. Barber believes that lying would be the most beneficial behavior.

**Subjective Norm:** Barber knows that lying is not right, we all do. But Barber also knows that if he tells the truth others will judge him. His peers, specifically Saltz, will have issues with his inability to organize his team and prioritize their tasks. Professionally Barber would look incapable of his position. Rather than bear this perception, he chose to lie and assumed he would not be found out. Under the pressure of having to lie he likely forgot that the location tracking system could be used to prove his story false. Barber is pressured by what his peers would think of him to lie.

**Behavioral Intention:** Barber didn’t likely have any malicious intention on lying. Rather, he likely just wanted to be spared the judgment of being an inadequate manager. His intention was to avoid embarrassment, not to make his team look bad. But in doing so, he did in fact, make his team look unmotivated and incapable.

**Behavior:** The resulting behavior from these inputs is that Barber does lie to Saltz, instead of telling the truth about not having met with his team.

**Location Tracking Technology**

It is well established that Waco uses its location tracking technology to track behavior and increase productivity. A side affect of having the data available is it being used for alternative uses, such as disproving the lie told by Barber.

This technology in and of itself is interesting in concept. It allows it employees to be reached by phone based on their location (before cell phones) and other useful applications. But what is most interesting about this technology is the prison it creates for its employees. Now, nothing is left unknown. Their basic privacy is intruded upon and productivity can be extrapolated more than any supervisor could. The system that Waco has created now controls the creators.

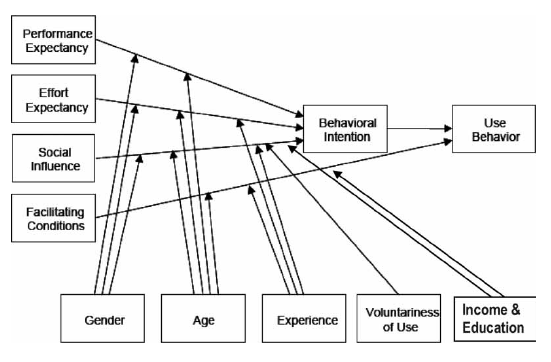
*“While organizations may be socially constructed realities, these constructions are often attributed an existence and power of their own that allow them to exercise a measure of control over their creators.”* **-Morgan, pp. 207**

These constructs now make something as human and “normal” as lying about activities performed nearly impossible to get away with. Its interesting to think that lies can be snuffed out by employee monitoring systems.

**Technology Acceptance**

Accepting the technology is another story altogether. Some other case analysts might posit that Barber took off his badge because he didn’t agree with the tracking system. This is at best a stretch. To assume that a company wide policy isn’t accepted by someone in an engineering management position.

This is also a much more complex assumption than assuming that Barber is lying to avoid being judged. As Einstein put it, “Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler.”

We can analyze this location tracking technology and its acceptance among workers at Waco using a Technology Acceptance Model (image below). This shows the y-axis with factors that create behavioral intention. The x-axis lists characteristics an individual possess that would alter their behavioral intention.

At Waco we can assume that each individuals gender, age, experience, voluntariness of use, and education might affect their perception of the technology factors into their acceptance of the location tracking. If, for instance, Barber were an older male nearing the end of his retirement he would be much more reluctant to use this technology than a brand-new female intern.

But even if an employee (Barber) were to disagree with this policy they wouldn’t likely choose to not use it. There would likely be repercussions for not using it, and as a manager Barber would be expected to participate.

We can therefore assume that although Barber could very well not appreciate being surveilled by this system, he would likely have fallen in line and used the system if for nothing more than to appease his superiors and set an example. Waco has adopted this system and it has become part of their process and culture. Although this monitoring system can be beneficial, it can be seen as a constraint for their employees. Their employees likely behave differently knowing they are being surveilled, and this goes for all types of users.

*“All the forces that help people and their organizations create the shared systems of meaning that allow them to negotiate their world in an orderly way, can become constraints that prevent them from acting in other ways.”* **- Morgan, pp. 209**

**Decision**

The first course of action is to meet with all three engineers (McCoy, Frank, Gogan), the engineering manager (Barber), and the area manager (Saltz) to discuss the disconnect of expectations and reality for effort on the composite designs. From there we will learn what Barber has done to communicate with his team and their perception of what is going on.

Meeting with everyone in the room brings clarity about the situation and ensures everyone has heard everything. Either McCoy, Frank, and Gogan lied or Barber was the one who lied. Either way, the group as whole needs to resolve this issue face to face.

Next, we need to decide what to do with the team and how to move forward to meet the deadlines for the composite designs. And then with Barber, Saltz needs to discuss the issue of Barber either lying or not using the location tracking system. Either way there is an issue with Barber’s behavior that needs to be corrected. Barber may need to be removed from his post, if he is found to have lied and not prepared adequately for the composite design project.

**Rejected Alternatives**

1. **To do nothing:** to do nothing after having to conflicting stories is to dismiss lying in the workplace as acceptable and non-detrimental to operations. Neither of which is true.
2. **Confront Barber about the Location Data in private:**  this wasn’t chosen because if Barber lied the first time he may try and lie again to get out of it. This would only make things worse for Barber, unless he decided to come clean about lying.
3. **Go straight to a higher manager with the issue:**  this wasn’t chosen because it is using a sledge hammer when a hammer will do. The issue can and should be resolved at the lower level, at least initially, until it is confirmed that Barber has lied and failed to perform his duties. Only then should upper management be brought in.