

Steven Hinkle: Part B

This case was written Jonathan Trujillo, an Online Curriculum Designer at Brigham Young University – Idaho. The case was prepared solely as a basis for class discussion and not as an endorsement, a source of primary data, or an illustration of effective or ineffective teamwork. Although based on real events, the case is fictitious and any resemblance to actual persons or entities is coincidental.

Copyright © 2019 Brigham Young University – Idaho. Copies may not be made without permission. No part of this publication may be copied, stored, transmitted, reproduced or distributed in any form or medium whatsoever without the permission of the copyright owner.

José's Office Continued

As Steven followed José to his office, he thought about the different warnings he had received over the last eight months. Steven hoped he would get one more chance. He knew he wasn't the greatest employee, but he had never considered the fact that he might actually get fired, until now.

As they arrived at his office, José motioned for Steven to take a seat. Steven sat upright in his chair, very much on edge. José tiredly sank down into his own chair, adjusted a thing or two on his desk, and then looked Steven squarely in the eyes for several agonizing seconds.

José finally spoke. "Okay Steven, let's talk about your future with us."

Steven looked around uncomfortably but remained silent.

"I know you like video games. Do you like sports?" asked José.

"Um, they are okay I guess," Steven stammered, unsure where the conversation was going.

"How about baseball?" questioned José.

"Sure, I played when I was a kid," Steven answered.

"Great. So, you're familiar with the phrase 'three strikes and you're out.'"

Steven looked down ashamed.

José continued, "I think it is fair to say that we have had more than three strikes, Steven. Would you agree?"

"Probably," Steven answered without looking up.

"I would appreciate it if you would look at me, Steven," José calmly asked.

Steven looked up to meet José's eyes, fighting back tears in his own. José didn't seem mad or angry, but he certainly wasn't happy either. Truth be told, José had a look of concern.

"Steven, I will make this simple. We have every right to let you go. You have cost us hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars in time and money with some of your mistakes. You are consistently late, and you have a generally terrible attitude about this job. However," José paused. "...I know that sweet wife of yours is due any week now and you are about to become a father." José paused again for a few seconds. "I couldn't live with myself if I didn't give you one last chance to shape up and improve."

Steven was at a loss for words. Suddenly the reality of his situation and the impact this job had on him and his family came crushing down. Steven was feeling a mix of emotions. Gratitude towards José for another chance, embarrassment for being called out on his mistakes and attitude, and fear for now understanding what losing this job means for his growing family. He was also feeling frustration in himself for the lack of diligence and effort he had shown in his work. After composing himself, he finally issued a short and tearful "thank you."

“Steven,” it was José again. “I mean it. You’re out of strikes. This is your last chance. I expect model behavior, attitude, and performance from here on out. If you show up late, inappropriately gossip, or make a preventable work mistake one more time,” he paused, “we will have to let you go. Do you understand?”

“I do,” Steven replied. “Thank you.”

Steven finished the remainder of his shift diligently but still thinking about the ultimatum that José had given him. Could he really continue to be perfect and mistake-free from here on out? That was a lot of sudden pressure. As he drove back to his apartment, he thought about how he would break the news to his wife, Melissa.

As he walked into the door of their small apartment, Melissa greeted him with a look of concern on her face.

“I had my doctor’s appointment today and was told that I have to be put on bed rest.” Melissa saw the look of alarm on Steven’s face. “It’s nothing too serious,” she added. “The baby should be fine! But I can’t work anymore at the clothing store. I called and let my boss know that I will have to start my maternity leave early.”

There was still another month before Melissa was due, and they were both hoping to have her work as much as possible before the baby came. Melissa had expressed that she might not want to go back to work once the baby was here. She would prefer to spend all her time at home with the baby. So, with that option in mind, they were hoping that Melissa would be able to earn as much as possible before the baby came. The news of her bed rest would take a month’s worth of her salary away from their budget. Steven was starting to feel the pressure of his situation at work even more now.

Melissa looked at him nervously. “But I have some more news,” she said. “I was talking with my mom earlier today and things are at a breaking point with her and dad. As you know, they have been fighting for weeks and today he basically kicked her out of the house. I think they are getting a divorce. She needs a place to stay and asked if we could help.”

Melissa was an only child and very close with her mother. Steven loved his mother-in-law and knew that her marriage had been turbulent for the past couple years. He and Melissa had always planned on taking care of her mother if things got to a breaking point.

Steven breathed a long and tired sigh. “Is our place big enough for a new baby and your mom?” he asked.

“No. But our lease is up at the end of this month and rather than renewing it, maybe we could move into a bigger place. I know it would cost more a month, but you’re supposed to get a pay raise at your year mark with the school district, and I will just need to go back to work after my maternity leave is over. My mom said she could help us out too but would have to wait for the dust to settle with lawyer fees if they end up getting a divorce.”

“Lawyer fees? Well, that will take months,” Steven sighed.

“I know. But we will just have to buckle down. You know, eat out less and take fewer trips on weekends,” Melissa explained. “Thank goodness we have your job!”

“Well, about that...” Steven started. “... something happened today at work. There is something I need to tell you.”