



## Business Ethics

### SAMPLE ROLE PLAY 3

#### PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS

- You have 20 minutes to review the information and prepare your presentation. You can take notes for the presentation.
- During preparation, give an ID label to your adult assistant.
- Your presentation is 7 minutes long. You'll get a 1-minute warning when the timekeeper holds up a colored card. When time is up, the timekeeper will hold up a colored card, and you must stop immediately.
- After the presentation, you have up to 3 minutes to answer the judge's questions.
- Every team member must participate in both the presentation and answering questions.
- Turn in all notes and materials when you're done.

#### PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Identify ethical failures in workplace culture and leadership accountability.
- Analyze how organizational success can mask underlying cultural problems.
- Evaluate the responsibility of leadership to address misconduct among high performers.
- Develop policies that prioritize ethical conduct over individual performance metrics.
- Recommend cultural reform strategies that rebuild trust and establish accountability systems.

SAMPLE

## CASE STUDY SITUATION

You are to assume the roles of organizational consultants for APEX FINANCIAL SERVICES, a wealth management firm with \$5 billion in assets under management. You have been hired by the company's chief executive officer (judge) to address a workplace culture crisis involving a top-performing executive.

APEX FINANCIAL SERVICES has experienced tremendous growth over the past decade, largely driven by its aggressive sales culture and high-achieving advisors. The company prides itself on a competitive, results-driven environment where top performers receive significant bonuses, public recognition, and considerable autonomy.

Marcus Chen, a senior vice president, has been the company's top revenue generator for five consecutive years, personally managing over \$800 million in client assets and bringing in \$15 million annually in fees. Marcus is charismatic, highly intelligent, and has a close relationship with several board members. However, over the past three years, HR has received eight formal complaints and numerous informal concerns about Marcus's behavior, including: bullying and verbal abuse of junior staff, inappropriate comments toward female colleagues, taking credit for others' work, and creating a hostile environment in his division.

Each time HR investigated, Marcus's behavior was confirmed by witnesses, but he received only verbal warnings and mandatory training. Senior leadership consistently prioritized Marcus's value to the company over employee complaints. Some executives privately referred to him as "untouchable" due to his client relationships and revenue generation. Recently, three talented junior advisors resigned citing Marcus's toxicity, and their exit interviews detailed years of mistreatment.

Last week, a former employee filed a lawsuit against the company alleging a hostile work environment and claiming leadership knew about Marcus's behavior but failed to act. The lawsuit includes emails from executives discussing Marcus's conduct and explicitly deciding not to terminate him due to his financial value. Local media has covered the story, and current employees are increasingly vocal about the double standard for high performers.

The situation is complicated by several factors. First, Marcus manages relationships with the firm's largest clients, and his departure could result in significant asset loss. Second, the board is divided—some members want immediate termination, while others fear the financial consequences. Third, the company's entire culture rewards aggressive behavior and individual achievement, suggesting this isn't an isolated incident. Fourth, competitors are already attempting to recruit Marcus, knowing his situation.

The chief executive officer (judge) has asked your team to recommend how to address this crisis while reforming the broader organizational culture.

You must address the following in your presentation:

- What the ethical failures are at both individual and organizational levels
- Why prioritizing performance over conduct creates long-term business risks
- Proposed actions regarding Marcus Chen and broader policy reforms
- How you will rebuild employee trust and create accountability systems that prevent future incidents

Your team will present the strategy to the chief executive officer (judge) in a meeting at the company headquarters. The chief executive officer (judge) will begin the presentation by greeting your team and asking to hear the strategy. After the strategy has been presented and you have answered the chief executive officer's (judge's) questions, the chief executive officer (judge) will conclude the meeting by thanking you for your work.

## JUDGE'S INSTRUCTIONS

You are to assume the role of chief executive officer of APEX FINANCIAL SERVICES, a wealth management firm with \$5 billion in assets under management. You have hired a team of organizational consultants (participant team) to address a workplace culture crisis involving a top-performing executive.

APEX FINANCIAL SERVICES has experienced tremendous growth over the past decade, largely driven by its aggressive sales culture and high-achieving advisors. The company prides itself on a competitive, results-driven environment where top performers receive significant bonuses, public recognition, and considerable autonomy. This culture has attracted ambitious talent and generated impressive returns for clients and shareholders.

Marcus Chen, a senior vice president, has been the company's top revenue generator for five consecutive years, personally managing over \$800 million in client assets and bringing in \$15 million annually in fees. Marcus is charismatic, highly intelligent, and has a close relationship with several board members. However, over the past three years, HR has received eight formal complaints and numerous informal concerns about Marcus's behavior, including: bullying and verbal abuse of junior staff, inappropriate comments toward female colleagues, taking credit for others' work, and creating a hostile environment in his division.

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You have asked the team of organizational consultants (participant team) to recommend how to address this crisis while reforming the broader organizational culture.

- The organizational consultants (participant team) should address the following in their presentation:
- What the ethical failures are at both individual and organizational levels
- Why prioritizing performance over conduct creates long-term business risks
- Proposed actions regarding Marcus Chen and broader policy reforms
- How they will rebuild employee trust and create accountability systems that prevent future incidents

The consultants (participants) will present the strategy to you in a meeting to be held at the company headquarters. You are to begin the presentation by greeting the consultants (participants) and asking to hear the strategy.

### **Presentation Procedure**

- Participants receive 20 minutes of preparation time prior to presenting. Presentations will be scheduled at 10–15 minute intervals.
- Please place the participant team's name and ID number in the upper right-hand corner of the Evaluation Form.
- During the first 7 minutes, the team presents their analysis, recommendations, and rationale. Allow them to complete this portion without interruption unless a question is required. Timekeeper will provide a 1-minute warning and indicate when time is up.
- During the next 3 minutes, ask questions to determine understanding. Each team member should respond to at least one question. Ask the same standard questions to all teams, then any team-specific questions.
- After questioning, conclude by thanking the participants and complete the Evaluation Form, recording scores for all categories. The maximum score is 100 points.

### **JUDGING THE PRESENTATION**

#### **Judge Responsibilities**

- Listen to the full presentation without interruption.
- Ask the standard questions provided (plus any team-specific questions).
- Score the participants using the **Response Criteria**, **Performance Indicators**, and **Presentation Criteria**.
- Conclude the meeting by thanking participants

#### **Response Criteria**

Evaluate the participant's ability to analyze the business situation and develop strategic recommendations using the following criteria:

- Demonstrates understanding of the role play and defines the business objectives
- Identifies logical solution and develops implementation plan

#### **Performance Indicators**

Ensure that the scores reflect the participant's understanding and application of the performance indicators:

1. Identify ethical failures in workplace culture and leadership accountability.
2. Analyze how organizational success can mask underlying cultural problems.
3. Evaluate the responsibility of leadership to address misconduct among high performers.
4. Develop policies that prioritize ethical conduct over individual performance metrics.
5. Recommend cultural reform strategies that rebuild trust and establish accountability systems.

## Presentation Criteria

Evaluate the quality of the presentation itself using the following presentation criteria:

- Statements are well-organized and clearly stated; demonstrates preparedness
- Consistently displays confidence, poised body language, engaging eye contact, and effective voice projection
- Demonstrates the ability to effectively answer the judges' questions

## Standard Questions

After the initial presentation you are to ask the following questions of each participant team:

- Should we terminate Marcus Chen immediately, or is there an ethical way to manage his transition to minimize client disruption?
- How do we address the fact that our entire leadership team, including myself, enabled this behavior by prioritizing revenue over employee wellbeing?
- Is it ethical to offer Marcus a financial settlement in exchange for his resignation and a non-disparagement agreement, or does that just cover up the problem?
- If we implement stricter conduct policies, how do we maintain our competitive, high-performance culture without crossing ethical lines?

## Scoring Definitions

- **Exceeds Expectations:** Information is presented effectively and creatively; nothing more could be expected.
- **Meets Expectations:** Information is presented well; minor problems or omissions may exist but are not significant. Creativity may be limited.
- **Below Expectations:** Presentation does not meet minimum standards of acceptability.
- **Little/No Value:** Major flaw or omission significantly reduces effectiveness, or the information presented is of no value.

## JUDGE'S EVALUATION FORM

**Event:** Ethics Role Play

Response Criteria	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Below Expectations	Little/No Value	Judged Score
Demonstrates understanding of the role play and defines the business objectives	10-9	8-7-6	5-4-3	2-1-0	_____
Identifies logical solution and develops implementation plan	10-9	8-7-6	5-4-3	2-1-0	_____

**Case Analysis & Response Subtotal:** \_\_\_\_\_ / 20

Performance Indicator	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Below Expectations	Little/No Value	Judged Score
<i>Did the Participant:</i>					
Identify ethical failures in workplace culture and leadership accountability.	10-9	8-7-6	5-4-3	2-1-0	_____
Analyze how organizational success can mask underlying cultural problems.	10-9	8-7-6	5-4-3	2-1-0	_____
Evaluate the responsibility of leadership to address misconduct among high performers.	10-9	8-7-6	5-4-3	2-1-0	_____
Develop policies that prioritize ethical conduct over individual performance metrics.	10-9	8-7-6	5-4-3	2-1-0	_____
Recommend cultural reform strategies that rebuild trust and establish accountability systems.	10-9	8-7-6	5-4-3	2-1-0	_____

**Performance Indicators Subtotal:** \_\_\_\_\_ / 50

Presentation Criteria	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Below Expectations	Little/No Value	Judged Score
Statements are well-organized and clearly stated; demonstrates preparedness?	10-9	8-7-6	5-4-3	2-1-0	_____
Consistently displays confidence, poised body language, engaging eye contact, and effective voice projection?	10-9	8-7-6	5-4-3	2-1-0	_____
Demonstrates the ability to effectively answer the judges' questions?	10-9	8-7-6	5-4-3	2-1-0	_____

**Presentation Subtotal:** \_\_\_\_\_ / 30

**Total Points:** \_\_\_\_\_ / 100