

# Accidents Happen

2019-03-24

## Part 1. Selecting the Best

Betsy Wheeler had been a supervisor in the Data Production Center of American Security, Inc. for two years. She was responsible for six data entry clerks who worked the 4:00 p.m. to midnight shift. Four of the clerks worked full-time in a keypunching capacity and two of the clerks combined some key-punching with clerical and administrative chores. The Data Production Center was responsible for keypunching data taken daily at the 65 office locations spread across the state. It was a production job with high and demanding standards (150 items per hour). Betsy had worked three years as a data entry clerk before assuming her current job. She knew that after a reasonable training period, these standards could be met by most anyone. Betsy had done well as a data entry clerk and was doing well as a supervisor. She liked supervising others, especially dealing with the multitude of “people problems” that came her way during each shift. Nonetheless, she was not prepared for the latest problem that had developed. There seemed to be no solutions for it, and it was starting to wear her out. Betsy’s problem was centered on Bob Jenkins, a recently hired data entry clerk, although Betsy was not sure whether the problem was caused by Bob or by her boss, Sharon Leigh. Betsy reviewed the situation, going back two months to the very beginning. At that time, one of Betsy’s data entry clerks had quit, and she had sent a hiring order to Personnel. Three days later, one of the interviewers in Personnel called to say that they had found “a good applicant” by the name of Bob Jenkins. The interviewer explained that Bob was disabled (confined to a wheelchair) and had been referred by the State Rehabilitation Department. The interviewer told Betsy: “He has been extensively trained by the State in keypunching. I think you’ll like him.” The next day, Betsy went to Personnel about 20 minutes before her shift started in order to interview Bob Jenkins. Rather than ask a lot of questions, she listened to Bob talk about himself. He said he was finishing his associate’s degree in finance at the local community college and that this night shift job would allow him to go to school while he worked. He also mentioned that he had had a colostomy (removal of a portion of the bowel, which required him to wear a collection bag for his waste matter). Betsy asked if Bob would have transportation problems getting to work and he assured her there would be no problem. Betsy liked Bob. She was also in a rush

to start her shift and decided to end the interview on that note. Although Bob was the only applicant she interviewed, she decided to rely on her intuition and offered Bob the job. He accepted and began working the following week.

1. Given Bob's disability, what kinds of questions should Betsy have asked during the interview? What legal considerations exist?

**Answer** It is essential to emphasize nondiscriminatory practices. It is often time consuming and can entail potential legal issues. Much information that could be interpreted as irrelevant and conclusion misleading, but may be brought up by the candidate, thus a racial or religious statement could end up entailing potential legal issues, given that the interviewer was aware, even if not intended. Due to Bob being disabled there are many potential situations for which legal issues may arise, thus her interview should have been much more structured. The unstructured interview leaves room for possible issues. Her questions should have been revolving around whether or not he is capable of doing the job.

2. Evaluate how well Betsy interviewed Bob and completed the selection process.

**Answer** She didn't interview Bob well, she used an unstructured interview form, which as above described can often entail problematic situations. The selection process was merely existing, her only interviewing one candidate doesn't really count as a selection process, as her approach doesn't leave any room for selection.

3. What kind of selection procedure should Betsy have used in order to identify the best candidates for her data entry position? Design a complete selection process.

**Answer** Betsy did not use any screening method. Bob did not hand in a resume. She didn't use any selection testing methods nor reviewed the applicant or the interview they conducted, but rather made a selection decision straight away without consultation or reflection upon the applicant. A selection process that she could have employed is to start with doing a preliminary screening on the applicants. The problem is, that she only left three days for applicants to apply. Thus, leaving more time before deciding on a candidate is what she should have done. After having done preliminary screening, the smaller pool of potential candidate's resumes and CV's are considered, before starting the selection testing process. This step is to see whom of the applicants are more adequate to do the job, the left over applicants are then often interviewed, which should this time be done in a structured manner. After all these considerations, the pool of applicants has become significantly slimmer and it should hence ease the selection process. After all these considerations, the pool of applicants has become significantly slimmer and it should hence ease the selection process.

## Part 2. Learning the Ropes?

As supervisor of six data entry clerks on the night shift at the Data production Center, Betsy was eager to find good quality employees. She thought she had found one in Bob Jenkins, a wheelchair-bound student. After a brief interview, she hired him, and he began working a week later. On Bob's first night on the job, Betsy wondered whether she made a mistake in hiring him. After showing Bob around the area and introducing him to co-workers, she took Bob to his keypunch station and briefed him on the work. She gave Bob her usual orientation speech and then left him alone to start work. By mid-shift, it was clear to Betsy that Bob was not doing well. He was laboring at the job and was very far behind in the work, even for someone's first day. She came over to Bob's station. "How's it going, Bob?" she asked. She was clearly worried. Bob sensed concern in her voice. "Oh, I'm coming along," he said. "It will just take me a little time to get used to this machine." He waited a moment as Betsy looked over his shoulder at the pile of work still needing to be done. "You see, although I received two weeks of keypunch training with the state, this is my first job as a keypuncher." Betsy's expression registered the surprise and worry she felt inside. Bob realized he may have said the wrong thing. He added hurriedly, "Look, don't worry, I'll get the hang of it real soon." Betsy did not look very relieved. Bob looked at her rather desperately: "I really need this job. I promise that with some time and practice, I will be the best keypuncher you've ever had." Betsy still liked Bob and admired his courage and conviction. She was sympathetic to his plight. But, she also realized that she did not have much time to spare in training him. Her unit had a demanding production schedule, and she needed to have a fully capable production team as soon as possible. Although there was some leeway in the schedule due to varying weekly and monthly loads, her flexibility was limited.

4. Does Betsy have a problem here?

**Answer** Definitely, the fact that Bob has not worked with a key-punch machine before should have been found out about during the selection process. Due to the lack of proper selection, this problem has only surfaced now. Betsy's worries are reasonable, given that she caused them and would be held reliable in case of the job placement going south.

5. Evaluate her coaching and orientation of Bob

**Answer** Betsy is apparently sympathetic towards Bob. His struggle and her knowing that she probably made an over-hasty decision, cause her wanting Bob to succeed, to support her decision about employing him. Her sympathy towards Bob and *intuitive* nature caused these problems in the first case. Betsy is even considering doing training with Bob, which is completely inappropriate, considering that Bob should already be able to do the Job. She should not be using paid time to do training with an employee, it is not her job, nor should this circumstance have been created

in the first place.

### Part 3. An Explosive Problem

Betsy decided to cross-train Bob for some of the clerical and administrative duties her unit had to perform. In this way, he could still do limited keypunching while also getting other important work done. For three weeks, this strategy worked well. Betsy was very impressed with Bob's general work habits. He worked very hard and on many occasions even refused to take breaks. Betsy told one of the other supervisors: "If it weren't for his handicap, he'd be an ideal employee." Then came the night of the accident. As Betsy later told a friend, "Wouldn't you know it would happen on the night I was off?" The problem was this: Bob's colostomy bag ruptured. There was nothing special leading up to the event. Bob was doing his work as usual. At one point, he reached across his desk for some papers, wedging the bag at a bad angle, and it just ruptured. He tried to be calm and matter-of-fact about it as he headed to the restroom. At one point, a co-worker visiting the restroom saw Bob. "I've had a slight problem," Bob stated. "I'll be in here for a while." Bob spent about an hour in the restroom, trying to clean up. When he came out, his co-workers could see that he was upset and that, despite his efforts, Bob had not been able to clean his soiled clothing or the evidence of the accident in the restroom. To make the situation even more difficult, there was a pronounced odor hanging in the air. Bob was embarrassed and so were his co-workers. They tried to ignore the situation until the end of the shift. When the day shift arrived the next morning, the restroom was still unpleasantly soiled and smelly. The manager of the day shift received many complaints, and he had to arrange for a cleaning crew from building maintenance to clean up the restroom. The day shift manager called Sharon Leigh, the night shift manager (and Betsy's boss) at home and woke her up. He was belligerent and caustic as he complained about "the mess that cripple left." Sharon was angered by the phone call and was still angry when she came to work that evening. Sharon immediately called Betsy to her office and angrily complained to her about what had happened. She concluded the ten-minute lecture by announcing to Betsy that "if that kind of accident happens again, I'll fire him." Betsy left Sharon's office, shaken and unsure what to do.

6. What should Betsy do now:

- With Bob?
- With the other co-workers in the unit?
- With her boss Sharon Leigh?

**Answer** Bob needs to be informed about the situation he finds himself in and the potential risk of losing his position. The accident was caused by something hindering him in performing his job. Again, this should have been spotted prior to employment and could have been a legitimate reason for rejecting the applicant, as his capability of doing the job is hindered.

The other co-workers are unfortunately affected by the accident and there is little to do with them, other to talk through the events. *Sharon Leigh* is upset for a reason and is reasonably blaming Betsy. The whole thing could have been prevented, thus *Sharon's* outrage. Betsy needs to ensure *Sharon*, that she in fact made a mistake, and will cover up potential agitation as part of her responsibility. Bob will have little influence over his position, him promising to learn quick doesn't change the entailed potential problems that arise. These issues, like the accident, do not only hinder Bob from pursuing his job, but also other employees, which needs to be minimised.

7. Is there any legal problem if Bob is terminated because he had ruptured another bag?

**Answer** The intention of the circumstance matters highly, properly obeying work instructions is vital to minimise the risk of being insinuated of violating a policy or having omitted an egregious error in judgement. Because Bob is implying much greater effects upon the rupture of the bag than just hindering himself of working, the termination of Bob's position can be successfully justified.