

Case - 2

Introduction

Too Much Intelligence?

The rapid growth of Pace Technologies was due in no small part to sales manager Ken Bodine and to the skills of the savvy young sales staff that he had assembled. Bodine prided himself on finding and hiring top grads from two major business schools in the area. In addition to the top salaries offered by Pace, the grads were attracted by Bodine's energy, innovative thinking, and can-do attitude. He was the embodiment of Pace culture—moving fast, ahead of the knowledge curve in high-tech. Pace's sales force consistently stunned the competition with their high performance level.

Among other things, Pace had the reputation for aggressive business intelligence. Competitors found both amusing and frustrating the company's ability to outmaneuver others and capture accounts. Bodine enjoyed the air of mystery surrounding the Pace organization. Awareness that some competitor sat on the verge of a big sale always stirred Bodine's passion for sales and ignited his desire to "one-up these guys" and grab the sale out from under them.

"If this was a poker game," one board member mused, "Pace would win every hand. It's like Bodine as well as his staff possess the uncanny ability to know the cards your company is holding. He keeps a straight face, a low profile throughout the game, and then suddenly he lays his cards on the table and you're sunk. Here at Pace, we all love it."

A former military intelligence officer, Bodine brought that "sneaky" air into the Pace culture, adding a bit of excitement to the day-to-day business of sales. "With a great product, great staff, and great business intelligence," Bodine was fond of saying, "you can dominate the market." He wanted everyone—customers, competitors, and the media—to see Pace everywhere. "Every time the competition holds a staff meeting," he said, "the first question should be, 'What's Pace doing?'"

The sales staff was a mirror image of Bodine—younger, but with the same air of invincibility, and very competitive with one another. This, too, Bodine encouraged. A chess player, he enjoyed observing and encouraging the competition within his own sales staff. And seeing the thrill it brought "the boss," ambitious salespeople worked vigorously to prove their competitive worth.

Bodine's latest competitive "match" pitted Cody Rudisell and Ali Sloan in an intellectual and strategic struggle for a coveted assignment to a potential major account with a company that had just expanded into the region. Bodine let it be known that Cody and Ali were being considered for the assignment, and that each could submit a proposal

to lure the account to Pace and away from its top rival, Raleigh-Tech.

Both Cody and Ali eagerly grabbed the opportunity to expand their influence within the company and to build their reputations. Putting together their presentations within a short time period meant working long days and late nights. On the evening before the presentations, Cody bounded into Ali's office and dropped a file on her desk. "Top that!" he said.

Ali began thumbing through the file, and as she looked up in startled amazement, Cody slammed his hand on the folder and jerked it from her desk.

"That's like a watershed of Raleigh-Tech's trade secrets," Ali said. "Where did you get that?"

"My secret, sweetie," Cody replied, taking a seat and noisily drumming his fingers on the folder. "With this information, R-T doesn't have a chance. And neither do you."

"You could get into all sorts of trouble," Ali said. "When you lay that on Bodine's . . ."

"Bodine's espionage side will love it," Cody interrupted. "This is classic Bodine, classic Pace. You can't tell me that with all of the brilliant moves he's made over the years, Bodine hasn't done the same thing. This is business, cut-throat business, and I may have just topped the master. See you tomorrow."

As he left, Ali sat in stunned silence. "Cutthroat, indeed," she whispered, reaching for the phone. She held the phone for a moment, wondering who she should call. *This is unethical, illegal*, she thought. She hung up the phone. *Should I let him hang himself tomorrow? What if Bodine really does love it? If I call some manager tonight, will everyone see me as a sore loser and a crybaby? Is this really what it takes to win in the big leagues? Is this really the culture of this organization?*

Questions

1. How has Ken Bodine shaped the sales culture at Pace Technologies? Do you consider this culture to be at a preconventional, conventional, or postconventional level of ethical development? Why?
2. What should Ali Sloan do? What would you actually do if you were in her place? Explain.
3. How might Cody Rudisell's decision differ if he based it on the utilitarian approach vs. individualism approach vs. practical approach to ethical decision making? Which approach does he appear to be using?