

## **Robyn Hurst Case Study**

Case analysis by Denise A. Wallace

### **Comprehend the case situation: data, identify relevant facts**

A small academic library has only three employees, two librarians and the Director. Time off must be scheduled carefully since two employees cannot be off at the same time.

Joshua Spence, one of the librarians, has worked for this library for three years. He has a son who plays baseball and will be playing in an upcoming tournament. Joshua has planned to take his son to the tournament and has put in for time off with the library director two months prior to needing the time off.

On the same day Joshua requested time off, Patricia Waters, the other librarian, has decided that she no longer enjoys working at this library and will be resigning in six weeks.

Edward Gass, the library director, appears to have acknowledged Joshua's request for time off even though there are only six weeks to find a replacement for Patricia. During interviews, Edward finds the perfect candidate, Mary Willis, and offers her the position. Her start date overlaps with Patricia's leaving date by one week.

After being at work for only one week, Joshua discovers that Mary has the next week off and realizes that her days conflict with the days off he requested. He is upset and confronts Edward about the apparent problem.

Edward confirms Joshua's discovery and explains that the time off for Mary was requested as part of her hiring contract. Edward further states, that Joshua will have find other arrangements concerning his child's tournament and does not show any sympathy at all considering the unfortunate turn of events.

Joshua is upset and feels betrayed.

### **Define the problem:**

The problem here is one concerning loyalties, outcomes and communication. Joshua has already planned his trip with his son to the baseball tournament that his son is playing in. With only a week to 'make *alternative* arrangements' Joshua may not even be able to get his son to the tournament. He is being forced to choose between his son and his job.

Another aspect of this problem is Edward's communication with Joshua. Edward did not 100% confirm or deny Joshua's request for time off. In addition, Edward did not seek out Joshua when Patricia turned in her resignation to discuss possible repercussions to the work schedule and any time off; nor did Edward discuss the time off that was part of Mary's contract with Joshua even though he knew it would be a problem. Edward has created a conflict by not sharing information and has further increased the hostility level by acting nonchalant toward Joshua went confronted about it.

### **Generating alternative solutions/implementing a plan and following up:**

What should Joshua do? Unless he has quite a nest egg stored up, shirking the job to take his son to the tournament is probably not an option. It would feel good to leave Edward to handle the days by himself, but would reflect very poorly on any upcoming reviews or result in termination. Joshua should first take a small break to calm down and then go back and discuss this situation with Edward to see if together they might not come up with a better solution. Suggestions might be to indeed have Edward cover the days by himself provided that Joshua ensured most of the tasks were taken care of prior. Another option might be to hire a temp, but a temp librarian may be hard to find on short notice. If no suggestions can be found to ensure Joshua's time off, then Joshua should be given some time during work hours to try to 'make alternative arrangements' and resign to working those two days.

However, as part of this discussion, they need to talk about communication. With only three staff members, it is very important to keep everyone informed. Information will allow *alternative* things to be taken care of with plenty of notice. Edward should have immediately discussed the possibility of having to cancel Joshua's time off when he received Patricia's resignation. And afterwards when Mary was hired, he should have informed Joshua himself of the conditions of her employment and the conflict with Joshua's time off. By taking a proactive approach, Edward would have been able to diffuse the conflict before it ever happened even though Joshua would not have been able to go to the tournament he would have at least not felt betrayed. Joshua would have felt included and part of the decision making process.