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Weekly Activity 7
INFO 204
Fall 2020
10/6/2020

Ethics Case Study:

Your religion or your job

The dilemma were the stakes Rosemary Shahn, Lowder University's library's interim acting director, faced when made to decide if she should bend library policy and allow Simon, a database programmer, time off for a religious retreat before the end of his first six months of employment. Though with the most seniority at 11 years in her position, she has the weight of Lois and Everett, deputy directors, the former also a rival for Library Director, against her, as they have already refused Simon his request.

It seemed Lois and Everett had decided by the theory of deontology, "from the Greek *deon* meaning duty, refer[ing] to an ethical system based on adherence to rules" (Garnar, 2018). This theory came full circle with Shahn's bias against Lois' heavy-handedness – "... she... tended to say fearlessly what she was thinking, a habit that occasionally got her into trouble." (*Libraries Unlimited*, 2015)-, pitting the interim acting director between policy and her own ethics aligned with utilitarianism, that "... policies should be critically evaluated by whether they tend to produce the greatest happiness" (Garnar, 2018), as she seemed hesitant to upset anyone, including herself over her chances for promotion ("Notwithstanding... [Lois] was a good-natured... person. ... she was said to have the inside track on the director position." (*Libraries Unlimited*, 2015).

I understand Lois and Everett's unwillingness to allow the time off, because it could create a precedent allowing other policies to be ignored due to personal religious beliefs. However, I empathize with Simon's frustration, especially since he had conducted himself professionally enough so that management did not have to keep tabs on him.

Two alternative courses of action are:

First, all three deputy directors should conference on Simon's request. That way, Shahn would have grounds to claim that whatever decision made was made together, and thus could be shielded during the library's final assessment of her performance towards promotion.

Second, she should take this opportunity, as interim director, to urge an amendment to the policy, since Everett had already inferred there were many others asking for the same circumvention of policy ("He was sure that over the years other people had wanted time off..." [Libraries Unlimited, 2015]), which highlights a need to reconsider the stringency of the probationary period. Initiating the amendment would show Shahn's skill in change management ("Some of the biggest changes in information services today are not driven by new and emerging technologies but by ideological questions." [Barefoot, 2018]), and that she is capable of Ethics of Care ("Given the service orientation of the library... a care-based approach to ethical thinking can be seen as complementary to overall goals." [Garnar, 2018]).

In the end, Shahn should allow Simon time off, but he must first finish his open projects/assignments and complete the last of his probation upon returning. This assist would strengthen his dedication to the job and, though Lois and Everett might criticize the decision, ultimately there would be no harm done or value taken from the library and its stakeholders. Once some weeks have soothed the ruffled feathers, Shahn could use that situation as precedent to amend library policy.

References

Barefoot, R. (2018). Change management. In Hirsh, S. (Ed.), *Information services today: an introduction* (2nd ed., pp. 246-255). Rowman and Littlefield.

Garnar, M. L. (2018). Information ethics. In Hirsh, S. (Ed.), *Information services today: an introduction* (2nd ed., pp. 366-377). Rowman and Littlefield.

Your religion or your job. (2015). *Libraries Unlimited*. ABC-CLIO, LLC