

## <sup>1</sup> Merville Lynch 1 – Teaching Note

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Conor Vibert developed this teaching note to guide the use of the multimedia case entitled Merville Lynch 1 for instructional purposes. It is not the purpose of this material to serve as an illustration of how to effectively or ineffectively address a managerial situation.

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### SUMMARY

Merville Lynch, CEO of Merville Lynch productions is faced with the unpleasant task of having to deal with a long standing employee who has been rude to him in the presence of an important client. Students are offered access to a set of transcribed video clips that outline the issue and its cause along with providing context for the issue. In order to arrive at alternative solutions and justify their choice of a solution, students are expected to use sources of information not found in the case.

### KEYWORDS

- Conflict Resolution
- Personnel Management
- Problem Employee

### CASENET VIDEOS

Each video in this multimedia case features a segment of an interview with one of the organization's key decision makers. The videos describe:

1. the *Issue* facing the individual or organization
2. the *Cause* of the issue
3. *Background* information for the individual, organization and industry
4. *Alternatives* for addressing the issue
5. A suggested *Solution* and justification

Transcriptions for each video are also available. Students may not access the *Alternatives* and *Solution* videos or transcripts.

### OBJECTIVES FOR TEACHING

There are a number of instructional objectives for this case.

- To enhance the decision making skills of students by having them address a real life issue faced by managers of Canadian or international companies.
- To provide students with a brief introduction to the television production industry.
- To offer students an opportunity to analyze a situation using concepts that illustrate conflict resolution.

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### POSSIBLE TEACHING STRATEGY

This case is ideal for in-class case analysis or as an assignment. Assuming an 80 minute class, here is an approximate class schedule:

Time (minutes)	Task
5	Introduce case and divide students into groups.
15	Students view <i>Background</i> case videos and make notes.
5	Instructor plays the <i>Issue</i> and <i>Cause</i> clip(s).
25	Students identify alternatives, a solution and rationale.
20	Instructor guides a discussion around alternatives, solution and rationale.
10	Instructor plays the <i>Alternatives</i> and <i>Solution</i> clips.

If the case is used as an assignment, the instructor may want to focus assessment on:

- 1) **Decision-making process.** The instructor would evaluate writing style, appropriateness of information sources, alternatives, solution and rationale. This approach recognizes that the alternatives and solutions offered in the case are not necessarily optimal, and other choices may be equally effective. Students can be rewarded for their selection of decision making approaches, analytical frameworks and cited reference material.
- 2) **Outcomes.** The instructor would evaluate how closely student responses match those offered in the *Alternatives* and *Solution* video clips. Or, the instructor could use the insight of an existing research paper or analytical framework as the basis for judging outcomes.
- 3) **A combination of process and outcome.** The instructor may apportion the grade between process and outcomes.

### POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS

Students can be asked to identify a set of alternatives to address the issue outlined in the case, a solution and rationale. Other questions that will help students prepare for their case analysis include:

- In this instance, what appear to be the primary sources of conflict?
- What might be some of the processes available to manage the conflict?
- Do both individuals appear to be of equal stature within the organization?

### CASE ANALYSIS

Issue: The *Issue* and *Cause* video clips outline the problem or challenge of the case.

- My name is Merville Lynch of Merville Lynch productions. The issue was with one of my staff members who was quite rude to me and to a major client who was in the room with me at the time. He said a couple of rude things to me and the client. The client came into my office at the end of it and said to me, 'Merville are you going to allow your staff member to speak to you and me like that? Aren't you going to fire him?' That was the

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issue. It was important to deal with the issue. You should never allow your staff to be rude to you or a client. It was important to deal with that issue.

Analysis:

To start their analysis of the case, students should view the *Background* video clips. These clips should help students grasp the following points or case facts.

- The company business is video production
- A typical job fee is \$1000 to \$5000
- Government departments and banks are his normal customers
- His firm has three big competitors in Barbados
- There is no government regulation.

Researching information sources other than the content of the cases should enable students to garner the following insights:

- As of 2010, Barbados has a population of 280,000 people.
- Services, manufacturing, and agriculture are the most significant sectors in the Barbados economy
- Education is compulsory to age 16, and Barbados has near total literacy due to Government funded primary and secondary schools
- Barbados workers' rights include non-discrimination with respect to race, gender, disability, ethnic, or political background, as well as the freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively

With this information in hand students can be challenged to identify an analytic framework that will help them organize their thoughts.

- When dealing with issues of Conflict Management, Martin Charms suggest a set of possible modes of conflict management which include avoiding, smoothing, unilateral, forcing, confronting and bargaining.

Effort focused on research coupled with analysis should enable students to present a series of options. These can be compared to the options offered by the interviewee which are also summarized below and found in the *Alternatives* video clip.

- My options were to fire him immediately. Speak to him to see if he had a problem on that day and send him home for a couple of days. The other alternatives was to sit down and discuss it with some else.

The *Solutions* video clip offers the interviewees' solution to the issue along with a rationale. Highlighted below, this can be compared to the student response and explanation.

- The alternative that I chose at that point of time was to think about it. I actually thought about it for a day and only spoke to him the next day to find out that he had a problem at home with his partner and brought that problem to the office. If had taken one of the other alternatives, and disciplined him or fired him on the spot, it would have been

wrong. What he did was wrong. But there are always reasons for doing what you do. As a boss or as a manager, you need to be able to speak to your staff and know your staff and what they are going through before you discipline them.

## SUGGESTED COURSES

We suggest that this case would be suitable for a number of courses. These courses include:

- Human Resource Management
- Organizational Behaviour
- Management

## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

The case offers students opportunities to undertake interesting additional research.

Students may want to delve deeper into how managers make decisions. Classic approaches to decision making include works by Cyert and March (1963) and Tversky and Kahnemann (1974).

Students interested in learning more about the industry in general might make use of numerous online information sources some of which are noted below.

- Business Barbados <http://businessbarbados.com/investor-guide/human-resources/employee-rights/> , Overview of employee rights and labour practices
- Compete Caribbean .Org <http://competecaribbean.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2014-Barbados-Private-Sector-Assessment-Report.pdf>. Private Sector Assessment of Barbados including labour regulation overview
- Encyclopedia Britannica <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/52655/Barbados/54605/Barbados-since-independence> - provides overview of Barbados demographics and culture
- Global Edge, <http://globaledge.msu.edu/global-insights> (Provides profiles of countries and global industries with a focus on risks, trends, events, and trade statistics)
- Government of Barbados: [www.barbados.org/govt.htm](http://www.barbados.org/govt.htm) (Provides general information about Barbados)
- Government of Barbados Ministry of Labour [www.labour.gov.bb](http://www.labour.gov.bb) - information about employees rights and responsibilities in Barbados
- U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2013/204600.htm>, 2013 Investment Climate Statement - Barbados

## REFERENCES

A number of articles, referenced below, offer insight that might help instructors effectively explore this case with students.

- Government of Barbados: [www.barbados.org/govt.htm](http://www.barbados.org/govt.htm) (Provides general information about Barbados)
- Charns, M. cited in Notes on Conflict Management, HPSP #TCG 316, The Crimson Press Curriculum Centre.