Decision Making Paper Essay, Research Paper

Decision-Making Analysis Paper

The Problem.

I have been employed for 17 years with a major aerospace company. Like any corporation, it functions through a multi-tiered managerial hierarchy. In the spring of 2000, several derogatory comments appeared on www.companygossip.com about Stella O’Brien (not her real name), an employee of the aerospace company. The www.companygossip.com, is a website in which anyone can post comments about their superiors and co-workers or complaints about their employment environment. The comments posted about Stella were slanderous and sexually explicit, and evidently posted by a co-worker.

The Management Decision.

Stella reported these incidents directly to the Manager of Launch Operations, the head of the aerospace program on which she worked. He told her to “just ignore it”. Not surprisingly, within a few days, slanderous statements were again posted about Stella on the website. She again complained to the Manager of Launch Operations, who took no steps to report the incidents to upper management. Instead, he reported the incident to the Manager of the Information Systems Department, Mr. Blair (not his real name). Mr. Blair’s response was “Don’t worry about it, just ignore it”.

The website comments continued, becoming more crude and graphic. Stella then contacted the Manager of the Human Resources Department, who advised her that it was a freedom of speech issue and that HR could do nothing about it. He suggested that she contact the company’s Ethics Department. As the incidents continued, Stella repeatedly reported them to

Mr. Blair and finally, threatened to retain an attorney to force the company to resolve the problem. Mr. Blair, fearing legal action, contacted the company’s legal department and several other consultants to advise him on the best course of action. About two weeks after Stella threatened to retain a lawyer, the problem was resolved. The systems administrator denied access to all computers on the company’s network to the IP address and internet domain name of www.companygossip.com. In other words, the IS Department locked all employees’ access to the website. The computer, from which the slanderous statements initiated could have been traced, no such action was taken. The employee(s) responsible were never identified.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Decision.

None of the managers whom Stella initially contacted (the Manager of Launch Operations, IS Manager and HR Manager) were willing to use their reasoned judgment or some form of cognitive thinking to negotiate a solution. They simply wanted to ignore the situation in the hopes that it would go away. The problem did not present a routine situation where programmed decisions or a standard set of rules could be applied. The company had no standardized set of mechanical procedures in place to deal with the novel problem, and none of the managers were willing to take the initiative to make a non-programmed decision. Eventually, when faced with the threat of legal action, the HR Manager implemented a systematic decision making process, taking a more logical, step-by-step approach, contacting others (legal department and IS Department) whose input could be used to frame and evaluate alternatives and ultimately come to a decision.

The only strength of the decision was that it solved Stella’s immediate problem; however, barring access to a single website represents a band-aid for an otherwise company-wide problem. Similar problems are destined to occur in the future involving other employees and other websites until eventually, the managers of the impacted departments will have to look for a

global solution. The company will have to create systematic procedures for all departments in dealing with internet abuses by company employees.

Impact on Management Functions.

The failure of company managers to discuss a global solution to employees’ internet abuses creates a situation ripe for continuing abuses. The result will be that the managers will waste time and effort each time a similar abuse is brought to their attention and eventually, plagued with the same problem again and again, they will be forced to create a company-wide procedure to resolve the problem.

Ethical Issue Involved.

Stella’s situation gives rise to the ethical issue of a company’s responsibility to deal with sexual harassment among its employees and other matters of serious consequence to its employees’ well-being. At the aerospace company, the Corporate Office of Ethics and Business Conduct serves as a source for information and advice and the Human Resource Department is suppose to assist employees who are faced with any ethical issues in the workplace.