teaching note

Case Summary

The case presents a dilemma for a new employee who has just joined the company who must determine a course of action which considers the dynamics of the organization he has recently joined. Right now, Tim is focused on the issue of a married couple with the potential ability to manipulate data that may create a potential financial risk if not monitored closely.

Target audience

This study may be applied in undergraduate human resource management, vacation ownership courses, or introductory to hospitality course. The case is useful in a human resources course in which several topics, including corporate policies toward relatives working at the company, managing financial risk, and the factors contributing to employee collusion are discussed. The case may also be applied in an introduction to hospitality or sales and marketing course as it illustrates the dynamics of the sales, marketing and administration departments.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes for the case include assignments at several levels of Blooms Taxonomy of Learning including;

- Analyze the risks associated (financial and political) with having two married employees closely working together in leadership roles.
- Understand potential human resource challenges in managing site level operations remotely from a regional office.
- Analyze the hierarchical structure of a sales and marketing organization in the vacation ownership context.
- Comprehend and contrast the roles and responsibilities of department leaders in terms of compensation that may lead to a conflict of interest.
- Evaluate basic operating metrics for sales, marketing, and administration departments.
- Apply knowledge of top-line prospect generation and tour flow logistics.
- Evaluate a course of action based on the facts of the case.

Case assignment

The case and the two articles listed in the references section of this teaching note, Balancing conflicts of interest when employing spouses and Beyond the fraud triangle, should be assigned two weeks before the day the case is due and discussed in class. Instructors may also wish to assign a general reading (Upchurch & Gruber, 2002) about the vacation ownership industry to familiarize students with the vacation ownership industry.

Written responses by students to the case should be limited to a maximum of two to three pages, double-spaced and should be organized in the following manner.

a. Problem identification: One to two sentences in which students identify the key problem in the case. (Only one problem should be identified. Students may want to identify several but limit to one.)

b. Support for problem identification: This is the largest section of the written discussion of the case. However, this should be limited to no more than four paragraphs. In this section the student identifies facts from the case to support his/her problem identification.

c. Alternative solutions: In this section students suggest at least three possible solutions to the problem which may be two to three paragraphs. It is important that several suggestions are made as it forces the student to consider alternative solutions.

d. Solution: In this section the student should succinctly state the solution to the problem identified above. This section should be limited to one paragraph.

e. Reaction: In this section the student should identify and discuss possible reactions by players in the case to the solution chosen. All solutions will generate reactions and may further create issues. The solution should generate more benefits than downside risks.

Teaching Plan/Case Discussion (75 minutes total)

This case is ideally used in one class but could be divided into two consecutive classes.

Case review (15 minutes)

Several methods of discussing the case may be used but it is best to first illustrate (and keep them illustrated during discussion) some key elements of the case, including the organizational structure, the responsibilities of each department, how individuals in each department are compensated, and most importantly the responsibilities of Tim's role. The main points from the articles such as factors in the fraud triangle and reasons why policies were generated prohibiting family members to work together should also be reviewed. This may be used to guide students understanding of the potential problem in the case as the instructor can generate questions for the students of how the articles relate to the context of the case.

Step 1: What is the problem in the case? (10 minutes)

Start by asking students what the problem is in the case. Identifying the problem in a case is the most important decision made in a case discussion as all decisions will flow from this problem identification. It is important to remember that students will often identify symptoms of problems as the problems themselves. Take care to discuss the difference with students. Allow students to identify different problems and write each on the board so you may use in discussions to come.

Step 2: Why is the problem important? (10 minutes)

As a second step it is best to then ask students WHY they believe each problem listed on the board is the main issue in the case. Students should present facts from the case to illustrate why they chose the problem they did. This portion of discussion should result in students starting to see how the facts and the problem are linked together and how these determine the other steps of analysis.

Step 3: What are alternative solutions? (10 minutes)

Students should have a variety of alternative solutions because they have all identified different problems. Using the problems listed on the board, instructors should be able to get students to talk about alternative solutions to problems others identified, not just their own. Students displaying the ability to do this have moved up Bloom's pyramid and others can learn from the process.

Step 4: What is the solution? (15 minutes)

It is important that they learn that multiple answers may be correct. Encourage students to offer varying solutions. These can be arranged under the problems on the board or listed separately as they may not identify with only one problem identification. Students may be reluctant to offer unique solutions. Encourage or reward them to do so.

Step 5: What will be the reaction? (15 minutes)

Students, and others, may often fail to remember that each action has a reaction. A spirited discussion is likely here as different students may see how different decisions affect players in a case. The instructor may need to prompt students to discuss what they believe will be the reaction of various players in and out of the case. For instance, the instructor may ask how the decision made affects Tim, the married couple, other employees, and so on. Each will be affected in some way slightly or drastically.

Assessment

Both format and content should be assessed. It is important that students use the assigned format as the steps follow a logical thought process. A method we used to evaluate specific sections of the case assignment (problem identification, alternatives etc…) is whether the student formed a well-formed argument supported by facts of the case.

Beyond format or grammar criteria defined by the instructor, questions that can be posed in a grading rubric provided along with the assignment may include?

a. Did the student provide a concise explanation of the problem of the case?

b. Did the student provide adequate support for their choice of the problem and explain why?

c. Did the student present plausible solutions to the problem and explain why each alternative is logical?

d. Did the student provide a concise explanation of the solution?

e. Did the student adequately evaluate the reaction of players involved to the solution to the case?

References

Dorminey, J. W, Fleming, A. S., Kranacher, M, Riley, R. A. (2010). Beyond the fraud triangle. CPA Journal, 80(7): 16-23.

Howard, J. L. (2008). Balancing conflicts of interest when employing spouses. Employee Responsibilities & Rights Journal, 2(1): 29-43.

Upchurch, R., and Gruber, K. (2002). The evolution of a sleeping giant: Resort timesharing. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 21(3): 221-225.