

## **Dilemma: Right vs. Right**

*Dilemma: What to Say to the Man Let Go?*

Mary worked as a secretary in a department within a branch of a large corporation. The branch director had decided that the job of her department director, Jim, would soon be discontinued. Although Mary and a few others in her department had this knowledge, Jim did not.

For a few weeks, Jim was directed to work on an array of special projects at his home office. In the meantime, an employee from a different department was told to move in to Jim's office.

The branch director instructed Mary and other support staff to change Jim's voice mail, move his files out of the office, and erase his name from his assigned parking spot. Mary was told that the human resources department would call Jim to let him know what had taken place.

That week Jim called Mary because he could not get into his voice mail. He wanted to know if there were any technical problems. Mary felt torn: should she tell him the truth now or should she rely on human resources staff to tell him?

### *Analysis*

Of the four dilemma paradigms that Mary might use to define the type of conflict she is experiencing — truth versus loyalty, short-term versus long-term, justice versus mercy, and individual versus community — truth versus loyalty seems most apt.

Mary might look at this situation as a “right versus right” conflict: should she tell Jim the truth, which is a right thing to do, or should she remain quiet and trust that the company would properly inform Jim, thus remaining loyal to the company? By defining the type of dilemma she faces, Mary is better able to decide how to resolve it.

Using an “ends-based” principle, Mary could ask herself: which decision would provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people? If she told Jim over the phone, it might release her fellow staff members from an awkward situation.

Drawing upon a “rules-based” principle, Mary would ask herself what would happen if everyone did what she was about to do? If everyone told secrets, what would be the result? If everyone withheld important information from each other, what would her world be like then?

Under the principle of the Golden Rule, or “do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” Mary might consider what it would feel like to be in Jim's shoes. Would it be better to be told that your job was gone by a fellow worker in your own department or by the staff at the human resources department?

Note: This and other dilemmas on this site come to you without their real-life resolutions. We encourage you to think for yourself about how you might resolve them, since the nature of each dilemma is highly individualistic. In sharing these dilemmas, we do not endorse them in any way, but rather offer them for your consideration.

