

The Quality Challenge

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S. L. McShane *Canadian Organizational Behaviour*, 5th ed. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2004); S. L. McShane & M. A. von Glinow, *Organizational Behavior*, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2005); S. L. McShane & T. Travaglione, *Organisational Behaviour on the Pacific Rim*, 1st ed. (Sydney: McGraw-Hill Australia, 2003)

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Maria Walker has been working for the last several years in the research and development department of a semiconductor manufacturing company employing 120 staff. Because of her “good people skills”, Maria has recently been asked to take on the role of human resources coordinator. Maria knows the job will be a challenge but is very excited at this opportunity to advance her career. The H.R coordinator she is to replace was not well liked and recently left the company under a cloud after giving management poor advice. This coordinator was perceived as a "nit picker" who would often challenge staff over trivial issues. Company HR policies were interpreted literally and without any flexibility. For example, if a staff member was only five minutes late in coming back from lunch, they would be reminded of the “hours of work and break times” regardless of their performance.

A number of other problems within the organization have also added to eroded trust in management. The final straw was the dismissal of a well-liked employee by the previous human resources coordinator. The general opinion among the other employees is that this staff member was poorly treated and should have been reinstated by senior management. Staff felt angry and frustrated when the general manager refused to meet with a deputation of staff over his dismissal. Since then, loyalties have been divided and many staff support the former employees claim against the company for unfair dismissal.

Quite apart from this latest issue, morale has been declining for some months. Last month a major contract was lost, when the contractor complained about poor quality of service and errors in reporting. There is increasing pressure from management for productivity improvements, and this has caused fear among staff that there may be job losses in the push for improved quality and performance.

Maria raised some of her concerns about the HR coordinators position with the General Manager when he first offered her the position. He said he had no choice but to support of the other HR coordinators’ decision, and staff were not aware of the full story. He also told Maria he “wanted to look to the future” and was prepared to give her a “free reign” over a six-month trial period prior to making the appointment permanent. The General Manager has asked Maria to focus on setting up effective Human Resource strategies (including developing a code of ethics) to improve morale and achieve a “Quality” culture.