

Dieter traditionally conducted a six-month review of all new hires, which had been on the calendar ever since Jeremy's first day. Normally, such reviews consisted of much praise with a few pieces of light developmental feedback. Never in Dieter's eight-year tenure at the Center had he dealt with such a problematic subordinate as Jeremy was turning out to be. Seeking guidance as to his options, Dieter consulted a senior attorney in Huntington University's Office of Employment. The attorney advised him that he had followed all required steps prior to termination. With grim relief, Dieter decided to let Jeremy go. He considered what he might say.

VIGNETTE 3: MARILYN MALKIN

Huntington University's Vice President of Dining Services was an energetic woman named Marilyn Malkin. She oversaw twelve residential dining halls, five third-party dining facilities, and several alternative dining options. In her three years on the job, Marilyn had made real progress in expanding the variety of high quality food options to the Huntington community while adhering to her allocated budget. She won accolades from both the administration and students alike for her efforts, among which was petitioning the University to allow popular local restaurants to come on campus as food trucks.

Serving a widely divergent set of constituents to their individual satisfaction was a challenge Marilyn was familiar with. In the past 15 years, 39-year-old Marilyn had brought culinary and operational improvements to each of the three hospital dining networks and collegiate dining programs she had directed. However, Marilyn was caught by surprise when two high-performing managers who worked for her began to clash: Silvia Bok and Derek Tiago.

As Manager of Diner Satisfaction for nearly 30 years, 55-year-old Silvia Bok was key to Marilyn's ability to quickly grasp student preferences and to work efficiently within the University bureaucracy. Beyond being an effective "river guide," the warm and grandmotherly Silvia was an extremely popular figure among students, who loved to confide in her. Whenever problems arose in the day-to-day operations of the various dining facilities, Silvia heard about them first and reliably resolved them, neatly and with aplomb.

Nine months ago, Marilyn hired Derek Tiago to serve as Senior Operations Manager, to whom Silvia and four other managers would report. Derek, who was in his early 30s, was an earnest, smart, and diligent worker who was eager to make a difference at Huntington, a school he had long admired and wanted to work at. His principal charge was to manage the dining halls' costs by reducing waste and introducing best practices in kitchen management. This role was particularly important because Marilyn had been asked to reduce dining hall spending by five to ten percent within the fiscal year. Derek had worked for Marilyn at a previous employer in a similar capacity and she trusted his work, so she granted him wide latitude to do what he saw fit and asked the dining hall managers to support any changes that he made.

Within a few months of Derek's appointment, Marilyn noticed that Silvia seemed somewhat unhappy. She did not put the two events together, however, until Silvia asked to meet with her in private and expressed her dissatisfaction with Derek. According to Silvia, Derek had unilaterally imposed a uniform portion size for students in the hot foods line, rather than allowing servers to informally 'size up' students and serve proportionate amounts as they had always done. The volume of complaints to Silvia had increased dramatically, but because Derek had been

unwilling to budge on this new policy, she was helpless to address the complaints. Marilyn assured Silvia that she would speak with Derek, and Silvia left their meeting with a smile.

When she approached Derek the following week, Marilyn noticed more than a hint of bitterness in his response. "Silvia is averse to change," he stated bluntly. "Most changes feel foreign at first and some will not ultimately work, but Silvia seems set on letting all my initiatives fail." Derek showed Marilyn a financial model projecting a 20 percent reduction in waste stemming from his ability to better predict ingredient usage through uniform portioning. Trash disposal costs were down as well. Impressed by his progress, Marilyn expressed her sympathy and promised to ask Silvia to give Derek a chance.

When Marilyn returned to Silvia several days later with an entreaty to support Derek's work, Silvia looked stung and sat in stony silence. Marilyn explained that some of the cost-cutting measures Derek was working on were necessary to meet their budgetary mandate, and could even fund exciting dining initiatives such as bringing in guest chefs from top restaurants. Silvia was not compelled:

I know Derek can do a lot of good for the budget, but he is making my job very difficult. I am constantly blindsided by students and staff who come to me upset. So many things are changing, from prices of foods to the menu items being offered. It's hard to keep track so I look like I don't have a clue or I try to defend things I disagree with. I used to love my job, and I wish I could have it back.

Marilyn felt badly at Silvia's forlorn tone but was unsure what to do. Her instinct was to mollify Silvia, who was invaluable in her role and had been instrumental in Marilyn's successful start at Huntington. She also wanted to give Derek a fair shot at completing his nascent projects rather than having his efforts prematurely scuttled. More than anything, she wanted to stop playing "monkey in the middle," and encourage Silvia and Derek to get along on their own. Both were such high-performing managers and so easy to like, she thought. Why couldn't they be friends?

As Marilyn sat with these thoughts, Silvia burst back into her office on the verge of tears. "I just can't do this," she sobbed. "If Derek is here for good, I must look for another job." Alarmed, Marilyn tried to calm the agitated Silvia while listening to her side of the latest flare-up.

Apparently some dining hall managers had sided with Silvia in her conflict with Derek and were openly questioning the changes Derek was trying to institute. "If it ain't broke, why try to fix anything?" one longtime manager had pointedly asked at a daily all-hands meeting of dining hall kitchen staff. Many others had murmured their agreement.

When the meeting ended, Derek was left feeling upstaged and unfairly challenged. When he bumped into Silvia outside the room, he had asked in front of several dining hall employees whether she had instigated the others' resistance toward him. Unaccustomed to such confrontation, Silvia had run away from Derek directly back to Marilyn's office.

As Silvia dabbed at her eyes, Marilyn felt a creeping sense of dread: How could she fix this?