

# Employee Background Verification Systems: Implementation Challenges

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I have critically gone through this case and find it is a fantastic case to be used in a course on HR or in a course on Ethics.

The case brings to life very vital and current issues of the pressures managers in organisations face on how to tackle critical situations involving choices between what is right and what is wrong, which is the central dilemma in any situation entailing ethics.

As HR manager, Samir has the onerous task of contemplating to let go of a star employee who has done so much for the organisation for many years, because a belated background check (after many years of his joining the company) revealed that his school credentials were not genuine. Likewise Samir had to make a call on a junior employee with dire family financial situation, who was harassed into staying longer in her previous company, and consequently ended up faking her relieving certificate. Rich theoretical and conceptual body of knowledge can be beautifully brought to life through these two stories embedded in the case authored by Debolina.

The class will surely be polarized at the two ends of the spectrum, as participants will take one or the other extreme posture, based on their own ethical frames of guidance. Participants may argue that it is a choice between right vs. wrong, in that Samir has no choice but to fire both employees (something they may justify as being right) and not firing both the employees is wrong. Hence they could argue that it is a no brainer, and a conscientious manager has to do what is right (fire both the employees). Others may argue that firing the senior employee may need more caution given his stellar track record in the company over the years, and the fact that he is handling a vital account that the company badly needs. Besides, imposing post facto a norm on verification of past credentials is not fair. In the case of the junior employee however, there is no need for any such qualms and Samir should blindly fire her, not with-standing the fact that she comes from a poor family and her family needs her income, and if she is fired, she may not easily get another job due to the unnatural nature of her exit. Others may argue that an organisation must have a heart and cannot be a

stickler for rules, but instead must interpret rules more in spirit rather than the word. In that sense, if Samir uses his heart, he should fire neither.

The instructor can then harvest a rich crop of learnings, and provoke participants to think of whether there could be shades of grey, or is the world of corporate decision making on matters relating to ethics just black or white.

Actually there is an entirely different way of looking at the case. It is not that Samir has to chose between right (fire the two employees in question) vs. wrong (falsifying past testimonials). When viewed from Samir's perspective, actually the whole thing can be looked at very differently. It is right to fire the employee. It is also right not to fire the employee (in one case due to past contribution of the senior employee and in the other case due to dire need for job by the junior employee). Given that it is a clash of two rights from Samir's perspective, the case actually takes on the hue of Samir facing a defining moment, which is the central dilemma well captured in Badaracco's article titled 'The Discipline of Building Character.' If this track is taken, the instructor opens up a pandora's box for discussing defining moments at three levels (I, We and organisation). The dilemmas in front of Samir are at the level of 'We.'

On the whole it is a fantastic case.

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