

Conflict of Interest

I once worked with a supervisor whose position of leadership involved evaluations. One day this supervisor began selling “items” to the staff for personal financial gain. The items were somewhat expensive (for what they were) and the way it was presented was: “which one do you want, they are \$20 each.” Some staff members said no, but expressed fear that the supervisor would be retaliatory. Some said yes, hoping it would help their improve evaluations. Some just said yes or no with no fear or hopes.

One day the union representatives came to say they were concerned about this. The supervisor was incensed and did not know why they were concerned. When the supervisor shared this with me I explained the conflict of interest such activity posed. It was met without receptivity.

Eventually, selling these items became a high priority task for this supervisor, displaying items for selection in the office, collecting money and distributing items. As I continued my daily work, I became more and more conflicted with these business transactions, though I tried to just ignore it. The day came when I was shown the items and asked which I wanted for \$20. I simply said that is too much money and in response I was told that I should really try to treat myself now and then. After this I became incensed with anger.

Eventually I said this was inappropriate and morally compromising due to the “conflict of interest”. The supervisor in turn became incensed at this assertion. The matter was finally brought to light before a HR supervisor among other issues and it mainly stopped, though a few less overt sales still continued.

This supervisor and I never saw this the same way and it was the object of conflict between us for many months and it is still seen through different lenses.

Pat Murthy - EDE 9822- Dr. Perry