

Jump Start Micro-Enterprise Credential: School versus Work Expectations Simulation

Teacher Guide

(Updated: July 2016)

You're an Assistant Store Manager at a clothing store at a large regional mall. You and your best friend live together in an apartment, and you carpool together to work and home again at the end of the day. You try to coordinate your schedules so that you work the same hours.

You've hired a new employee who is a recent high school graduate. This person's resume is strong – good grades and a Customer Service and Sales certification from the National Retail Federation. He / she was particularly impressive during the job interview, showing enthusiasm and a real commitment to becoming a success in the Retail industry.

During the first two months on the job, however, this new employee has had trouble showing up on time. This new employee also is eager to leave as soon as the store closes at night – often friends are waiting for him / her after closing hours, to go out and have fun after work.

Today is the last day of the quarter, so your store has to conduct a complete inventory. You and your team members must physically count each item in inventory to determine exactly what products are in the store. It is absolutely critical that your counts are accurate because the regional headquarters will compare your inventory report with their records of the product that should be in your store to determine your "shrinkage" rate. ("Shrinkage" means product that is missing from your store, either because of customer theft, employee theft or damage.) You and your Store Manager both earn bonuses if your store keeps its shrinkage rate below the goal provided by your Regional Manager.

You've been given instructions by your Store Manager who is trusting you for the first time to complete this important task. You want to get this right, to justify your Store Manager's trust in you, and to show your Regional Manager that you're ready soon to be promoted to Store Manager yourself.

You've scheduled all of your team members to work today. The inventory starts after the store closes at 9pm. You expect the inventory to take three hours if everyone works together.

Your new employee shows up late for work again, and then tells you he / she intends to leave after normal closing hours to go to a concert with his / her friends. When you remind him / her that tonight your entire team is scheduled to work together to complete the quarterly inventory, he / she says: "I've spent a lot of money on these tickets. This is my favorite group. My friends will be picking me up when the store closes at 9pm and I'm going to leave."

After reading this scenario with your students, you may want to ask two questions:

Q1: "Do you think this scenario is realistic – could this happen in the real world?" The point you're trying to raise is that this type of situation does occur in the world of work. Team members don't always follow through on their commitments.

Q2: "Do you think it's fair that the new employee would go to the concert and not stay at the store to complete the inventory?" The point you're trying to make here is that there are many perspectives – the employee's perspective, the perspective of the other team members completing the inventory, the Assistant Manager, the Manager. What is "fair" may depend on whose perspective you take. **Raise the point : what may seem fair to the employee is unfair to all the others.**

While this is a writing assignment this is also a reasoning and workplace skills assignment.

From a writing perspective it is OK if students provide short one or two sentence answers as indicated below.

The “right” answer in this scenario from a workplace skills perspective is that the Assistant Store Manager has to make the difficult decision to ask the employee to stay for the inventory. If the employee leaves to go to the concert (as would be likely in the real world), the Assistant Manager is going to have to rally the other employees to work harder in this difficult circumstance and – at some point in the very near future – fire the employee.

This exercise tries to give students the perspective of management in this situation, although in reality they would more likely be the employee in this scenario (at least for the first few years after graduation). We’re trying to get them to look at the world from this different, adult perspective.

Sample Question Answers

First answer: extra credit if the student mentions that the employee made a commitment to the other employees and will be letting them down if he/she leaves. *If the student indicates that he / she would allow the employee to leave, you should ask the follow-up question: “Is this fair to the other employees who might have to stay many extra hours to complete the inventory?”*

Second answer: students need to know that going to the concert would get this employee fired. See notes in blue.

Third answer: extra credit if the answer indicates the Assistant Manager says something motivational to the other employees.

Fourth answer: extra credit if the student mentions one of the Self-Assessment terms like “determination” or “self-discipline.” *(You can ask the students to consider the Self-Assessment terms and use one of them as they write their answer to this question.)*

The answer to the last question could be: “Ask your friend to help you with the inventory.” or “Ask my co-worker for a ride home.” or any other reasonable solution. *The key here is to have the student write up a practical solution to this unexpected situation.*

Simulation Questions

What are you going to say to this employee?	“You need to stay to complete the inventory. If you don’t stay you will be fired. Ask one of your friends to sell your ticket and stay at the store for the inventory.”
What are you going to do if this employee leaves when the store closes to go to the concert with his / her friends?	If the employee leaves the store to go to the concert I’ll have to fire the employee. <i>(see note in blue above if your student indicates he/she would let the employee skip the inventory and go to the concert)</i>
If the employee leaves to go to the concert what are you going to tell your other team members who are there to complete the inventory?	“We’re all going to have to work harder because the employee left. Thank you all for agreeing to work harder.”
What are you going to tell your Store Manager and Regional Manager about this employee you hired?	“This employee did not have the self-discipline to miss the concert and complete the inventory.”
What are you going to tell your roommate? How are you going to get home?	“Please help me complete the inventory and drive me home after.” <i>or</i> “Go home without me. I’ll catch a ride home after the inventory is over from one of my co-workers.”