**DYNAMIC AND COLLABORATIVE TEAMS**

**Learning Outcome 2: ACTIVITY 6**

**HOMEWORK ACTIVITY**

**Fostering collaborative working**

Read the case study below: ‘How do you solve a problem like Margaret?’

“Being a manager would be easy if it wasn't for the people!” Martin McManus thought as he considered his first years as General manager (GM) at The Copperhouse Complex. Martin was particularly struggling with Margaret Smith, a full-time waitress who was part of the plantation restaurant team. Her behaviour was having a negative effect on the workplace; she was disruptive, rude and would regularly engage in whispering campaigns against her colleagues who she had taken a dislike to. “I don't know who is in charge around here”, Martin had commented to a trusted friend, and deciding tackling Margaret’s behaviour had become an urgent problem that needed addressing. Morale among the plantation team was already low, and Martin knew that however he choose to deal with this particular problem with Margaret would have a big impact on the respect of his staff as a leader and his position with his owners. Sat in his office Martin started to work through his options. One thing was perfectly clear – his professional reputation could be ruined if he did not figure out how to get his staff to work well together.

**Staff Morale**

A particular challenge for The Copperhouse complex was the morale of staff. Issues were resulting from reduced budgets associated with complaints about a lack of appropriate equipment, slow response to fixing repairs and pressure from suppliers. The owners were worried that spending was not appropriate to maintain the high standards they prescribed. After a couple of months in his new role, Martin McManus realised that the operational challenges staff faced were not communicated to the owners.

Other contributing factors was a perception that the staff were too powerful, and unexplained inconsistencies in HR policies leading to accusation of favouritism, uneven pay awards and a lack of performance management which resulted in staff being treated differently.

**The Problem With Margaret**

Margaret Smith had been working at the restaurant for nearly 15 years but was becoming a consistent problem for her line manager and colleagues. Margaret appeared to deliberately set out to undermine people she worked for and there had been complaints of abuse and harassment. Margaret would leave her own work to point out, in front of customers, the extra work she was doing compared to her colleagues. She would also use meetings to raise perceived grievances and make derogatory comments about other people. However, a lot of negativity was reserved for one-on-one interactions, which she used to spread rumours and gossip maliciously about other staff or the complex itself.

Margaret had had several formal performance discussions, but Margaret would often explain her away her comments as being misunderstood or misrepresented, and insisting that her intentions were good. She would use these discussions to claim unfair treatment in terms of scheduling, work allocation and time off and to accuse her line manager of having favourites.

Adapted from Rebecca Wilson-Mah, "How do you solve a problem like Lucinda?", The CASE Journal, (2016).

Imagine you were advising Martin McManus. What recommendations would you make to help foster collaborative working among the complex staff?

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