

A Question of Commitment - Introduction

In a recent leadership workshop, a newly hired team lead asked his peer learning group how he should handle a difficult situation. Having never held a formal leadership position till this one, and being new to the company, his plan had been to watch the team in action for a month or so before making any big moves. Besides, he had a lot of other things on his plate just getting acquainted with the many new challenges of his job.

He soon became concerned though about the commitment of one of his female team members. She did great technical work, and was the apparent "go to" person for key elements of a major project. Her work habits were the issue. While the rest of the team worked long hours to ensure critical milestones were met, she left work early almost every day. Most days it was an hour or so before usual close of business. But at least a couple of times in the two weeks he'd been watching closely, she'd actually headed home right after lunch. Worse in his opinion, in a recent team meeting one of her co-workers had joked lamely about some people on the team being more committed to family than team.

He was sure he knew who the joker was referring to, and heard it as a cry for someone, probably him as leader, to do something. As a new parent, he had some empathy for the young woman as he'd heard she had 3 small children. He was personally committed to maintaining a good balance between work and home, and just didn't believe anyone should be working the long hours his team was for too long. But when the team was in trouble, he also believed everyone should step up to help as best they could. That's what he would do, and that's the kind of team he intended to develop.

What he really wanted from his peers in the workshop was their best advice about what to say to this woman when he met with her later in the week to discuss the situation. What would you tell him?

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