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Nonprofit Strategies



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Employees have a duty to organization and themselves

By Barry VanderKelen

In the last *Nonprofit Strategies*, Samantha White did not get a job at a nonprofit bookstore even though she was an ideal candidate. Fred Jones, the manager, was told by his boss that White didn't get the job because she didn't take a voluntary drug test as part of the interview process.

White asked Jones why she didn't get the job.

As a manager, and a part of the interview team, Jones has access to confidential information, like why some people are hired or fired. And as an employee, he has a duty to the organization.

From this perspective, Jones may want to deflect the question. Whether or not White is hired is a personnel matter and

the reasons why are confidential. Jones may say to White that he is not at liberty to discuss the specific reasons why.

If Jones were to tell White that it was because she didn't take a voluntary drug test, he could be opening up the organization to a lawsuit. The organization misrepresented its process to the applicants.

At the same time, Jones has a duty to himself. If a practice or policy of the organization causes him distress, he must address it, or leave the organization. Organizations should have a whistleblower policy that, if followed, protects the person for having blown the whistle on an issue. Telling White outright without having followed the policy subjects Jones to disciplinary action.

Furthermore, Jones has a duty to address the situation because he is working for a nonprofit that needs to build trust with the community. He may strengthen the organization by constructively confronting his boss.

I would suggest that Jones tell White the reason she wasn't hired is confidential, and try to change the interview process. If he can't change it, he should begin looking for a different job.

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Resource Use

- Support nonprofit leadership
- Board development/training
- Strategic planning

Nonprofit Business Column of The Tribune

The San Luis Obispo Tribune publishes a column every other week in the Business section dedicated to the business practices of nonprofit orgs. Barry VanderKelen, Executive Director of the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation writes the bi-

weekly column to help strengthen nonprofit organizations in the community. Each column is reprinted here as a one-page handout for use by local organizations. Barry can be reached at 543-2323 or by e-mail at barry@slocf.org.