

HANDOUT

Case Study Sally and Jan

A high rate of absenteeism destroys your dependability and other working factors. Depending on the fringe benefits your company offers, you may lose all of your pay for the time missed at work; therefore, you put a strain on your personal finances. Also, you put a strain on your co-workers. In the example listed below, pay close attention to how one person's being absent affects co-workers:

Sally and Jan work as the secretaries in a local plant. Sally's supervisor is Mr. Brown, Personnel Director. Jan's supervisor is Mrs. Smith, General Manager. Both of the secretaries perform independent tasks for their own supervisors. Sally handles most of the receptionist duties such as answering the telephone, greeting customers, and so on. Jan covers the front desk for Sally when she goes to lunch.

Sally's husband has an upcoming holiday (on a Friday) in which he will be off work; Sally has to work that day. They want to go to the beach for a long weekend and leave that Friday morning. After being told that she could not have the day off, Sally decides to call in sick so she can go on to the beach. After all, she can just catch up on her work that following Monday.

The day before, Jan prepared her daily work plan to prioritize her work for the day. Her tasks included all of her daily operations, typing a report for a 4:00 meeting that Mrs. Smith has this afternoon with the district managers, making meeting arrangements for the meeting, and taking minutes during the meeting.

To her dismay, when Jan comes into work that morning, she finds that Sally will not be coming to work. She immediately reorganizes her daily work plan to make sure that she will be able to cover the front entirely by herself. She also has to find a co-worker to cover the front desk while she attends lunch. Constantly throughout the day, she is interrupted by visitors, phone calls, and so on, all of which are usually not a part of her day. To add to her day, the personnel director is holding interviews that day for a production manager. Sally was supposed to sit in on the interviews and take notes; now Jan will have to complete this task which will take up three hours of her work time. Jan not only has to complete her tasks, but Sally's as well.

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Throughout the day, Jan is unable to complete all the tasks to the best of her ability. There just is not enough time in the day for one person to fulfill all of the tasks. As a result, Jan is seen as incompetent. Since Jan knew nothing about the interviews for the production manager, they were not organized, as they should have been; therefore, the interviews took longer than expected. Some of the interviewees saw an unorganized company, thus losing interest in the company. Mr. Brown was highly upset.

She did not get through typing Mrs. Smith's report until 3:55 p.m., leaving no time to proofread. Not only did the typographical errors make her look bad, but they embarrassed her supervisor as well. The district managers were upset at the lack of professionalism, as was Mrs. Smith.

Through this scenario, one person's absence has a domino affect on the entire company. Sally thought she could just make up her work on Monday; however, this confusion cannot be solved that easily. She cannot make up for the damage to Jan's professional reputation.

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Sally and Jan Discussion Form

1. Was Sally acting ethically by calling in sick when she really went to the beach? Why or why not?
2. What effects were caused by Sally's absenteeism? How was Jan and other employees affected?
3. How was the overall company affected?
4. On Monday, Sally let it slip that she was at the beach on Friday. If you were Jan, how would you feel? What would you say? What would you do? Would you report Sally?