

Case Study—Leadership

Sylvia was young, serious-minded, well educated, and capable. More than anything else she wanted a management role with her company.

Sylvia worked hard for three years. She did an excellent job in human relations. Her personal productivity was never questioned. Ms. Smith, her supervisor, encouraged her to prepare to take over her job. She helped Sylvia a great deal in this respect, but, of course, she could make no promises.

About this time, Sylvia went to lunch with Helen, a friend of hers. At one point Helen told Sylvia she had heard that Mr. Young, an employee from another department, was being trained to take Ms. Smith's place as department head.

Although she said nothing and did not show it on the outside, Sylvia was very disturbed by the news. It was hard to believe that management could make such a decision so far in advance. She fretted about it constantly and could not keep her mind on her work. As a result, she made more and more mistakes, and certain important reports were turned in late. Over the next six months the excellent relationship she had with her supervisor slowly deteriorated.

Then, just as Helen had said, Ms. Smith was promoted and Mr. Young was made department head in an official announcement from top management. Sylvia was deeply hurt and disappointed.

What mistakes did Sylvia make that might have contributed to her ultimate disappointment?