

## WCM 620 Final Project Case Study

### Company Overview

ABC Corporation is an electronic device company selling cellular phones and tablets. It is a global company with both sales and service departments. The technology industry is highly competitive, so ABC Corporation focuses on after-sales service levels in order to ensure it has repeat customers. It has eight call centers worldwide and each call center handles a multitude of customer issues. There is an extremely high expectation that the call centers resolve customer issues in a timely fashion and to the customer's satisfaction. The call center managers are focused on ensuring their center is the best and that their center handles the most calls, has the highest-rated customer evaluations, and wins the most recognition for performance. Customer service is at the heart of the ABC Corporation's mission.

### Employees

**Thomas** is the call center manager and runs a tight ship. Thomas has been recognized for having the most productive unit in the organization year after year. Thomas is very proud of his unit and the recognition it receives and he holds his employees to very high productivity standards. Although customer service is critical to the organization, Thomas does not transfer that same mentality to his employees.

**Janet** is a call center supervisor, one of 10 in the call center. She has been working for Thomas for some time and follows his lead with respect to managing the center and the employees. She tends to focus on her work, rarely takes a break, and is completely dedicated to the success of the center.

**Michael** is a customer service representative and has been with ABC Corporation for two years. He likes his job but gets frustrated when others do not work as hard as he does. He is the first to know how hard one has to work to be successful in this call center. The calls come in nonstop, you always have to be polite, and the customers can be very upset at times. He prides himself on not only surviving this environment, but succeeding.

**Kathy** is also a customer service representative. She has been with ABC Corporation for five years but at this call center for about six months. She enjoys her job but feels like the environment in this call center is competitive and hostile at times. She is always nervous that she will lose her job. Her performance has always been good but she finds success more of a struggle since joining the new call center run by Thomas. Kathy and Kareem became friendly since they started in call center at about the same time.

**Kareem** was hired as a customer service representative after an interview process that proved he could manage the workload, had a pleasant phone voice, and had a desire to please the customer and represent the company well. Kareem is of Indian descent and is a practicing Muslim. His religion requires that he pray five times a day. This involves a series of movements and recitations from the Quran and there are various standing, bending, and prostrating postures. Kareem worked for ABC Corporation for eight months before being terminated.

## Case Study Overview

Over the duration of Kareem's employment, Kareem's number of calls dropped and he was often missing from his workstation.

Michael noticed Kareem sitting on a mat, talking to himself, and making strange movements with his body often throughout the day. Michael thought this was odd and could not believe how often Kareem was away from his workstation; he reported this to his supervisor, Janet.

Kathy also saw Kareem leaving his workstation but since they were friends, she asked him about it. He told her he was a practicing Muslim and was required to pray five times per day. He also told her that before he prays, he has to wash his hands, face, arms, and feet to be physically pure in order to spiritually pray. She thought this was fascinating.

Janet then began to focus her attention on Kareem's performance and the times he was absent from his desk. She determined it was excessive and spoke with Thomas.

Thomas kept an eye on Kareem's performance closely after discovering the performance deficiencies.

After a few weeks, Thomas made the decision to terminate Kareem's employment for unproductive work time, excessive breaks, and not meeting performance standards.

Kareem was very upset and decided to consult with an attorney as he felt that he was treated unfairly by being terminated.

Kareem's attorney sent a letter to ABC Corporation's employee relations department and you, the ER representative, are tasked with investigating this concern.

**Complainant Transcript**

**ER Rep:** Hi, Kareem. How are you doing today?

**Kareem:** Fine, thank you.

**ER Rep:** Well, first, let me thank you for meeting with me today to share your concerns. I appreciate that you are willing to discuss your concerns with me. I am here as a neutral party to objectively investigate your concerns. Now during this process, you should know it may be necessary for me to speak with others to gather additional information. It's very important that I gather all sides of the story before making any decisions. So now that I've explained my role to you, do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

**Kareem:** No.

**ER Rep:** Good. I also want to assure you that I will maintain confidentiality and only discuss this information with those who have a direct need to know. I would also encourage you to keep the contents of this investigation confidential to protect the integrity of the investigation. Do you have any concerns about your ability to keep this confidential?

**Kareem:** No, I understand, thank you.

**ER Rep:** Great. OK. So, as we talk today, I will be looking for complete and truthful information and any specific detail you can provide me regarding dates, times, or examples that will help me better understand your concerns. I'll also be taking notes on my laptop as we talk so that I can accurately record what you are telling me. OK, that was a lot of me talking. Let's shift gears, and you tell me what happened during your employment with ABC Corporation.

**Kareem:** Well, I am just really upset by what happened. I really loved my job and thought I was doing a good job; I was really caught off-guard.

**ER Rep:** OK. I'd like to understand what you mean when you say that you thought you were doing a good job and were caught off-guard. Tell me what specifically has made you feel that way.

**Kareem:** Well, I thought I was doing a good job and I would get good feedback from my customers and Janet told me from time to time I was doing a good job. My numbers were good compared to the other reps and no one told me anything different.

**ER Rep:** Did Janet ever have any performance conversations with you?

**Kareem:** No, she really just said things in passing like "Good job, Kareem" or "You did a nice job with that customer." I never had any formal performance conversations since I started.

**ER Rep:** What about Thomas? Did he ever give you any feedback?

**Kareem:** No, he is really intimidating. He watches over the call center like a hawk. He is very focused on all of us customer service reps taking as many calls as possible and keeping our numbers up. This call center wins awards every year for productivity. At times, getting my call numbers in was sort of hard for me since I have to take many breaks throughout the day.

**ER Rep:** Why did you need to take so many breaks throughout the day?

**Kareem:** I am Muslim and, as part of my faith, I have to pray five times a day. I would simply sneak away from my desk and go to a hidden corner of the service center and complete my ritual.

**ER Rep:** Did you ever tell anyone what you were doing or that you needed to do this daily?

**Kareem:** Well, no, I did not want to ask for any type of special treatment; I really thought I could sneak away and pray. I just hoped no one noticed.

**ER Rep:** Did anyone notice?

**Kareem:** I don't think so. I do know that Michael walked past me a few times and gave me strange looks. I just assumed he did not know what I was doing. He never asked me about it.

**ER Rep:** Did you ever approach Michael to tell him what you were doing?

**Kareem:** No.

**ER Rep:** So then what happened, how did you get terminated?

**Kareem:** Well, I felt like after Michael saw me a few times praying, things started to change.

**ER Rep:** How so?

**Kareem:** I noticed that Janet was watching me more closely; she asked me once where I was going when I went to pray and it was not a lunch hour or 15-minute break time. I also felt like Thomas was walking past my cube more, standing and observing more and just paying more attention.

**ER Rep:** Did you speak to Janet or Thomas about how you felt?

**Kareem:** No. I just put my head down and worked. I just did not want to draw attention to myself.

**ER Rep:** Ok, so then what happened?

**Kareem:** I got called into Thomas's office and I was told that my numbers were not up to standard for a customer service rep and that I was taking excessive breaks and my time away from my desk was causing too much unproductive time at work.

**ER Rep:** Did you say anything to Thomas or Janet?

**Kareem:** No, I was so shocked and so upset that I left as fast as I could.

**ER Rep:** Did you talk to anyone about what happened that day?

**Kareem:** No, I just left. I was so embarrassed and I was so proud of having this job and then just disappointed for being terminated.

**ER Rep:** Ok, Kareem, thank so much for telling me what happened. Is there anything else that you want to share with me? Anything else you can think of that pertains to your situation?

**Kareem:** No, I think that is it.

**ER Rep:** Ok, I will be looking into your concerns and will follow back up with you by the end of the week. If you do think of anything else you can share with me, please call me.

**Kareem:** Ok, I will. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me.

**Alleged Interview 1 Transcript (Janet)**

**ER Rep:** Hi, Janet. How are you doing today?

**Janet:** Fine, thank you.

**ER Rep:** Well, first, let me thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I appreciate that you are willing to discuss a situation at ABC Corporation with me. I am here to objectively investigate some concerns raised by a former employee. But, before we get into specifics, it's very important that I gather all sides of the story before making any decisions. So now that I've explained my role to you, do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

**Janet:** Well, what is this all about? Am I in trouble?

**ER Rep:** I am here to look into a situation regarding the termination of an employee here at ABC Corporation. It is Kareem; he reported to you for about eight months.

**Janet:** Ok, well I remember Kareem but Thomas fired him, not me.

**ER Rep:** Oh, I understand, but it will be helpful as I look into this situation that I get your side of the story.

**Janet:** Alright, but you are not going to tell anyone what I say, are you? This makes me very nervous; everyone is out for themselves here and I cannot lose this job!

**ER Rep:** Ok, that is good to know and I'm glad you asked. I want to assure you that I will maintain confidentiality and only discuss this information with those who have a direct need to know. I would also encourage you to keep the contents of this investigation confidential to protect the integrity of the investigation. Do you have any concerns about your ability to keep this confidential?

**Janet:** No, I understand. Thank you.

**ER Rep:** Great. OK. So, as we talk today, I will be looking for complete and truthful information and any specific detail you can provide me would be appreciated. I'll also be taking notes on my laptop as we talk so that I can accurately record what you are telling me. OK, that was a lot of me talking. Let's shift gears; what can you tell me about former employee Kareem?

**Janet:** Ah, yes, I remember Kareem. He was not here for long, maybe eight months.

**ER Rep:** OK. What can you tell me about his performance?

**Janet:** Well, I thought he was doing a good job and I would get good feedback from his customer service call recordings. His numbers were fair.

**ER Rep:** Janet, did you ever have any performance conversations with Kareem?

**Janet:** No, he was not really here long enough. I think there were a few times I made comments to him in passing like “Good job, Kareem” or “You did a nice job with that customer.” I never had any formal performance conversations with him.

**ER Rep:** Is that standard process to not have any performance conversations with employees?

**Janet:** Well, we really only conduct performance evaluations once per year.

**ER Rep:** Even for new employees?

**Janet:** Yes, we don’t have any different processes for new employees.

**ER Rep:** What about Thomas? Did he ever give Kareem any feedback?

**Janet:** Not that I know of.

**ER Rep:** So what led to Kareem’s termination?

**Janet:** Well, I began to notice that he was missing from his workstation several times a day and his numbers were dropping.

**ER Rep:** Did you speak with Kareem about this?

**Janet:** No, I did not, but Michael, another customer service rep, reported to me that he saw Kareem in the bathroom washing his hands and feet and that he also saw him on a mat in the corner of the service center making strange movements with his body and speaking softly.

**ER Rep:** Ok, so when Michael reported this, did you talk to Kareem about it?

**Janet:** No, I reported it to Thomas. You know, this is a high-productivity environment. We have to work. We don’t have time for conversations. The expectations are very high. And I don’t know what Kareem was doing but it will not be tolerated here; the focus is on productivity.

**ER Rep:** Can you tell me about your conversation with Thomas about Kareem?

**Janet:** Well, I just reported to him what Michael told me and what I had observed and he said he would monitor Kareem and handle it.

**ER Rep:** Ok, so what happened next?

**Janet:** I started watching Kareem more closely. I asked him once where he was going when he left his desk and it was not a lunch hour or 15-minute break time. He did not say anything; he just kept walking. I also noticed that Thomas hovered a bit around Kareem's cube and was observing him as well.

**ER Rep:** So when did you and Thomas decide to terminate Kareem for his performance?

**Janet:** Well, we really didn't. Thomas does not really talk to any of us. He is kind of intense and when he makes his mind up about something, we all go along with it. So, Thomas called me into his office and said that he had made the decision to terminate Kareem and he asked me to be there to witness the conversation since I was Kareem's supervisor.

**ER Rep:** What did you say to Thomas?

**Janet:** Nothing. You don't question Thomas; you do what he says. So I stayed and he called Kareem in the office and terminated him. I must admit, I felt bad that this was happening. Maybe if we talked to Kareem, he could have improved... Well, I don't know.

**ER Rep:** Did Kareem say anything?

**Janet:** No, he seemed shocked and upset and he got up and left as fast as he could.

**ER Rep:** Did you and Thomas talk after Kareem left?

**Janet:** No, Thomas just excused me and I went back to work.

**ER Rep:** Ok, Janet, thank so much for giving me your account of the situation. Is there anything else that you want to share with me? Anything else you can think of that pertains to Kareem?

**Janet:** No, I think that is it. Again, I really need this job, but I think maybe we could handle these things differently. But who am I to say?

**ER Rep:** Ok, Janet, is there anyone else who worked closely with Kareem or was friends with Kareem who may be able to help us with investigating his concerns?

**Janet:** Well, hmm. I think he was friends with Kathy. She transferred to our center from another one at about the same time Kareem came to work here.

**ER Rep:** Ok, thank you. I will be looking into this situation this week and will give you an update by the end of the week. Thank you so much for your time.

**Janet:** Ok, thank you.



**Witness Interview 1 Transcript (Michael)**

**ER Rep:** Hi Michael. How are you today?

**Michael:** Good, thanks. How are you?

**ER Rep:** I am fine; thanks for asking. As we talk today, I will be looking for complete and truthful information and any specific detail you can provide me regarding dates, times, or examples that will help me to better understand the situation. I'll also be taking notes on my laptop as we talk so that I can accurately record what you are telling me. I wanted to talk to you today about a former coworker of yours, Kareem.

**Michael:** Yeah, I remember Kareem. I haven't seen him in a while though.

**ER Rep:** Ok, what do you remember about Kareem?

**Michael:** Well, I did not know him well, but he seemed nice enough.

**ER Rep:** Michael, do you have any information about Kareem's performance or work habits?

**Michael:** I don't know. He seemed to perform well; I heard him on the phone with customers and he seemed pleasant and he was able to resolve the customer's issues from what I could tell.

**ER Rep:** Ok, anything else you can share?

**Michael:** Well, yes, I noticed that he left his workstation often. A few times, I saw him in the bathroom when I went in and he was washing his hands and feet. Seemed odd to me but who am I to question someone else's bathroom habits?

**ER Rep:** Michael, was there anything else you observed?

**Michael:** Well, I also found him in the corner a few times during the day kneeling on a mat with his face down and his forehead resting on the mat and he was talking to himself.

**ER Rep:** Did you know what he was doing? Did you ever ask him about it?

**Michael:** No, I didn't think it was any of my business. I guess he was doing some form of praying. I don't know.

**ER Rep:** Michael, did you ever report this to Janet?

**Michael:** I did. You know, this is a really tough environment and I work really hard to be successful. You can't just be leaving your workstation to go to the bathroom and wander around the center. That is just really not cool. And I don't care why he was doing it, so I felt like I had to tell Janet what I saw.

**ER Rep:** So what exactly did you share with Janet?

**Michael:** I just told her that I saw Kareem on several different occasions sitting on a mat in the corner of the center with his eyes closed and his hands clasped praying. I also told her that I had seen him in different positions and talking to himself on the mat. I told her about seeing him washing his hands and feet in the bathroom as well. I just thought she should know.

**ER Rep:** Thanks, Michael, for your information. Anything else you can think of that I should know about Kareem?

**Michael:** No, I think that is it.

**ER Rep:** Ok, Michael, well if you think of anything else, please let me know. Also, I would ask that you keep this conversation confidential as we are investigating some concerns here at ABC Corporation. Can you commit to this?

**Michael:** Yeah, sure, of course.

**ER Rep:** Thanks again for your time. I appreciate it.

**Michael:** No problem.

**Witness Interview 2 Transcript (Kathy)**

**ER Rep:** Hi Kathy, how are you today?

**Kathy:** Good, thanks. How are you?

**ER Rep:** I am fine, thanks for asking. I wanted to talk to you today about a former coworker of yours, Kareem.

**Kathy:** Oh yes! I remember Kareem. I miss him. We were friends and then one day he was gone.

**ER Rep:** Ok, as we talk today, I will be looking for complete and truthful information and any specific detail you can provide me regarding dates, times, or examples that will help me to better understand the situation. I'll also be taking notes on my laptop as we talk so that I can accurately record what you are telling me.

**Kathy:** Um, ok. What is going on?

**ER Rep:** Well, let's just start at the beginning. What do you remember about Kareem?

**Kathy:** Well, he was very nice. We kind of bonded since we started at about the same time. I transferred from another call center and Kareem asked me for my help quite a bit in the beginning.

**ER Rep:** Kathy, you said Kareem asked you for help. What can you tell me about Kareem's performance or work habits?

**Kathy:** He really wanted to succeed. He was so hard on himself when he made a mistake. He got the hang of it and then he seemed to perform well. I heard him on the phone with customers and he seemed pleasant. From what he told me, his numbers were good too.

**ER Rep:** Ok, anything else you can share?

**Kathy:** Well, yes, Kareem was very religious. He had to pray five times per day.

**ER Rep:** Ok, can you tell me more?

**Kathy:** Well, from what he told me, he had to leave his workstation often. He would go into the bathroom to wash his hands, arms, face, and feet. Then he would go and pray on a mat. He said it was a way of reminding him of God throughout the day. I thought it was pretty cool.

**ER Rep:** Kathy, was there anything else you observed?

**Kathy:** No, but I worried about his religious practice since it took him away from his cubicle quite a bit and I didn't want him to get into trouble.

**ER Rep:** Did you express your concerns to Kareem?

**Kathy:** Well, in a roundabout kind of way. I told him to be careful because I did not trust the leaders around here. You just never know what might happen.

**ER Rep:** What does that mean?

**Kathy:** It is a really intense environment and employees are expected to be at their cubicles and answering customer calls all day. Productivity standards are really important to Thomas. I have seen people come and go here for the littlest things.

**ER Rep:** Do you have any specific examples?

**Kathy:** No, just what I have heard and sometimes seen. One day you are here and the next you are not. It is ruthless.

**ER Rep:** Thanks Kathy for your information, anything else you can think of that I should know about Kareem?

**Kathy:** No, I think that is it. I miss Kareem and I don't know why he left, he seemed happy here.

**ER Rep:** Ok, Kathy, well if you think of anything else, please let me know. Also, I would ask that you keep this conversation confidential as we are investigating some concerns here at ABC Corporation. Can you commit to this?

**Kathy:** Oh, yes, of course!

**ER Rep:** Thanks again for your time, I appreciate it.

**Alleged Interview 2 Transcript (Thomas)**

**ER Rep:** Hi, Thomas. How are you doing today?

**Thomas:** Fine, thank you. What is this meeting all about? I am a busy man and don't have time for this nonsense.

**ER Rep:** Well, first, let me thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I appreciate that you are busy but let me assure you this is very important. We need to discuss a situation at ABC Corporation. My role in this situation is to objectively investigate some concerns raised by a former employee. But, before we get into specifics, it's very important that I gather all sides of the story before making any decisions. Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

**Thomas:** No. Let's just get to it already.

**ER Rep:** Ok, we will. I would appreciate your patience today and we will get through the conversation as quickly as possible. I also want to let you know that I will maintain confidentiality and only discuss this information with those who have a direct need to know. I would also encourage you to keep the contents of this investigation confidential to protect the integrity of the investigation. Do you have any concerns about your ability to keep this confidential?

**Thomas:** Nope, got it.

**ER Rep:** Great. OK. So, as we talk today, I will be looking for complete and truthful information and any specific detail you can provide me would be appreciated. I'll also be taking notes on my laptop as we talk so that I can accurately record what you are telling me. OK, what can you tell me about former employee Kareem?

**Thomas:** Kareem? I don't know any Kareem.

**ER Rep:** He was an employee that worked in your call center for about eight months. You terminated him about three weeks ago and he has hired an attorney to potentially sue you for wrongful termination because of religious discrimination.

**Thomas:** What?! Well, that is ridiculous.

**ER Rep:** OK. Well, think about it for a moment. His name is Kareem; I have his personnel file here. What can you tell me about his performance?

**Thomas:** Ah yes, he was the boy we fired for poor performance.

**ER Rep:** Yes, that is him. What specifically about his performance?

**Thomas:** Well, Janet, one of the call center supervisors, told me she began to notice that Kareem was missing from his workstation several times a day and his numbers were dropping.

**ER Rep:** Do you know if Janet spoke with Kareem about this?

**Thomas:** No, I don't know. I trust her to manage her employees appropriately and to my expectation.

**ER Rep:** Ok, so when Janet reported this, did you talk to Kareem about it?

**Thomas:** No, he is Janet's and she knows what to do. I don't have time for those types of conversations. I run the best call center in this company and we work hard. We need to do our jobs, work the phones, and get our numbers up. It's as simple as that.

**ER Rep:** Ok, so did you observe Kareem or look into his performance numbers?

**Thomas:** Well, I decided I would monitor Kareem and check things out. I have no patience for underperformers and my customer service reps need to be at their desks at all times except for designated lunch or break times.

**ER Rep:** What did you discover?

**Thomas:** I started watching Kareem more closely. I hovered a bit around Kareem's cube and was observing him as well.

**ER Rep:** So when did you decide to terminate Kareem for his performance?

**Thomas:** Well, I saw him leave his workstation several times over the course of the day. And his numbers were dropping. I have no tolerance for this and Kareem knows the expectation. So, I called Janet into my office and said that I had made the decision to terminate Kareem. I asked her to be there to witness the conversation since she was Kareem's supervisor.

**ER Rep:** Did you ever have a conversation with Janet about why Kareem was leaving his workstation and why his numbers were dropping?

**Thomas:** No, of course not. I could care less. All I care about is the productivity of this center and if I have an employee who is not cutting it, then that employee must go.

**ER Rep:** So what happened next?

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**Thomas:** We called Kareem into the office and told him he was taking excessive breaks, was not productive because of those breaks, and his numbers were down.

**ER Rep:** Did Kareem say anything?

**Thomas:** No, he did not, so I excused him and he left.

**ER Rep:** Did you and Janet talk after Kareem left?

**Thomas:** No, Janet and I went back to work.

**ER Rep:** Ok, Thomas. Thank you so much for giving me your account of the situation. Is there anything else that you want to share with me? Anything else you can think of that pertains to Kareem?

**Thomas:** No, I think that is it. We have very high standards here and some people can't hack it. Kareem could not handle the work so we let him go.

**ER Rep:** Ok, I will be looking into this situation this week and will give you an update by the end of the week. Thank you so much for your time.

**Thomas:** Ok.