



## CURRENT CHALLENGES

Ling works full time as a Team Leader in a busy call centre in the tech industry. She manages a team of 30 and the job is very fast paced, and target driven. Her teams' stats are compared each week with those of other Team Leaders. Recently, she has found it very difficult to keep her team motivated as well as herself. Her team consists of 22 women and 8 men and although she does not like to admit it, she finds managing some of the men more of a challenge, especially one who seems intent on trying to embarrass her and often seems to snigger after any interaction. When she walks away from this employee, she often questions herself. Is he like this because she is a woman? Is it her ethnicity? Is it her sexual orientation? Her team is mixed in that some work full time, some part time and mixed culturally too, although mainly white British. There is one woman from Greece, one from Australia, 2 men from the Indian Tech call centre, who are on a temporary contract. They will return to the partner organisation in India in approximately 3 months. Their presence along with some of their colleagues from India, who work in the other teams may have started the rumours – one being that all the organisations work is transferring to India. There are 6 daytime teams of 30 = 180 plus staff (with management and admin). The call centre is open 24 hours and there are 4 evening teams of 25 – 30 per team. It is easy to see how gossip and rumours spread.

# LING

## Team Leader

AGE 45

GENDER Female

NATIONALITY Chinese

**FAMILY SITUATION** Married for 5 years and has no children. Looking to adopt a child soon with her wife, who is also from China

**JOB/CAREER** Full time Team Leader in a call centre that is based in the tech industry. She has worked in middle management for 12 years now.

**PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON GENDER EQUALITY** Has strong beliefs on gender equality and LGBT rights. She often holds back in sharing her thoughts for fear of being judged.

## ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONS

- Initially this was her dream job but more recently Ling feels less motivated and is not sure why. Maybe it is due to personal plans of wanting to adopt a child and go part time. Due to financial responsibilities, she would still need to work. Maybe subconsciously the team member who has been trying to embarrass her – is starting to knock her confidence in her ability to manage. She is also conscious that other team members are observing the situation and is starting to feel talked about – or is she imagining this? She is hoping to go part time and this along with other issues is what she would desperately like to discuss with her immediate line manager – but there has been no opportunity to do so, and Ling is feeling frustrated and isolated.

## MOTIVATIONS

- Her team is never top of the leader board in the call centre stats and is never bottom either. She aims for a consistent standard and the team seem to respect her for that. Generally, Ling believes she has a good team and that she herself is good at her job. However due to everything that is happening she is feeling less motivated and more anxious.

## WORK SITUATION

- Morale is currently low across the organisation as there is talk of mass redundancies. This is a rumour that has escalated and Ling herself has not been able to confirm or deny this. She has not been part of any discussion with higher management or HR. She senses distrust within her team and wants to motivate them and herself. Would job losses be linked to stats? She needs to improve her stats and the stats of her team. Her own line manager seems to be in constant meetings and not available for personal discussions. Some of the other Team Leaders are very close and meet socially. However, Ling prefers to keep the job professional and does not join with the socials. Also, her culture is very different from many of the other workers, and she is increasingly aware of this.

## Manager's questions

- The manager needs to make time to address the many issues Ling and other employees have. There is strong evidence of bullying. The experiences Ling has with one of her team sniggering and trying to embarrass her, is not acceptable behaviour. Even if Ling does not address this, as a matter of urgency, the Line Manager should have greater awareness of what is happening in the teams. This is a possible disciplinary issue and Ling also needs support in being assertive with this team member. Other issues that are demotivating staff need to be addressed too. This Manager should ask if all managers should really adopt a more open way of working?
- How can they put an end to the rumours and give some clarity to the situation within the organisation? Instead of pitching teams against each other, could they encourage a more inclusive workforce?
- What would motivate the teams, working together more, fun incentives and how would this help Ling?
- Why is Ling asking about being more assertive?
- What are the real issues? Something has changed?
- Need to make time for Ling and ensure know what is happening in her life that is impacting this situation and what is happening within the team?.

## Peers/colleagues' questions

- How can colleagues/peers support each other, through this period of gossip, rumours and speculation?
- Can the teams work more closely together, and can Ling work more closely with other team leaders who are also likely to be experiencing the negative impact of the rumours?



## Individual's questions

- Is my job secure?
- Will I have the option to go part time when I hear from the adoption agency?
- What about my team if I go part time?
- How will they be managed? Is there any truth in the rumours about job cuts?
- Will me and my team be penalised or disadvantaged if my own circumstances change?
- How can I be more assertive if the team becomes unruly and ask questions I can't answer?

## Policymakers' questions

- All equality and diversity policies need to be updated and other policies around communication and what is acceptable need to be considered to avoid spreading gossip or rumours.
- In addition, policies on bullying and inappropriate behaviour should be considered and inclusivity and cultural awareness policies. Within a large workforce, it is important to ensure all employees receive training on equality and diversity.