VBA School of Bank Management
First Year Case Study

You are the Human Resource manager for Banks "R" Us in Tigertown, Virginia. Scott Dockery, a branch manager, has approached you with a personnel issue. You have known Scott for a number of years, even before he became a branch manager. He is most comfortable when he is able to work alone on his own tasks and he values a careful, detailed approach toward his work. As a manager, however, his style is more laissez-faire. He uses a hands-off approach in managing people and only deals with people issues once they become problematic. He is introverted by nature and primarily manages by exception, which means issues that receive his time and attention must be out of the ordinary. His direct reports have told you in the past that "no news is good news" when it comes to their interactions with Scott. Scott also has some health related problems. He has high blood pressure and just recently had angioplasty performed to unclog a 90% blocked coronary artery.

Scott explains to you that the issue involves one of his tellers, Sue Patterson. Specifically, the problem Scott is experiencing is that Sue spends too much time in his office talking and complaining about her personal problems. Scott tells you that his patience is increasingly running thin because her personal problems never seem to get resolved and there seems to be a new crisis in her life every week. Scott feels stressed out and this issue is threatening "to push him over the edge."

Sue Patterson is an average employee who has been with the bank for several years. She has a history of attendance problems. Recently, she has been more mistake-prone. Over the last six months, her cash drawer has been out of balance more than is typically expected within your branch, with the number of shortages and overages being about the same. Based on your interactions with her as the HR manager for the bank, you believe that Sue has a strong personality, is very much into her feelings and likes to be the center of attention (i.e., desires validation from others).

When you ask Scott how often this problem behavior occurs, he reports that it happens about every other day (i.e., about 3 times a week). On average, he says that Sue will be in his office venting her personal problems for 30 minutes to an hour.

When you ask Scott to describe what happens during one of the "counseling" sessions, he states that Sue usually comes to his office during the 1st part of the shift, has a cup of coffee, takes a seat, and proceeds to tell him about her problems.

When asked what his response to Sue's behavior is, Scott reports that he tries to be a sympathetic listener and provide her with counsel and emotional support. He's reluctant to say that he doesn't have the time or the inclination to listen to her personal problems for fear of hurting her feelings. He believes that being an empathic listener and problem-solver is what a good manager should do in these situations. He's also afraid that if he doesn't listen to her vent that it might negatively affect her performance.

To add to his stress, Scott has also caught wind of some rumblings in his branch about the preferential treatment Sue receives. The other employees are upset because they have to pick up the slack when Sue is bending Scott's ear with her personal problems. They are starting to resent Scott as well as Sue. In this situation, the employee's reaction is more pronounced

because of Scott's general lack of positive reinforcement (e.g., praise and encouragement) to his employees.

1. What is Scott's natural style [if he was free to choose (without any situational requirements/expectations) which style would he engage in]?

2. What style does Sue exhibit according to the HR manager?

3. What style is Scott using when he interacts with Sue?

4. What should Scott do differently in his interactions with Sue to produce a more positive outcome for the bank? What style should he adopt, for example, when interacting with Sue?

5. What should Scott do differently in his interactions with the other employees of the branch? What style should he adopt when interacting with them?