



## “It pays to be Tough and Nice”

About 5 months ago, Amer Chatterjee was promoted to a supervisory position in the electronics department of a large picture tube manufacturing company in Noida. Before his promotion Amer was quite friendly and popular with his peers. He moved closely with Shyam Sundar and has fairly intimate ties with him dating back to over 9 years, right from his college days. Both Amer's and Shyam's families socialised regularly and both men attended parties, movies and other social events together.

After his promotion, Amer wondered if he could still move closely with Shyam without even inviting criticism from other quarters. Amer thought to himself, “there's nothing wrong with continuing to socialise with Shyam as long as I treat all other members of my department fairly. Moreover, Shyam happens to be my friend right from the days of my college. I have accepted Shyam's wife as my Rakhee sister long back”.

Then after sometime there was a change in one of Shyam's habits. Twice in the past month he was late for work. Amer did not say anything to Shyam the first time he was late. The rules in the company were fairly simple and everyone knew that in a private sector company, violations are not tolerated. If you report late on any day, oral warning is given, second time there will be an entry in personal file, third time a notice is served seeking explanation, fourth time half day's leave is cut and fifth time you are fired. This morning Shyam was half an hour late due to heavy traffic during morning hours near the Noida bridge – his third offence in recent weeks. Amer decided to have a discussion with Shyam, before matters took an ugly turn.

**Amer:** Shyam, this is the third time you have been late in 2 weeks. I am going to give you a written notice and make an entry in your personal records.

**Shyam:** Come on “yaar”. Don't do that. You know the traffic problem in Delhi. During the morning hours the Noida Bridge is flooded with vehicles. I have to come from the other side of the river, away from the work spot by nearly 35 kms. We were caught in the jam on a number of occasions previously. Now that you got company accommodation inside the premises, don't pull my legs. You can't do that.

**Amer:** I know all this. But as the supervisor checking the work of more than 35 employees in my department, I can't give that special privilege to you. You know I have cut 2 days' leave from Naveen Gupta's file about a month back for



excessive tardiness. My own boss would not tolerate anyone reporting late on any day. After all he has come from Japan after attending several quality improvement workshops.

**Shyam:** Don't tell me all that yaar. I am not concerned with what you boss says to you. Nor what you did to Naveen. Don't you remember that we are good friends/you can let it slip this time. It's not going to be noticed by anyone. I promise I will try to improve my punctuality.

**Questions:**

1. Can a person who has been promoted risk continuing to be friends with his former peer? Explain your position.
2. How would you handle this situation if you were Amer?
3. Don't you think a boss has to be "tough and nice" and not "nice and tough"?