



“that’s what she said”

a ford & harrison blog about the popular television series “the office”

And the Beet Goes On

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In the words of the incomparable Monty Python troupe – now for something completely different. With the season over and Michael departed, I decided that, rather than review a rerun, I’d share some thoughts about one of the putative candidates to replace Michael. I’ve decided to focus on the character we all love to hate, the beet farmer from birth, the senpai of his dojo – Dwight Kurt Schrute III.

If desire for the job were the only requirement, Dwight would be a shoo-in. The week that he spent as Acting Manager clearly was one of the highlights of his life – a period he described as one of “maximum happiness” – and he went to extraordinary lengths in an effort to be reconsidered for the position after being disqualified for accidentally shooting Andy, including wrapping himself in bandages and bribing members of the search committee. He also could lay claim to the position based on his skills as a salesman, which would be one of the best examples of the Peter Principle in action. Dwight would be an unmitigated disaster as Manager of the branch on so many levels including, for our purposes, with respect to potential employment law liability.

Dwight’s main problem is his unshakeable belief that he is so much smarter than everyone else, which means that he knows what is best for everyone in the office, and the rules that apply to others don’t apply to him. He has no concept of how his actions might be perceived by others as inappropriate. Take his shooting of Andy. Despite the obvious

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stupidity of walking around with a loaded gun at the office, and being told as much by Pam and others, he insisted on doing so, resulting in an incident that could have had even more dramatic consequences depending on the bullet's trajectory. And this is by no means the first time he has had dangerous weapons at work, including ninja throwing stars and a blow gun. Indeed, watching the start of today's repeat episode reminded me of something I had forgotten – that in the music video the office was shooting, Dwight brandished a knife at Andy's neck! Talk about exhibit A in Andy's lawsuit against Dunder Mifflin Sabre. What about when Dwight, alone with Phyllis in a conference room, cut off her blouse to give her a massage? How would that look if Phyllis decided to raise a sexual harassment complaint (particularly given Dwight's on office sexual activity with Angela)? His management style also would decimate office morale, as was evident during the week he was in charge, when he made so many unpopular decisions that there was a mass uprising for his head.

There are some people who may be capable in some respects, but are not cut out for management. Dwight falls in that category. How an employee's shortcomings might become even more problematic in a management role is something that must be taken into account in making promotion decisions. That can be a challenge if an employee is technically proficient in his or her job and believes that promotion is the next natural step in the career path.

Well, this is just one person's opinion about Dwight. I'd love to hear what you think. Maybe you think that the discipline and order that Dwight would bring to Scranton is just what the branch needs, especially after Michael's very different management style. Maybe you think I'm overstating the risks of Dwight as manager. Drop me a note and let's discuss! I'd also be interested in hearing who you think might make a good Manager and why. Perhaps your favorite candidate will be discussed in an upcoming post!