

researchers. The only logical explanation for something like this was that some of the data was being fabricated. The other two on the project had been with him for years, and he had never known them to be anything other than scrupulously honest. He hated not to trust John, but he simply could think of no other explanation. But that didn't really make sense either, because if he was "cheating," surely he knew he would get caught by being so far out of line with the others on the study. Jack decided he had to talk to John, so he asked John to come to his office. He asked John to close the door, and Jack presented him with the comparison of the data. At first John denied that he had been doing anything wrong. He insisted that his methods and his results were "by the book," and he did not have an explanation for why two of his colleagues were getting more modest results. Finally Jack said, "I don't like accusing people of something like this, John, but I just have no other explanation of these results. Have you altered this data?" When confronted with a direct accusation, John finally admitted his culpability. He said he was being considered for a position as R & D Manager for a competitor, and he had wanted his research records to look outstanding. He had just taken a little liberty with the data. He begged Jack not to tell anyone and not to get him in trouble so as to jeopardize his possible employment with the new company. Now Jack had an ethical dilemma himself. His inclination was to fire John. After all, this company's future rested partly on the data collected in its research labs, and their recommendations for new products were taken as significant drivers of the company's success. He was also inclined to call the other company and let them know about John's actions. After all, if he would cheat to get the job, he would probably cheat while on the job. Just how far should Jack go with this? Jack told John, "I want to think about this for a day or so. I may still let you go over this incident, but frankly, I am going to consult with HR about this and get their advice. I'll talk to you as soon as I make my decision. In the meantime, I want you to go back to helping with the regular sample testing where you started out when you came here. I'll move Jan to your project and let her work with Allan and Bill; she can start over with it." When he consulted with the HR manager later that day about John, Jack's Impression was confirmed. Angela's advice was that John should be fired for this. This was a serious enough incident and one that he clearly knew was wrong; she did not think they should keep him on the payroll. It would be awfully hard to trust him after this. As for whether or not they would call the competitor and blow the whistle on John, she decided to wait and make that decision when John came to her for his exit interview tomorrow morning, right after Jack terminated him. She would decide whether there was any remorse and if he had learned his lesson. At that point, she and Jack would confer again about whether to call the competitor. Jack thought this was a good idea, and he made himself ready to carry out the plan first thing tomorrow morning.

Questions :

- (a) What are the ethical and legal issues in the case?
- (b) To what extent do you think John is unethical and why?
- (c) Does an act of whistle blowing be a solution to John's actions?
- (d) Discuss the ethical implications of the decision that Jack took in terminating John.
