# LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: MAKING DIFFICULT DECISIONS

One of the acknowledged attributes of an effective leader is having the courage and the ability to make difficult decisions. Often, these tough calls involve the prospect of letting go of an employee or even doing a layoff. Many of us have had to face the harsh reality that people we like or respect aren't necessarily appropriate for their current role. We typically learn this fact after the employee has been in the role for a while and, to our dismay, we discover that he or she can't do what we had anticipated, expected, and/or needed. Even if we notice early warning signals and provide candid feedback, we might stay in denial and let the issue linger for too long.

Take the example of Caroline and Sally, who had been colleagues and friends within a particular company, for a long time. Shortly after Caroline got a new job in a different department, she brought Sally over to take on a role Caroline thought would be perfect for her. In a couple of months, Caroline realized the mistake. She struggled with her response to this realization—after all, she had encouraged her friend to join her in the new department. Caroline tried providing Sally with more specific direction on her tasks, but she soon realized that Sally was simply not pulling her weight. Moreover, Sally's colleagues were disgruntled about having to take up the slack. Caroline made the tough decision to tell her friend she needed to find another position. Once Sally moved on, the department heaved a collective sigh of relief, morale improved, and the group returned to its prior level of productivity with a new employee who was a better fit for the job. Sally and Caroline's relationship survived this series of events, as Sally came to realize she was happier not trying to be a square peg in a round hole.

Needless to say, leaders' tough decisions do not always involve personnel issues. Look at what is going on with GM now. It appears that over the last decade, many leaders did not make the hard decisions to fix ignition problems and notify customers; the new CEO is paying the price now by having to devote a huge amount of energy to damage control. The data is still coming in, and it will be an uphill battle for GM to regain good will and customers' trust and loyalty.

*As a leader, can you think of difficult people, brand, or service decisions you have made? When have you had the courage to take the harder yet more "leaderful" path? When did you let too much time go by? What happened? How would you coach others in the same situation?*