



JAMES D. MORRISSEY INC.

Executive Summary/Synopsis

Union and nonunion workers represent two distinct approaches to labor relations in the workplace. Union workers are members of a labor union, an organized group that negotiates conditions affecting their work. Nonunion workers negotiate employment terms individually with their employer, granting them flexibility in an employment contract. Contrary to a union job, nonunion employees enter roles at differing salary points, receive individual compensation packages including paid time off, healthcare options and in some cases, are granted the ability to adjust their schedules. Nonunion employees do not necessarily receive paid breaks, lunches or the option to “turn off.”

In certain industries, it is standard practice to hire union laborers, largely due to the reliability of consistency and availability. When one of the most well-known construction companies in Philadelphia tried to switch from hiring one group of the above to the other, co-owner Jim Morrissey was met with resistance in an uphill battle.

Background

James D. Morrissey Inc., commonly referred to as “Morrissey,” is a family-owned and operated construction company in the Philadelphia area. Nearly 100 years old, this active company has been constructing and paving roads, airports and other projects for decades. JDM Materials Co. and Eureka Stone Quarry, Inc. are material supply companies which operate under the Morrissey umbrella. In some ways, they are a one-stop shop. Their values of integrity and quality construction shine through in their dedication to maintaining the roads and developments of Eastern Pennsylvania through repairs, upkeep and protection.

The privately owned, for-profit company has multiple locations throughout Pennsylvania, supplying and working with many other construction companies across the country. Morrissey is also frequently contracted by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to build highways.

Jim Morrissey and his brother are the co-owners of James D. Morrissey, Inc. The company was started by his grandfather, and then passed onto his father who turned over the reins to Jim and his brother. This means he is a third-generation owner. He started working for his father at the family company when he was 14 years old, working in the field, and then moved up the ladder. As the owner of the company, he has had to make many difficult decisions, both large and small.

Jim was raised in the Catholic faith, attending Catholic schools through his years at Villanova University. Maintaining a close relationship with family is of utmost importance to him, and continuing to support his high school and college alma maters through family legacy is a point of pride.

Case (Problem)

In the past, Morrissey worked almost exclusively with unions. Roadwork is a structured industry, and so are unions. Unions are set up so that employees are paid to work a set amount of hours on specific days. They receive paid meal breaks and any hours worked over a set amount of time require overtime pay.

In 2011, Jim and his brother had the opportunity to purchase an existing materials shop in Bucks County PA. At that point, Jim had 70 Teamsters union members working for him. The new shop was an organization that had nonunion employees running the operations. The nonunion employees were seasoned professionals with the knowledge and experience that came with working in a company for a long time. Jim and his brother did not want to let the nonunion workers go, so they decided to keep them on staff rather than lay them off and put them out of work.

In the meantime, Jim's union team was nearing the end of a contract and approaching the time when a new one would be negotiated. The union leaders came in to negotiate with Jim and guaranteed the Teamsters would receive better pay, benefits and a good retirement plan. The union leaders over promised and the union members did not receive what they were guaranteed. The union members went on strike.

Jim understood that this was business. Still, he was affected by the fact that his long-term employees struck. Jim felt as though he grew up with these men, because in many ways he did.

Jim also realized this was the livelihood of every one of his team members. They needed to provide for their own families and make the best financial decisions in the long run, and relied on the union to make that a reality. The strikers stuck to their guns and two years later, the strike was still in effect. Two years was a long time for these men to be out of work. No work meant no pay.

From Jim's perspective, it was two years of being in and out of court, disputing issues with the union leaders. The business was doing well, and they had enough money to fight this battle for years. However, Jim had a decision to make as an owner of the company. He needed to think about what was best for the company and best for the working nonunion employees that showed up every day. Jim had to decide if spending time in the courts was the most effective use of this time or if he should settle with the union, which would cost Morrissey a large financial sum.

Should Jim allow the strike to continue, with the possibility of hiring back his union team, or should Jim end the strike at an extremely high price point, guaranteeing the employees would not be allowed to return under the union?

PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS

- ❖ Teams will present to judges in the VJM Performing Arts Center on December 7th
- ❖ Presentation materials must be emailed to Kristen Davis at kdavis@vjmhs.org by 8:00 am on Friday, December 6th
- ❖ Each team will have 10 mins to present
- ❖ Judges will have 5 mins for Q&A at the end
- ❖ Each presentation must contain the following elements (no more than 6 slides total)
 - Team Name and introduction
 - Background Summary
 - Description of the Ethical Challenge
 - Recommendation & Justification
 - Share how your faith guided you in your recommendation

EVALUATION

- ❖ Teams will present to a panel of judges who will score presentations
- ❖ The rubric will be based on concepts within two areas: Content of the Presentation, and Presentation Skills
- ❖ Content of the Presentation will include concepts such as effective description of the ethical dilemma, knowledge of applied ethics within a business setting, and thorough presentation of case information
- ❖ Presentation Skills will include concepts such as thoughtful organization of ideas, effective speaking and professional manner, and judge Q&A responses
- ❖ Points will be deducted for grammatical errors and/or incomplete slides
- ❖ Points will be deducted for presentations over 10 minutes

DRESS CODE

- ❖ Similar to other non-athletic student competitions, such as Forensics and Mock Trial, students should dress in business attire or something similar (blazers, ties, business dresses, etc.)
- ❖ No jeans, sweats, t-shirts, sneakers, casual sandals