

O'Connor Group Case

Executive Summary

O'Connor Group, led by President Marcia O'Connor, is a "People 1st" human resources consulting firm that provides hiring support and customized HR solutions to businesses across the region. As a female-owned company grounded in creativity, collaboration, and growth, O'Connor Group takes pride in its mission: *"To empower organizations to grow, thrive, and achieve lasting success, one person, one solution, at a time."* The Company's culture is guided by four core values—Curiosity, Collaboration, Execution, and Integrity – principles so central that hiring and firing decisions are made based on them. When a difficult situation arose that put these values to the test, President O'Connor was asked to balance integrity and the well-being of her team with personal and professional convenience.

Background

O'Connor Group is a female-owned human resource services firm led by President and CEO Marcia O'Connor. The Company provides hiring support and customized HR solutions to local businesses, emphasizing a "People 1st" philosophy, which is captured in her motto: "do the right thing." This ethos is reflected in the collaborative company culture, which values creativity, growth, and ethical decision-making. O'Connor Group prioritizes work-life balance for its employees and bases hiring and firing decisions on four core values: curiosity, collaboration, execution, and integrity. Guided by the mission to "empower organizations to grow, thrive, and achieve lasting success, one person, one solution, at a time," the firm has built a reputation for putting people first while delivering high-quality, customized human resource solutions.

The challenge began when a CEO friend of Marcia O'Connor signed on as a client to O'Connor Group. Given their personal and professional connection, O'Connor accepted the opportunity in good faith. However, it quickly became evident that the primary client contact, an Interim COO, was toxic to the team environment—failing to meet expectations, disrupting collaboration, and even berating O'Connor Group's team members.

O'Connor faced a difficult decision: address the issue head-on and risk damaging a personal friendship and professional relationship or tolerate the client's behavior to preserve that connection.

True to her leadership values, O'Connor chose transparency and integrity. She reached out to her CEO friend to discuss the COO's behavior, but the conversation did not go well—the CEO did not appear to appreciate the feedback, instead appearing defensive and dismissive.

Faced with an assigned team from O'Connor Group that felt frustrated and demeaned balanced with a satisfied and lucrative client, O'Connor had to determine the next steps.

Case

How should the O'Connor Group proceed with the opportunity?