

# “that’s what she said”

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

## No Doom, No Gloom

November 04, 2011 by *Jaclyn West*

**Litigation Value: Sabre had better continue socking money away for a settlement with several female employees for their sexual harassment claims against Gabe. First poor Erin, and now “Warehouse Val” has to put up with Gabe’s creepy courtship. Robert may want to ship Gabe back to Tampa before he does any real damage. And Andy’s dance moves aren’t helping matters.**

Well, I’ll start with the cold open and just give myself a little pat on the back for predicting that Andy’s management style would be musical. Deciding that the office needed an end-of-the-day ritual, Andy instituted a new policy of singing “Closing Time” with his coworkers each day. Problem is, they don’t know the words, or just don’t care to sing along. Andy’s attempts to get people in the singing spirit with inappropriate dance moves . . . cringe-worthy, to say the least. Andy, I’ll be your lawyer here. If you’re going to try to turn your subordinates into a singing group, please don’t incorporate a towel into your dance routine. Thanks.

Okay, that little bit of business out of the way, what I really want to talk about is MOTIVATION. Since Andy took over, he’s been struggling to motivate the employees to pick up their game. Not surprising, since they never really gave Michael much effort either. But Andy’s got a new CEO to impress and he doesn’t have Michael’s tenure, so he has had to get a bit creative. We already saw him attempt to motivate the office into boosting sales by allowing them to tattoo anything they wanted under his “trou.” (It worked, and fortunately they took pity on the boss-man and gave him a little Nard Dog instead of the planned baby. Bullet dodged.)

This week, Robert California has tasked Andy with eliminating the mistakes the staff are apt to make. Andy, showing a Michael-esque inability to judge character, decided that “Number Two” Dwight is the man to motivate. Dwight installs an “Accountability Booster” – a.k.a. Doomsday Device — that will automatically email Robert California a recommendation that the branch be

closed, along with a bunch of other incriminating emails — at 5:00 p.m. if the staff makes five mistakes. This being Dunder Mifflin/Sabre, of course they make five mistakes — starting with Oscar’s brilliant idea to “test the system.” Chaos ensues while everyone attempts to reason with Doomsday Dwight. But Pam saves the day when she shows him some friendship. Crisis averted!

Laying aside the obvious stupidity of allowing Dwight to be in charge of “motivating” his colleagues, I’d like to talk about motivation a bit. It’s something that everyone struggles with from time to time, and the best managers are those who understand how to motivate and inspire their employees. Dwight chose negative motivation: making his coworkers “accountable” to one another by holding a punishment over their heads. I won’t pretend to be a motivation expert, but clearly it didn’t work with this group of employees. Everyone suffered, and they made the mistakes anyway.

We’ve also seen positive motivation used in the past. For example, when Sabre acquired Dunder Mifflin and word got around that there was no cap on commissions, sales skyrocketed. The incentive system certainly seemed to work on the sales team — and Andy’s tattoo of a few weeks back showed us that it worked on the administrative employees too. If Andy truly wants to motivate his workforce, he’ll learn from last night’s experience that sticks don’t work on this group of employees, but carrots do.

I also want to say a brief word about the B-storyline. We got to meet Darryl’s new warehouse staff, including pretty new employee Val — who struck the fancy of both Darryl and Gabe. As they competed for Val’s affections, Gabe came across as particularly creepy, inviting her on a date to the cemetery. (I can’t even imagine the dates poor Erin had to endure.) Fortunately, the competition was cut short by Val declaring that she has a policy of never dating coworkers. And if you live anywhere near the D.C. area, you may have heard me shouting for joy that Dunder Mifflin/Sabre has finally managed to hire someone sensible. I wonder how long it’ll last . . .