



REVIEW COMMITTEE

PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY
LABOR RELATIONS DEPARTMENT
MAIL CODE N2Z
P.O. BOX 770000
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94177
(415) 973-6725

JOHN MOFFAT, CHAIRMAN

- DECISION
- LETTER DECISION
- PRE-REVIEW REFERRAL

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CASE CLOSED FILED & LOGGED



INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF
ELECTRICAL WORKERS, AFL-CIO
LOCAL UNION 1245, I.B.E.W.
P.O. BOX 2547
VACAVILLE, CALIFORNIA 94696
(707) 452-2700

BOB CHOATE, SECRETARY

Pre-Review Committee No. 18235 Customer Services – Stockton

Margaret Franklin
Company Member
Local Investigating Committee

John Mendoza
Union Member
Local Investigating Committee

Grievance Issue:

This case concerns a Decision Making Leave (DML) issued to a Customer Service Representative for his inappropriate behavior towards a customer following an incident with the customer.

Facts of the Case:

While attempting to assist a customer with a bill inquiry, the Grievant determined that the account belonged to someone other than the female customer. At some point in their interaction, he told her he couldn't help her and sent her to the "red" phone in the lobby to contact a supervisor via the contact center. Witnesses reported that the customer was very upset, and when she sat down in the lobby, she proceeded to tear up pieces of paper and wad them up. She then returned to the grievant at the counter, threw the paper pieces at him and ran out of the office. Two other customers heard the grievant yell after her, telling her to "f___ off" and calling her a "mother f___ r". The Grievant admits that he said these things, and said that when she threw the paper at him he was so angry that he couldn't hold his anger. Grievant claims he had never used that kind of language before.

When interviewed later by Corporate Security, the customer claimed that the Grievant was very rude to her and embarrassed her in front of other customers. She claims he said, "What are you dumb or something, you don't get it?" The Grievant claims the customer is lying, and that she had used profanity against him saying, "Thanks for being so f___ing rude". No one else overheard their interaction at the counter.

After the customer left, the Grievant called out "Next", and the customer who was next in line stepped aside, not wanting to proceed to the counter. The third customer proceeded to the counter and reprimanded the grievant for his behavior.

At no time did Grievant push the panic button or contact a lead clerk or supervisor. The Grievant was aware that the procedure for when a customer requests to speak to a supervisor is to contact the lead clerk. When asked why he didn't follow the procedure, he replied that there was a line of customers waiting and he didn't want to slow it down.

Discussion

The Union maintained that the Grievant's response to the customer's hostile behavior is understandable, and that it was the customer who provoked the Grievant into an angry confrontation. Given this, Union opined that a DML is too severe.

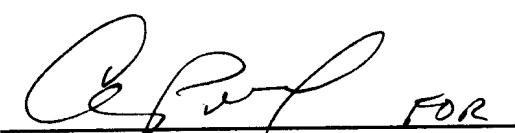
The Company stated that the provocation from the customer does not excuse the Grievant's inappropriate behavior. The standards for conduct and professionalism are very high for those who deal with the public and they are well communicated. Management has consistently taken serious disciplinary action or discharge when an employee negatively impacts a customer. When determining the action to take in this situation, management considered the grievant's long service as a mitigating factor to discharge.

The Committee agreed that the grievant had other options in dealing with this customer. Instead of sending the upset customer to the "red" phone to call the contact center, the Grievant should have contacted his supervisor or lead clerk. This action exacerbated an already heated situation. The Grievant also had the option of pushing the panic button, especially when the customer threw the paper at him. Customer Service Reps are specifically trained in dealing with irate customers just for this type of eventuality.

In addition to the negative interaction the Grievant had with this customer, his inappropriate response to the customer's hostilities also had a negative impact on other customers waiting in line for service. Two of them asked to speak to the supervisor after the incident and were upset and offended by what had taken place. It was not the customer's behavior that offended them it was the PG&E employee's behavior.

Decision

The Pre-Review Committee agreed that the DML is for just and sufficient cause. This case is closed.



John A. Moffat, Chairman
Review Committee

2-24-09

Date



Bob Choate, Secretary
Review Committee

2/27/09

Date