BUSINESS

PARALYSIS OR PRECISION

FACILITATION GUIDE

Overview

These caselets are narrative accounts designed to stimulate dialogue about the virtues that shape professional life. They differ importantly from the ethical case studies most faculty and students encounter in professional training. Rather than presenting a moral dilemma to be resolved, each caselet illustrates the presence—or absence—of a particular virtue as it operates in everyday practice. The goal is not to reach a verdict on what a character should have done, but to explore what a virtue looks like in action—and what may be at stake when it is absent.

Caselets are organized by virtue and professional context, but many will resonate beyond their primary category. A caselet about curiosity in a business setting may illuminate curiosity in medicine or law. Instructors are encouraged to use caselets flexibly and across disciplines.

General Facilitation Tips

- **Focus on virtue, not verdict.** Keep discussion centered on how the virtue appears (or is absent) in the caselet, not on whether the character made the right call. If the conversation drifts toward "what should they have done?", redirect gently.
- **Start with observation.** Open by asking what students noticed before asking what they think. Grounding early discussion in specific moments from the caselet prevents premature judgment.
- **Use questions as starting points, not a script.** Follow student energy. If a student raises a more generative question than the ones provided, pursue it.
- **Push back on easy agreement.** If the room converges too quickly, the caselet's complexity may not have been fully engaged. Invite students to complicate their own claims and consider opposing readings.
- **Invite connection to professional life.** The richest moments often come when students link the caselet to patterns they've observed or anticipated: "I've seen something like this when . . ."
- **Let silence work.** Resist the urge to fill every pause. Students often need a moment to arrive at their most substantive responses.
- **Close with reflection.** Reserve a few minutes to ask students what will stay with them — a question, an image, an unresolved tension. A sentence or two naming what they now understand about the virtue that they didn't before is a strong closing move.

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Discussion Questions

1. At what point does the search for more information become a liability rather than an asset? When is the obligation of "doing one's due diligence" met?
2. While these qualities of Emily's have led to her success, when does curiosity and research meet a point of diminishing returns? How could Emily have recognized when her curiosity was no longer adding value to the bottom line?
3. How does a leader discern when to rely on the team's intuition and experience versus when to delay action to gather more data?
4. How can a company encourage precision without encouraging paralysis in strategy?
5. The text states Emily's behavior was rooted in humility, but her actions — overruling her Lead Engineer and assuming the product wasn't ready — could be interpreted as arrogance. Does true humility mean seeking all the answers, or does it mean accepting that you must sometimes act without all the answers?

Facilitation of this Caselet

Start with what Emily gets right. Her concerns are not frivolous. Students should begin by taking her seriously rather than treating her caution as an obvious failure. The caselet is most instructive when the line between responsible diligence and counterproductive delay is genuinely hard to find, not when Emily is simply wrong from the start.

Take Sarah's position seriously without reducing her to a foil. Sarah is making a coherent argument about how products are actually improved, which is through real-world feedback rather than theorizing. The beta launch exists to surface the problems Emily is trying to solve in advance. Ask students whether there is something Emily's approach cannot learn that a launched product could and what that suggests about the limits of curiosity as a substitute for experience.

Explore the moment the meeting ends. The pivot on which the caselet turns is not the go/no-go meeting itself but what happens afterward. Emily reflects, digs deeper, and discovers new questions. Three weeks becomes two months becomes six. Ask students what is happening in that process. Is each new question Emily finds is a genuine discovery or a symptom of something else. The caselet suggests that curiosity can become self-reinforcing in ways that are difficult to interrupt from the inside.

Close with the organizational question. The final discussion question asks how a company can encourage precision without encouraging paralysis. This tends to generate practical, forward-looking conversation, which makes it a strong closing move after students have spent time with the more personal dimensions of Emily's situation. Ask students what structures, norms, or relationships would have had to be in place for Emily's curiosity to remain an asset rather than becoming a liability, and who in the organization bears responsibility for building those conditions.

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