

Case 1. Company Woman

Ravi and Amaia work as data analysts for a large tech company. Although the two met at work, they've since become close friends and frequently spend time together outside of the workplace. Recently their work trajectories have diverged: Amaia is quite good at her job and has moved up the corporate ladder quickly, while Ravi finds his work unsatisfying and tedious. In addition, it's become clear that their boss, Ed, clearly prefers Amaia. Ed consistently selects her for high prestige projects while leaving Ravi to do essential but menial work. Worst of all, as different people in the department have left the company, Ravi has had to pick up their work without getting a raise—he is currently the only one doing a job that used to be handled by three people. Both Amaia and Ravi find this to be unfair.

Given his dissatisfaction with the job, Ravi has decided to quit and go back to school. He has been accepted to a great program and will start in a few months. In the meantime, however, he has decided that if he's going to have a few more months at a job he hates, he's going to ask for a raise. As he reasons, he's in a good position to do so. On the one hand, if he doesn't get the raise, he doesn't have anything to lose since he already plans to leave—any tension between him and Ed that might arise from asking for more pay will only last a short time. On the other hand, if he does get the raise, the extra money he'll receive will help him greatly in starting his new life and will cost the company very little since they would only pay him at an increased rate for a short time. Besides, Ravi feels that the money he'd be receiving is money that he deserves for being made to do the work of others without getting a raise.

After reasoning in this way, Ravi tells Amaia of his plan and asks her not to tell Ed that he's going back to school. After all, if Ed knows that Ravi is planning on leaving the company, he won't feel compelled to give him a raise, and will immediately begin looking for a replacement—all of Ravi's leverage will be gone. Amaia agrees not to bring it up with Ed but tells Ravi that she feels uncomfortable lying for him or purposefully hiding information that would be relevant for Ed to make the best decision for the company as a whole; she will tell the truth if Ed asks her directly whether she knows anything that would help him make his decision.

A few days later Ravi puts his plan into action and asks Ed for a raise. The two don't come to an immediate agreement. It's obvious that Ed doesn't want to give Ravi the raise. Ed calls Amaia into his office and asks whether she has any pertinent information regarding Ravi's request for a raise. In response, Amaia tells Ed that she thinks Ravi deserves to make more money for the additional responsibilities that he has been given, but also that he is planning to go back to school in a few months. Consequently, Ravi doesn't get a raise and spends his remaining time at the company doing the same work at the same pay. Ravi and Amaia's friendship also suffers since Ravi feels betrayed and considers Amaia's commitment to telling the truth as a sign of her loyalty to the company over their friendship.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Has Ravi acted unethically? Why or why not?
2. Was Amaia right to tell Ed of Ravi's decision to go back to school? Why or why not?
3. In general terms, what does it mean to be loyal to someone or something? To what extent is loyalty morally valuable?