

# When the boss's daughter bends the rules

"Treat her just like all the other employees," Mr. Bigg, the company CEO, told you when Sam came on board. "I don't want her getting special treatment because she's my daughter."

Well, of course, it hasn't worked out that way. Not because you've been going easy on Sam, but because--well, she's young and hasn't quite mastered the rules and work habits of your office.

She's often a little late coming to work. Sometimes she leaves early for lunch or comes back late. Some days she goes to visit her father—without an appointment, of course—and forgets to tell you where she's gone. The rest of your team members have noticed this behavior as well, and they assume that—regardless of your intentions—Sam can get away with such infractions.

When you brought up these issues with Sam, she readily acknowledged that she needed to do better. "I'm just not used to working 9 to 5 yet," she said. "But I'll really try, I promise. After all, I don't want you telling Daddy on me. That would be really bad." But Sam hasn't done better yet, and other team members are starting to take their own liberties and bending the rules as well. What should you do?

Option A: Go ahead and tell Daddy on her—that's the only thing that will work.

Option B: Remind the whole team as a group of the importance of your work rules.

Option C: Sit down with Sam again to adjust her schedule to one that works for her.

## And the Answer Is ...

You can't do anything without Daddy's help.

Our panel of experts visibly shuddered at Sam's comment about "telling Daddy." "This could be a ghastly situation for the manager," said one panelist. "Any action you take is happening in the context of her relationship with her father, and you don't know who's trying to prove what to whom here." For that reason, the panel was firm that your first stop should be an appointment with Mr. Bigg (Option A). "I don't know if I'd think of it as 'telling Daddy on her,'" said another panelist. "You can couch it in terms of looking for friendly advice, from someone who, after all, has known Sam her whole life. And during that conversation, you can find out just how seriously Mr. Bigg takes his request to treat his daughter like everyone else."

Said another panelist, "Let's face it—you can't fire her, and you can't even discipline her without his OK. You may end up having to make accommodations for Sam (Option C). But if you do that without Mr. Bigg's knowing and agreeing to it, then you're cutting Sam slack that he may not want you to."

The panel agreed that reviewing the work rules and expectations with the whole team, including Sam (Option B), is a necessary step to keep other team members from slacking off as well. But they didn't think this in itself would be enough to change Sam's behavior.

"She simply has a different relationship with this company than you or anyone else," said one panelist. "You

have to deal with that directly."