SAMANTHA DOESN’T SAY NO – SHE’S LEAVING THE COMPANY, ISN’T SHE?

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CASE “A”

It was 2007 First of May, Labor Day. Samantha woke-up; her thoughts didn’t let her sleep. She got up without making any noise because she didn’t want to wake her husband up. She was exhausted and concerned about the hard day she would have, and she couldn’t avoid her thoughts about her professional life. She felt trapped. It was the 1st of May, a holiday, and she had to go to work. She would rather stay with her family and save a little time to do the homework for her Master’s program.

Slowly and sadly, with her heart tied up for declining a pleasant day with her daughter and husband, she took her breakfast alone. Samantha drunk her coffee slowly, thinking about her
professional life, her decisions and concerns. She looked at the table and found the invitation for the celebration of Mothers’ Day at her child’s school: it would be on Friday 11th during the morning. It was 5 AM and Samantha was thinking again about her life and career. She couldn’t refrain from crying.

She felt guilt, anger and sadness. It would be good to share her concerns with her husband. But she knew she was the only one to solve the dilemma. She was alone with her thoughts:

“What should I say to Patricia? I had already made up my mind, but how could I ignore Patricia’s request?” she pondered. “And now… should I take back my words on leaving the company?”

Samantha knew it would be a hard day. Patricia would be at work too and more than Samantha’s boss she was her friend.

**Samantha - The early years**

Samantha Vincent was born in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1972; she was the youngest daughter of a low middle-class family. Very soon she shared the responsibility of supporting the household. Her mother, who was used to work in a factory before getting married, quitted when the first child was born, because she wanted to take care of the family. Her father made his career as Production Supervisor Technician and in his entire life had only three jobs; his salary was enough to keep the family in quite modest patterns of living.

Her mother, who knew the difficulties her husband faced to provide comfort for their daughters, encouraged and helped Samantha to find an informal job as a Nursery Assistant in a small preschool in the neighborhood when she was only 12 years old. She worked there for almost one year and when she was thirteen, she quitted.
“I had to leave because I was working covertly. My father didn’t know I was working. He thought it was too early for me to work. (...) and was very severe, sort of military (...)” explained Samantha when someone asked why she quit.

When she turned thirteen, she convinced her father to let her work in a part time job; as a part of the deal, she promised him she would continue her studies and would go to school in the afternoon. At that time she got a job as a Credit Plan Auxiliary in a department store, where she worked for two years. During this period she was promoted to Assistant.

“I wanted this job because it was close to my school. At that time, I had not chosen a professional career yet. Later, when I got into High School, I decided to look for a job in a bank, because working in a bank would provide status, good wages and offer benefits. Everybody in my class began to look for jobs in the bank industry, and all of we started to apply to bank positions.”

Samantha applied for a job and began to work for a big Brazilian bank.

“I was fascinated by the charming site where I was going to work: Avenida Paulista. It was the most glamorous commercial neighborhood in São Paulo. The building was located on a charming corner and was very beautiful. I would have a desk, a telephone, a typing machine only for me! However, (...) the environment was hostile, there was neither cooperation nor teamwork, and the director of the area which I worked for was distant and cold with his employees.”

In May 1990, she changed her job again. She moved to a temporary job in a small company in real estate industry. In this job, her salary and benefits were under market average. In October of the same year, Samantha had the opportunity to change to a better job with a formal employment contract, better benefits and a career perspective. She worked for the General Bank of Commerce (Banco Geral do Comércio) from October 1990 to 1994, as a Support Coordinator.

Samantha recalls:
“I had a good salary, benefits and the office was close to my house; it took me only 20 minutes to go from my home to the bank.” She also pointed out: “I had always been a provider. (...) By the time I was twenty years old, I already had a car, and had refurbished and redecorated my parents’ house. I was very young and I had already bought a property by the beach (...) I wanted to offer comfort to my family. After all, they always gave me their support to work.”

During the period she worked for The General Bank of Commerce, she finished High School and start thinking about going to college. The Bank supported employees’ education, paying up to 80% of the University tuition. This was very good for Samantha, because she would like to go to University and didn’t have financial resources for that.

“At that time, I had not defined what I wanted to be. I thought a lot about Physical Education, Dentistry (...) but people told me Business Administration was a course in which I would get general knowledge. So, I chose Business Administration because, besides the company’s financial support, I believed that it would help me to obtain success in my career”, she explained.

The years at University

The organization’s financial support was decisive for Samantha. With her grades, her chances for approval in a public school were little; therefore, the only alternative was going to a private school. That’s why the bank’s supporting was so opportune. She chose a private university and was admitted to a Business Administration undergraduate course that runs at night.

Samantha was aware of her goals and could talk about them clearly:

“I did not go to College because I liked to study. I went because I believed that I had to have the college degree. That was the reason why I chose Business… At the beginning I did not like it.
Probably because it was too theoretical and, as I was used to work for a long time..., I did not like it! I did not think that it would help me with absolutely nothing, in the daily routine. I could not understand. (...) I could not find great value in my course. Then, I met my husband in the first year at college and he was one of my biggest motivations. We went to the same classes and that was motivating. (...) What really touched me was the marketing class because it showed me a vision of the whole, in a strategic and innovative manner. As students, we were supposed to present our papers in the class and that was really hard for me because I was very shy and trembled like a leaf. It was so difficult but I thought I had to do it, because it would give me some experience to get over my difficulties (...) I came from a very severe and conservative family, and those opportunities to expose myself could help me deal with the difficulties.”

During the period she went to college, Samantha did not have time to take part of any extra curricular activities, because she worked all day long and went to school at night.

**In search of a career**

In her last year at college, Samantha decided to leave the General Bank of Commerce because she realized the bank offered quite limited career opportunities. As her financial situation was stable, she thought it would be the perfect moment for making changes. She began to search for a new job and rented a place to live on her own.

“My father was quite severe, the military type, and I wanted to fly on my own. I had already rented a place, bought a refrigerator, an oven, everything. I had already furnished the place I rented. But my relationship with my mother did not allow me to fly, because we were very bonded. When she asked me to stay home, I agreed”.

A few months later she began to work for a steel plant, in the Human Resources area; she stayed there from 1995 to 1998. Her activities were related to legal and administrative procedures. She started as an intern, but in three months she received a job offer as a formal employee. During the period she stayed there, she was promoted a couple of times.
In 1997, the steel plant, which was a Brazilian national capital company, was bought by a German company. Many employees were fired during the acquisition process. Samantha decided to live the company and search for a new position.

In 1998 she moved again and worked as a trainee for the human resources area in a big retail company. Her activities were boring, as she described:

“There was a strong disconnection between my abilities and the job challenges in that company.”

Givaudan - The Promised Land

In 1998, a new job offer came up. The activities were similar, but the company was quite different. Samantha did not hesitate: she was not pleased with her job at the retail company and the opportunity to start something new left her more comfortable. She moved to a new company: Givaudan (Exhibit 1a).

Samantha remembered:

“At that time wage was not the main issue for me. I would prefer a more stimulating environment (...) a better organizational climate to work, consistent with my preferences and values at work.”

Givaudan was a global leading organization in the flavors and fragrance industry. Givaudan had a different culture and Samantha was enraptured by it. She told her family: “Not only was the fragrance industry charming, but also the organization itself.”
Givaudan offices were beside the factory and were distributed in rooms located in three floors. Some departments were next to the product testing rooms, which were environments similar to laundry rooms, hair salons, a supermarket store or, even, a fast-food store. The laundry rooms, with a dozen of laundry machines, would test new fragrances for soap powder or the qualities of a new fabric softener. The aromatics and perfume makers should work together with the managers of the creation area for fragrances, as well as with the sellers, assistants, directors and the general director of the company. They had to test new fragrances for shampoos and hair conditioners and it was common that several employees from different departments were invited, in the middle of their work hours, to have their hair washed and give their opinion to the researchers. Samantha took part in many of those tests.

She was very proud of her company and she said:

“The environment at Givaudan was nice, smelled good (...) people seemed happy... I could imagine my future in this company: I would take care of employees just to make them feel at home. I, personally, took care of the decoration of the offices. (...) I wanted Givaudan's employees to be feeling good and happy.”

Samantha’s desire for people’s happiness and satisfaction in the organization was a fact. Givaudan had an excellent organization climate, even being a company in a highly competitive market. Many times Givaudan was ranked as one of “The Great Places to Work” (Appendix 1b).

She received great evaluations from her superiors and the Human Resources Director got to know about her.

“I had a very positive feedback (...) that I had a different personnel management (...) People talked about me and how I had a different way, a different approach, that I knew how to communicate. And that feedback made me feel comfortable to knock on the director’s door and ask for an opportunity in the development and training area.”

Samantha was discovering, through the feedback, abilities that she had never been aware of. She decided to try to convince the Human Resources Director to choose her for an opportunity in the development and training area. He remembered that day:
“One day, Samantha came to me asking for a brief meeting. It was one of our good practices: leave doors open for the employees. On the day of the meeting, Samantha surprised me with her capacity and professionalism to convince me that she was the ideal candidate for the spot. I had no doubts! I bet on her talent. I had already known about her professional history of high-quality performance in the company.”

The experiences and challenges offered by the company allowed Samantha to improve her performance.

“I felt the necessity to extend a little more my public’s needs. Career orientation, for example. I took a coaching course; I bought a lot of books. (...) I felt the necessity of being an organizational psychologist to help my colleagues at Givaudan.. And Givaudan was a very open company: you didn’t have to wait for your manager to ask you to do something. You could bring the idea, you could talk about its importance and, if it was feasible, the company would invest in it. I hired consultants in HR and I learned from them.”

Patricia Giacomo, her boss and Human Resources manager, was surprised with her new employee:

“Samantha came to the D&T area with a great disposition for learning and contributing. She did that with an amazing professionalism! She did not wait for me to tell her what to do; she always came up with a well done and good quality project. She paid attention to details (…) she cared about people and the working environment, and her approach always was with affection and careful. She took the responsibility for the decoration of the building. My esteem for her grew and a strong relationship was built between us. (…) When she got married, I was even her Maid of Honor.”

From Development and Training Analyst she turned to a Internal Consultant for the Human Resources Dept. During her first year as a training analyst, Givaudan was ranked (for the first time)
among the 150 Best Places to Work, a research conducted by one of the most important Brazilian magazines: “Você S. A.” (Exhibit 1).

In 2002, Samantha started her new program: an executive course at Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie. She aimed to learn about the current tools in management and build a new network. In this same year she got pregnant of her daughter Ana Carolina. In March 2003, after giving birth and finishing her executive course, she decided to step back and slow down on her career. She wanted to dedicate more time to motherhood, her husband and her home. This decision was taken calmly, she was happy and satisfied at Givaudan, and the organization let her grow in her path.

A new challenge

In 2004, Patricia, her boss and close friend, called her for a chat. Patricia told her that she had a new job opportunity. Samantha listened to the news and did not hesitate to encourage Patricia to take it. That was when she heard, unexpectedly, from her boss and friend a proposal to join her in the new company, taking a coordination position in the HR area. Samantha remembered what she felt:

“Oh, I accept. Let’s go right now! – I answered. Those words shocked me and gave me some adrenaline… I thought: I loved Givaudan, no doubt about that. For the last seven years I had been there I was used to talk about the company with shining eyes. (…) Did I have any problems there? Yes, of course I did… but it was a company that was in a different pace. (…) Everything fitted perfectly. (…) At that time, the CEO and the Board of Directors were in perfect synchrony. And we could feel that (…) And I heard Patricia asking me:: ‘Are you coming with me?’ Again my thoughts: I’d be in charge of a team, coordinating a HR area; it was a step ahead in my career… This would help my career. The organizational scenario would see that I had the experience and would see me as a manager. The opportunity had come!”
It’s time to go

In August 2005, Samantha left Givaudan and started her new journey, a new challenge, which would take place at SAP. SAP was a global organization in the IT sector, leader in business collaborative solutions (Exhibit 2a). Differently from Givaudan, SAP occupied four floors in a large commercial building in São Paulo’s downtown. The company stood out for its competitiveness and stimulates its employees to direct the course of their careers (Exhibit 2b).

As soon as she arrived in the company and started her new activities as a manager, Samantha realized that what had been proposed to her was not actually happening. She found a quite operational and bureaucratic environment, with management problems where there was no integration between the processes and the working tools. She was spending most of her time filling spreadsheets without the opportunity to carry out what she most wanted: people management. The working hours were getting longer and longer. Samantha started to leave the company later and, by the time she got home she had to continue working. In order to finish her duties, Samantha had to take time from her family and dedicated very little time to her daughter.

“The whole situation was not what I wanted for my career (…) I began to reflect more about my characteristics and the conclusions were more and more hopeless. The challenges did not exist and I was not fulfilling my career anchor: lifestyle. My Psychological Type was ESFJ and all my duties were bureaucratic and impersonal. I was close to papers and far from my family and my colleagues. ”

Her self-knowledge pushed her to create room for different activities at SAP. When Samantha found some spare time, she developed management activities for the company. She got involved with her job in body and soul. She led some internal events in the company, a social responsibility project and she was always ready to assist her colleagues. Her performance during her first year at SAP led her to be elected a TOP Performer - an annual organizational award for high performance employees. Samantha had being highlighted by the Social Responsibility and Internal Communication projects she developed. Samantha was happy with this recognition.
“I was very recognized in the company”, she remembered.

She tried to bring and engage her family in her professional activities:

“I always had a very good relationship with my husband. I felt that he was proud of me. I had always involved my husband and my daughter in the projects I was taking care of. I took them to the daycare, because I was the in charge of the Social Responsibility Project. They were astonished. I saw in my husband’s eyes that he was proud of me. I could see his satisfaction with the goals I accomplished.”

The SAP time and the future of a career

At the end of 2006, Samantha applied for the graduate program Master in Business Administration at Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie. She would be able to combine the work at SAP and her studies at Mackenzie University. Her goal was to better understand the organization she worked for and, somehow, to help the processes development at SAP.

Samantha started her graduate course in February 2007. In the very first months of studying, she felt a great identification with the academic world. She commented about it: “My Masters degree was a dream that would come true!” However, the conciliation between her job and the graduate program was getting harder as time passed by. The company required many work hours and so did the MBA program. Samantha wanted to dedicate more time to study, but she did not feel comfortable leaving the office earlier than her peers.

At the beginning, the Master program was addressed to Samantha’s goal to better understand the problems she faced at SAP. But, as she got more and more engaged with the academic world, she realized that it would offer her quite challenging horizons. Also, she discovered that this could be the opportunity to get into a new profession that would offer her great personal satisfaction: the teaching
role. Besides the professional benefits, the dedication to this new career would allow her to conquer more: she would find more time for herself and her family.

She was very concerned about her family:

“I didn’t have time for my mother. I was used to call her everyday, after my father passed away. My God! She was skinny… She had never taken the responsibility of being a provider. (...) My dad did everything, he was the provider. (...)

And my daughter! One day my daughter’s teacher called me up to talk. She said I was always late and the last mother to pick up my daughter … She told me that my daughter mentioned that her mom and dad worked too much and that we didn’t have much time for her. This was difficult for me and for my husband, because we both needed to balance our personal and professional lives. (...) Once, my daughter said: I should tell my boss that I had a little girl and that I needed to take care of her... She also said that my boss would not argue with me! And poor child she had no idea that ‘Aunt’ Patrícia was my boss”.

Samantha spent 2 months before making her decision of leaving SAP. During this period, she felt very anxious and angry.

“I spent December and January telling my husband that I would not be dependent on him. I repeated this a thousand times. He finally came to me and asked me in a joking tone: ‘What have you been trying to convince yourself of? Did you have any trauma over it? (...) I spent my whole childhood and adolescence listening to my mother saying that I had to conquer my freedom, my independency. I used to help my parents and support my house before I was thirteen. My colleagues said I was so qualified! And I thought: ‘Oh My God!’ Was I getting crazy? How could I throw everything away?’

The end of a stage

In April 2007, Samantha decided to end that cycle. It was not an easy decision, but she made it.
“I tried to do my best, to balance both activities, but my performance in the graduate program was a mess. That made me very upset and frustrated. (...) These feelings made me reflect a lot about the whole situation... there were many doubts that haunted me about quitting, but by April, 2007, I made my decision.”

After Samantha had officially quitted, she was full of plans for the coming year.

Her boss and friend Patricia knew that Samantha had thought a lot before making the decision of quitting the job. Nevertheless, Patricia asked her to stay a little longer.

Samantha could not let Patricia down. So, they made an agreement: she would try a little more and they would talk in thirty days.

Samantha started to organize herself in order to perform both activities: her job at SAP and the Master program. She made her agenda and schedule, including the tasks in the company, time for studying and time for her daughter, husband and mother.

Almost thirty days had gone. And it was time to make the final decision.

Samantha would meet Patricia for a long work day. It could be an excellent opportunity to talk and Samantha knew that Patricia was anxious about this conversation.

**Was she leaving SAP?**

The sun was rising and that would be a wonderful holiday. Samantha put on her sunglasses, got into her car and went to work. Patricia would also be at SAP and they would work together. For sure they would talk about Samantha’s decision.
**Exhibit 1a**

**Givaudan**

As the leading company in the Flavours and Fragrances industry, Givaudan creates and manufactures unique and innovative taste and smell solutions. They are developed for global, regional and local food and beverage manufacturers as well as household, personal care and fine fragrance companies. Givaudan’s tailor made flavour and fragrance compounds are a differentiating key element for its customers’ successful consumer products. Givaudan, headquartered in Vernier, Switzerland holds a 25% market share in an industry which is overall valued at around CHF 17 billion. The company has been listed on the SWX Swiss stock exchange since its spin-off in June 2000. It is one of Switzerland’s 30 biggest listed companies in terms of market capitalisation. The company has a leading presence in all major markets and operates through a network of more than 40 subsidiaries in the mature and developing markets of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, North America, Latin America as well as Asia Pacific. This global presence as an industry leader is an important contributor to its success. Givaudan has the critical size and the supply chain to serve its customers seamlessly with innovative products in all regions of the world. Givaudan attracts some of the best talent in the industry, a key factor for delivering the cutting-edge creative and innovative products which end consumers demand. Givaudan’s business strategy has been consistent since its spin-off in 2000. It is focused on delivering long-term sustainable growth through innovation, speed of product development and relentless focus on its customers. Each year, the company re-invests around 10% of its sales into its research and development programme. The company operates a sustainable business model considered a key factor to achieve long-term value generation. This enables the company to proactively address possible business opportunities which emerge from different economic, environmental and social developments. Givaudan has been a consistent first mover and driver of the industry’s ongoing consolidation. The company itself is the result of 25 successful mergers and acquisitions over the last 212 years with its first origins dating back to 1796. What sets Givaudan apart from other companies in the industry is its focus and passion for building successful partnerships with its customers, helped by a deep understanding of their brands and their consumers. Givaudan is known for its ability to consistently deliver new tastes and scents that generate high levels of consumer acceptance and brand loyalty in diverse product categories. Givaudan’s vision is to be the essential source of sensory innovation for our customers, driven by our mutual passion for excellence.

**Headquarters** Vernier, Switzerland  
**Founded in** 1796  
**Traded on virt-x** Ticker symbol 1064593 (GIVN)  
**Sales** CHF 4,366 million in 2007 (in pro forma terms)  
**World market share** approximately 25%  
**Number of employees** approximately 8,770  
**Number of countries with subsidiaries** 46  
**Number of global creation centres** Flavour Creation Centres: 37  
**Selected list of creation centres** Argenteuil & Paris, France; Mumbai, India; Cincinnati, New York & Teaneck, US; Dübendorf, Switzerland; Naarden, Netherlands, Ashford, U.K, Shanghai, China; Sao Paolo, Brazil; Johannesburg, South Africa; and Singapore.  
**Number of production sites** 38  
**Number of sites** 87  
**Key fragrances sites** Shanghai, China; Teaneck, US; Argenteuil, France; Vernier, Switzerland; Ashford, U.K., Mumbai, India; Sao Paolo, Brazil; and Singapore.  
**Key flavours sites** Cincinnati, US; Dübendorf, Switzerland; Naarden, The Netherlands; Sao Paolo, Brazil; Shanghai, China; and Singapore.
### Exhibit 1b

**Givaudan Awards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award Description</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prêmio Nacional de Qualidade de Vida pela Associação Brasileira de Qualidade de Vida (ABQV) (National Award for Quality of Life)</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selo Empresa Cidadã pela Câmara Municipal de São Paulo (Condecorated as Citizen Organization)</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prêmios 100 Melhores Empresas para uma Mulher Trabalhar do Guia Exame -(Award: The 100 Best Places to Women Work)</td>
<td>2003 e 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prêmio Motiva de Responsabilidade Social (Award in Social Responsibility)</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prêmio Nacional de Qualidade de Vida - Ação Continuada pela Associação Brasileira de Qualidade de Vida (ABQV) -</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prêmio As 100 Melhores Empresas para Trabalhar na América Latina – Great Place to Work / Institute Brasil – (Award: The 100 Best Places do Work in Latin America)</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prêmio Benchmarking Ambiental Brasileiro</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prêmio - Boticário como Melhor Fornecedor em Responsabilidade Social</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movimento Natura Fornecedores</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exhibit 2a

SAP: Delivering IT-powered business innovation

As the world’s leading provider of business software*, SAP delivers products and services that help accelerate business innovation for our customers. We believe that doing so will unleash growth and create significant new value – for our customers, SAP, and ultimately, entire industries and the economy at large. Today, more than 47,800 customers in more than 120 countries run SAP applications – from distinct solutions addressing the needs of small businesses and midsize companies to suite offerings for global organizations.

From Walldorf to Wall Street: The SAP Success Story: Founded in 1972, SAP has a rich history of innovation and growth that has made us a true industry leader. SAP currently employs more than 51,200 people in more than 50 countries worldwide. SAP is listed on several exchanges, including the Frankfurt Stock Exchange and NYSE under the symbol “SAP.”

Knowledge, Experience, and Technology for Optimizing Business: We leverage our extensive experience to deliver a comprehensive range of solutions that empower every aspect of business operations. By using SAP solutions, organizations of all sizes – including small businesses and midsize companies – can reduce costs, improve performance, and gain the agility to respond to changing business needs. SAP also has developed the SAP NetWeaver technology platform which enables our customers to achieve more value from their IT investments. Our professionals are dedicated to providing the highest level of customer service and support.

Exhibit 2b

SAP Brazil Ltda – Indicators for each category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Favorable Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal Opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment with SAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes on the Job</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy &amp; Direction</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation &amp; Benefits</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taking</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources Management</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velocity &amp; Energy</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process &amp; Structures</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Focused</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Focused</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life and Work Balance</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CASE “B”

Samantha’s decision

Despite the fact that May 1st, 2007 was a holiday, Samantha went to work. She parked her car in SAP’s garage and went directly to Patricia’s office. She didn’t even take off her sunglasses. She hardly greeted her colleagues at work. It was the first time in years that she didn’t smile at her colleagues in the morning.

Still gasping, she entered Patricia’s office and said:

“I made my decision. I really want to leave SAP. I don’t identify myself with the company. I don’t share the same values, I’m not satisfied with my job; in sum: I’m not happy. I don’t have time for my graduate course: I was cut off the program and I want to return. My husband agrees with me, he has a good job and I can dedicate myself to the graduate course to pursue an academic career. Being a professor, I’ll have more spare time for my family.”

Although they were friends, they had a very difficult conversation. Patricia questioned Samantha in a censurable tone:

“Have you given it a good thought? Is this what you really want? Sam, I believe it’s a very stupid decision. Have you thought seriously? It hasn’t been 30 days”

Samantha looked firmly at Patricia and despite her perplexity, she understood that that comment was an immediate and not a well thought reaction to their professional separation. It had been nine years together. There was a strong feeling of friendship between them. It wouldn’t be easy to go separate ways. But Samantha didn’t hesitate and maintained her decision.

Samantha took a long breath, sat in front of Patricia and took the reigns of the conversation.
The conversation ended with an agreement that was satisfactory to both parties: Samantha would stay two more months until Patricia found someone to take her place.

**The next period: retake priorities**

The days passed as if nothing had happened between the two friends. The rhythm at work was intense. Samantha made an opening in her agenda to the celebration of Mothers’ Day at her daughter’s school with Patricia’s approval.

Patricia doubted that Samantha would maintain her decision. And this was noticed by Samantha:

“The following days after I said I’d really quit my job, each time Patricia met me, she smiled and nodded her head in a mixture of disbelief and censure to my decision. I didn’t want to have another difficult conversation so I kept in silence, waiting for the day to come.”

At the end of June, Samantha was, once more, accepted in the Masters Program at the same college. She’d begin in August. And this time, she wanted things to be different. In her interview to return to the course, Samantha said:

“At the beginning of the year, I failed the course due to the excess of absences. At that time, I had no personal and professional equilibrium. Now I realize that I had to make a choice – I chose the Program and not the company.”

Two months had passed and the period that Samantha had given to Patricia had ended. Patricia asked Samantha to stay one more month, because she hadn’t found the right person for Samantha’s job. Samantha, once again, attended Patricia’s request because the work volume was huge and she didn’t want to leave her friend abandoned.
Finally, on August 31, 2007, Samantha left SAP and despite her sadness, Patricia accepted her decision. Samantha felt happy and strong for the new professional challenges she would face: be a graduate student and in the future, realize another dream – being a career coach. Samantha also believed that, with an academic career, she’d have more time to dedicate herself to her family:

“The schedules and the work load of a professor are compatible with the amount of time I want to give to my family”, she thought.

Samantha had reinitiated her Masters Course. She was excited. She imagined a promising future. At the same time, she found herself very happy and having the chance to realize her dream immediately: have time for her daughter, for her husband and for her mother.

“The real and fundamental objective of leaving SAP wasn’t to attend the Masters Course as I had told people. My objective was to be a mom. When I left SAP, I got emotional with small things in life ... I realized how good it was to have time.”

After the three first months in the graduate course, Samantha didn’t have the good performance she expected. In the attempt to improve her grades, she put more effort in the course. Her main objective, by studying, wasn’t to become a professor, but to improve her intellectual life.

“The main reason to study was to have a differentiated education; not for the market, but for myself. I wanted to read and think better, I wanted to have more elaborated ideas; in short, I wanted to think for myself”.

She spent hours studying. One day she heard from her daughter:

“Mom, do you really have to study that much? Do you always have to carry around all those papers and books wherever we go?”
December arrived and Samantha was about to go on vacation from school. She had made her plans with her family: movie sessions, going to the pool, matinees at the theater, visits to the zoo, morning walks in the park and bicycle riding. But these were only plans...

On December 15 that year, Samantha was getting ready to go to school to turn in her papers for the term. Andrew Marin, her husband, had read her papers at her request. She imagined how proud he’d be of her performance. Samantha hurried to get dressed, slipped and fell down. She had seriously broken her leg. Andrew helped her promptly and took her to the hospital. The doctor’s diagnosis in the emergency room made Samantha cry: she’d have to go immediately to surgery and rest in the following three months.

“I cried not because of the pain or the surgery. It was because I wouldn’t be able to fulfill the activities programmed with my family.”

The surgery went fine and, as the days passed, Samantha realized that she could do what she had planned with her family, even with the motor limitations she had. Her forced rest enabled her to watch films with her family at home and to play with her daughter. For the first time in years she felt fulfilled and happy. She said repeatedly: “Now I feel I’m a mom, a wife and a daughter”. Time passed and Samantha took full advantage of the time spent with her family. Soon before classes began in 2008, Samantha confided to a friend:

“The time I spent recovering at home, gave me the opportunity for a deep trip inside me... I thought a lot, I recovered my self-esteem and I feel strong to finish my Masters. I learned that I do not have to wait for tomorrow to do what I want. I have to balance my day-to-day with what I have, need and want to do. Today I’m able to organize my day and dedicate myself to my family, my studies and relax... and feel happy, light, with the sensation of mission accomplished at the end of the day.”

Samantha intended to write her papers to get her Masters Degree. She also intended to do an international coaching course.
Samantha stood by herself

In March, 2008 Samantha was almost totally recovered. The final appointment with the surgeon had arrived and her discharge was certain. Samantha was ready for a new era. Her husband took her to the doctor, and on the way, she spoke excitedly about her plans. What priorities would Samantha attend now?