

# HEED THE WARNINGS

A story appearing in *The Bullish Thinking Guide for Managers* by Alden Cass, Brian F. Shaw and Sydney LeBlanc offers a lesson important for those who have leadership roles in Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home.

Kalle, a brokerage manager, was enthusiastic about mentoring employees. When a longtime friend asked Kalle to hire his son, Steve, whom Kalle had known for years, as a sales trainee, Kalle gladly said yes.

Steve was very personable and quickly made friends at the brokerage. Later on, however, a veteran employee told Kalle that Steve was creating problems – partying heavily, speaking cynically about the firm, and taunting co-workers. Kalle was surprised but raised these concerns with Steve. Steve denied them and asked that Kalle not reveal them to anyone else. Kalle decided to take Steve at his word, and you guessed it: Trouble followed within a few months.

Steve disrupted the office with his cynicism, borrowed money from his co-workers, harassed two colleagues who then sued the company, and used drugs heavily. He lost his job, and the firm paid a large settlement to end the suit.

The story does have a somewhat happy ending. After four years, Steve managed to pay back the money and leave drug use behind. He apologized to Kalle for his behavior.



Yet the question remains: Why did Kalle originally let Steve off the hook so easily? Kalle's generous nature and his long history with Steve were probably factors. He might also have been unwilling to expose his judgment in hiring Steve to the scrutiny of others.

But neither personal generosity nor self-protection was the essential mistake. Instead, Kalle's error was in making his call so precipitously rather than investigating further the concerns that first surfaced.

By being afraid of what he would find, Kalle ended up face to face with trouble. We should not ignore the warning signs.

– Beecher Hunter