

Ethics, CSR & Leadership

A personal investigation

Compiled by Laurent Ledoux

The ethics cases are adapted from Joseph Badaracco's "Defining moments". The leadership cases are adapted from Ronald Heifetz's "Leadership without easy answers"

The leadership questions are inspired by Mark Strom's "The Arts of the wise leader" & related "Guidebook" (unpublished)

In this document, you will find a set of questions about ethics, CSR, leadership and mainly about yourself. To reflect upon them, answer them and discuss your answers with others might help you to grow and take on a leadership role in your community or your organization.

The questions you are asked to answer are those that appear in italic and in a frame. Answer directly in the white space under them. Your answers may be short (a few sentences) or longer. There are not right or wrong answers. The only thing that matters is that you learn something about yourself by formulating your answers. So, your answers should be personal.

I'm fully aware that some questions, even their formulation and the words used to formulate them, will seem strange to you, but, believe me, if you answer them "seriously", you'll be happy to have done so at the end of it. What you will get out of it will be proportional to what you will put into it.

I wish you a great journey.

Laurent Ledoux
+32 478 62 12 20

Chapter 1 – CSR

1. CSR factors

According to you, what are the factors that can explain the rising importance of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) for organizations today?

2. CSR motivators

According to you, what does really “motivate” organizations to act in a “socially responsible” manner?

3. Share or Stakeholders

According to you, where does the primary responsibility of a manager lie: towards its shareholders or towards the stakeholders of the organization he manages?

4. Regulation

According to you, who should regulate the respect of CSR principles: the state or the organizations themselves (self-regulation)?

Chapter 2 – Leadership

5. Definition

According to you, what is leadership? What does it take to be a leader?

6. Barbara Parsons case

Please read the Barbara Parsons case in annex (end of this document).

What did Dr. Barbara Parsons (or did not do) and why? Reflect also on the question whether this is a case about leadership. Why or why not?

7. William Ruckelshaus case

Please read the William Ruckelshaus case in annex (end of this document).

What did Ruckelshaus (and did not do) and why? Reflect also on the question whether this is a case about leadership. Why or why not?

8. Commonalities & Differences

What are the relevant commonalities and differences related to leadership you can distinguish in these case studies?

9. Lessons

What are the general lessons about leadership you draw from reading these cases?

10. Links

What are the possible links you see between ethics, CSR and leadership?

Chapter 3 – ETHICS, WISDOM & LEADERSHIP

11. Your dilemma

Have you ever been confronted with an ethical dilemma at work? If so, describe it (you may disguise the name of the company or organization) briefly and explain:

- **why this was an ethical dilemma for you (and/or for your colleagues)?**
- **how you attempted to solve it?**
- **why you succeeded or did not succeed in solving it?**

12. Wisdom

What does wisdom mean for you?

13. Wisdom & decisions

We are taught that management decisions rely on knowledge (technical expertise, data, facts) and a rational approach. In your experience, can you describe how wisdom might add something more to the decision-making process?

14. Getting wise

How does one acquire wisdom according to you?

15. Your wise leaders

Strom writes “Contexts change, but wisdom is timeless. Wisdom is skill to live well.”

Who have you known whom you consider wise? Why do you think of them as wise? Try to write about someone you have known personally, whom you valued for the wisdom she/he was able to bring. Try to recall a time, an event when this was particularly significant.

Note: it does not matter if wisdom was not the whole story with this person. She/he shared the normal human foibles. She/he might be somebody whom others might never have thought of as leaders, or wise for that matter.

16. Wisdom & Leadership

At this stage, what value do you see in anchoring the leadership conversation in a consideration of wisdom? Do leaders need wisdom?

Chapter 4 – PATTERNS OF LIFE & LEADERSHIP

Module 4.1 – Reading the patterns of life

WISE LEADERS READ THE PATTERNS OF LIFE WELL AND APPLY THEM DISCERNINGLY WITH INTEGRITY AND CARE

17. Speaking patterns

For at least two weeks, write down your observations of human behaviors in your organization. Observe how relationships are made, shaped and broken, how people show interest or feign respect. Listen to the ways people speak. Observe what people do to find clarity when they are confused. What do you see? Are some patterns emerging?

18. Interaction flows

Consider your last 3 major “negotiations”, professionally or privately. What patterns can you recall about the flow of interactions? How did you gain your first sense it would come together, or fall apart? What stands out to you as common? Different? What did you learn? What could you improve?

19. Blame game

Strom writes: “Blame drives waste, inefficiency and plain stupidity.”

Consider the emails you sent or received, directly, in cc or bcc: How many are about covering backs instead of getting on with the work? How many are copied every day for self-protection and blame-shifting?

20. On behalf of

Strom writes: “Wise leaders act with integrity and care. They act ‘on behalf of’.”

Name your “On behalf of”, the people you serve, the people your team, department and/or organization serves, directly or indirectly. Do your plans and practices serve these people well?

Module 4.2 – Following
WISE LEADERS KNOW WHEN TO FOLLOW

21. Leading/following patterns

Strom writes: “Since we were children, we lead and we follow. To lead wisely is to pay attention to the very ordinary, natural and yet difficult phenomena of how a person comes to the fore in one context, and gets behind someone else in another.”

Look back over the past year: When did you (mostly) lead? When was this necessary? When would you have been better to follow? When did you (mostly) follow? When was this necessary? When would you have been better to lead?

22. Leadership & authority

A Position is a context for leading. It cannot make anyone a leader. Do not confuse a position with leadership.

Think of three people you know who (have or do) lead well without formal authority. What can they teach you?

Chapter 5 – PATTERNS OF WISE LEADERSHIP

Module 5.1 – Naming

WISE LEADERS ACHIEVE BREAKTHROUGH BY NAMING PROBLEMS DIFFERENTLY

23. Life shaping language

Strom writes: “We live and lead in language. Language shapes everything. Naming is integral to cultural change. We speak to know who we are. To mature requires naming ourselves more truly and strongly. We create meaning around ourselves and this meaning is formed in language. We speak to know who we are. We name ourselves. Naming is not about tags and definitions. Naming is about the ways we speak our identities, fears and hopes, first to ourselves, then to the world. Our lives are shaped by the names we give ourselves and our worlds. Our lives are also shaped by how we work with the names others gave and give us. Maturity is in part to move from living out the names others gave us, to living the names we know to be more truly and strongly who we are and who we wish to become. We cannot act purposefully without naming purposefully. The wise leader enables others to name themselves more truly and strongly and to live that naming with insight, intent and integrity.” By ‘language’, Strom means the way people speak, the names, words, expressions they use to talk about themselves, their team, their organization, their role and the role of others in the organization,...

Try to name the ‘language’ that has shaped your life. Assess the truth and strength of this language.

Follow up exercise

- Choose to let go language that is false and weak – it takes time.
- Choose to retain and adopt language that is strong and true – it takes time.
- Assess the impact in a month.

24. Power robbing language

Strom cites Fernando Flores, Minister of Finance in Chile at the time of Pinochet’s military coup: “We don’t realize how much we create reality through language. People talk about changing their thinking, but they have no idea what that is, let alone how to do it. The key is to stop producing interpretations that have no power.” Strom writes: “We interpret – and then we name – ourselves and our worlds. What we think about ourselves and life, how we interpret and name ourselves, has a way of coming to the surface. Powerless interpretations shrink our lives. Powerful interpretations enlarge us.”

Name the ‘language’ in your organization that might rob people of the power to think and to work better, that might induce people to make a powerless interpretation of themselves and their organization. Try to name stronger, truer language. How could you help to ensure that this stronger, truer language would start to be used in your organization?

Follow up exercise

- Choose a person or a group of people, and a regular interaction where you will begin to use this better language.
- Commit to this plan.
- Assess your impact in a month.
- Adjust your strategy accordingly.

25. Breakthrough Naming

Strom writes: "Systems do not exist, at least not in the same way as does a tree. Systems are ways of seeing, of thinking and of talking that we construct in our minds and conversations so we can deal in particular with complexity and purpose. The more complex the phenomena, the more important we find it is to see it, and name it, as a system. We draw a boundary around a bundle of experience and phenomena, we ascribe a purpose to it and name it the 'such-and-such' system. We name a bundle of reality as a system so we can view it as a whole. We name it as a system so we can put a boundary around it. Breakthroughs in science, technology, society or organizations often come 'simply' by drawing the boundaries in new places; seeing and naming some part of the world not as 'ABC system' but as 'XYZ system'. New ways of knowing or acting require new ways of naming."

Look back and try to remember how you or someone else achieved a breakthrough 'simply' by naming the context or 'problem' differently, how an important change in how you or someone thinks and works was triggered by describing your/her work or your/herself in a stronger and more fitting way?

WISE LEADERS NAME & SUSTAIN CORE CONVERSATIONS, GETTING THROUGH BREAKDOWNS TO ENABLE NEW MEANING

26. Core, missing conversation

Strom writes: “Humans construct meaning in conversation. Breakdowns in conversations enable new meaning, even if we can’t know what meaning will be created. Leaders must make conversation a core capability and activity. They must name and sustain the core (often missing) conversation.”

Think of professional discussions that covered significant ground. How would you describe the ‘path’ of the talking and listening? Straight? Twisting and turning? Do you recall new light being cast on the situation that opened a new way forward? How did this happen?

27. Breakdowns & Commitment

Think of a difficult professional or private discussion you had with someone (this discussion might have through one or more encounters, exchanges in meetings or via telephone calls, emails, letters,...) which led to a breakdown in your conversation. How did you stay committed to this person despite the breakdown? How did you stay committed to the conversation? Did you speak up your commitment to the person or the conversation itself? Did the conversation lead to a new question? Did that question help you name the breakdown as a shared challenge (the missing conversation)? Did you find a story that helped you both refocus on a shared goal/ambition?

28. Conversations audit

Audit the conversations in your team/department/organization. Are there vital conversations at the core of your processes for Vision casting? Strategy? Planning? Project design? Product design? Cultural change? If not, why not? What could you do to change that?

Follow up exercise

- Name one conversation you will reanimate
- Identify its core story by listening for the longing in the persons involved (note: it may be couched in cynicism)
- Commit to one relatively simple action to feed the conversation (note: subtle is often best)

**WISE LEADERS GROW INFLUENCE IN RELATIONSHIP
THROUGH COMMITMENT & CARE**

29. Influence

Strom writes: “Leadership is about influence. Commitment and meaning determine influence. Influence can be grown but is more often informal. Networks are crucial to influence.

Reflect: In general, to whom, to what kind of person do you pay attention? Why? Who has influenced you most in your life (professionally and/or privately)? Why and how?

30. Networks

What are the networks for change (in your team/department/organization or private life) in which you are active? Why? What do you do to sponsor, stimulate this network to achieve the desired change?

**WISE LEADERS HAVE THE COURAGE TO SPEAK INTO DARKNESS,
TO ENGAGE THE UNKNOWN ON BEHALF OF OTHERS**

31. Truth

Strom writes: Leadership engages the unknown. Uncertainty is unavoidable. Fear is likely. Leadership takes character: it is like speaking into darkness, into a void, on behalf of others.”

Assess your comfort to face the full truth about yourself. Discuss with a highly trusted friend or colleague how you might grow here.

32. Naming & Fear

Name a fear that holds you back. Devise a simple way to test the reality of your fear. Devise a mature method of addressing it.

33. Courageous conversations & Comfort

Review your past year’s behavior and performance in relation to the people and issues you like least. Assess your comfort with hard issues and conversations. Test your assessment with a highly trusted friend or colleague. Name where you need to grow. Devise a strategy for growth that includes frank reviews with your highly trusted friend or colleague.

Chapter 6 – ARTS OF THE WISE LEADERSHIP

Module 6.1 – Story

WISE LEADERS NURTURE CLARITY OF VISION AND IDEAS THROUGH THE ART OF STORY

The acts associated with the skilful reading of the patterns of life (naming, conversing, influencing & speaking into darkness) are the 'What' of wise leadership. The arts of the wise leader are the ways the acts can be performed. They are the 'How'.

Strom distinguishes 4 arts: the arts of story, of brilliance, of promise and of grace. Each art depends upon and enriches the others. We will start here with the art of story.

34. Stories & Vision

Strom writes: "Humans think and live in stories. Stories carry identity and culture. A vision is a story. A new story can change the culture. Value is not produced by hard work: it is produced by a story that creates new possibilities. Stories reveal the system."

If you head a team/department/organization, outline your vision as a story. Name three core statements. Assess how memorable and well-known your vision-story has become in your team/department/organization. If you don't head a team, outline the vision as a story of an organization that you know.

35. Organization revealing stories

Outline the basic plot of how people describe the history and purpose of your organization. Name three stories within that history that are told frequently. Assess the impact these stories continue to play on vision, strategy, culture and performance. Assess the impact of the story you tell and how you tell it.

WISE LEADERS NURTURE ELEGANCE AND SUBVERT CONFORMITY THROUGH THE ART OF BRILLIANCE

36. Your funeral

Strom writes: “Brilliance is accessed through story. Not the story a career expressed in five bullet points, but the story of the events and influences, the successes and failures that led someone to put his/her hand up.”

Imagine your funeral. What, do you think people will tell about you because of how you lived? What would you like them to tell?

37. Shining at and outside work

Strom writes: “Everyone can shine. A perceptive word can release brilliance.” Brilliance is vital to reputation. In organizations, brilliance looks like design. Brilliance is accessed via story

Scan your staff/colleagues. Name two members of staff who clearly shine outside work contexts. Try to identify glimpses of brilliance in their stories. Consider how this brilliance contributes to – or could contribute to – their professional lives. Assess how well they know and embrace this ‘analogy of brilliance’. Assess the degree to which you give them – or they are given – room to shine at work.

38. Your deserved reputation

Strom writes: “Brilliance, just like competence, is vital to reputation. We must grow to be competent in the things that every other member of the profession must master. But we also must grow in what we bring uniquely as individuals to the profession. Finally, we must grow in character, in integrity, or else competence and brilliance will count for little over the long term. Competence and brilliance combined with integrity gives a reputation of being outstanding.”

Audit your reputation. Assess the reputation of your team/department/organization respectively for competence, brilliance and integrity. Is this deserved? How can you grow in each of them? Which needs most attention?

39. Your brilliance & story

Try to outline your own life as a story and to name your brilliance: what sort of person are you becoming, long term, by the decisions you make? Assess whether trusted friends or relatives share your view on your story and brilliance.

Suggested process

- Pre-exercise arrangement. The process is far more insightful when shared with someone whose character and judgment you trust with your story. Agree to both do the exercise and to meet later.
- Get a big sheet of paper if possible.
- Identify significant moments that stand out in your life. They must be events, not a list of things you like. The reasons you pick them may vary. Perhaps they make you feel proud. Or happy. Or deeply reflective. Maybe you know others appreciated you. Perhaps they were sad and hard but you remember them with a sense of having learned and grown.
- Write a few words for each event. Try to capture them on the map in Chronological order. Don't force it. Don't judge what you think of and write. Let it flow.
- Look for themes that link even very different events (note the stars in the drawing above). Name the themes. Take time to revisit steps 3 and 4.
- Finish this sentence for each theme (for each 'star'): "I am one who ...". There will be more than one sentence to write. Edit it to make it as true and strong as possible.
- Try to identify and formulate the possible story linking these sentences.
- Revisit your story and how you named yourself. Edit each statement if necessary to feel as true and strong as possible.
- Meet with a trusted friend to share what you have seen. Walk at least 30 min. in one direction. Tell your story, the themes you discerned, and your sentences of naming. Then turn, swap roles, and walk back. At the end, allow further time for conversation.
- Revisit as soon as possible how you named yourself. Edit the map and sentences so they feel as true and strong as possible.
- A month later, reflect on your names and the experience. Name any impact they have had on you personally and professionally.
- All the while, remember the purpose of the exercise: You need to see your own story and brilliance in order to act well on behalf of others; the goal is to make yourself (and your friend) feel good. You are doing this on behalf of feeling your own weight as a person and a leader. You are doing it so that you might know how to bring your best to others. It is not about putting yourself in a box. The names you discern are not as important as the richness of internal dialogue in which you come to know yourself more truly and strongly. The names are always partial and temporary. Feel your weight in your story. Feel it in the successes. Feel it in the failures. Feel it as the language of success and failure melts away before a deeper sense of possibility and responsibility.

**WISE LEADERS NURTURE STRENGTH OF CHARACTER AND
STRONG INTERPRETATIONS OF A SITUATION/PROBLEM
THROUGH THE ART OF PROMISE**

40. Interpretations audit

Strom writes: “Promise is a word you can trust, a word that holds out hope. Promise subverts weak interpretation and nurtures strong interpretation of reading the world and acting in it. In order to do so, leaders must and can change the language game through the art of promise. Indeed, most people speak without intention; they simply say whatever comes to mind. We seldom realize however how much we create reality through language. If we say life is hard, it will be hard. We aren’t aware of the amount of self-deception that we collect in our personalities. The key is to stop producing interpretations which have no power. Typically, Immaturity leads to fears. Fears drive dishonesty. Dishonesty reinforces immaturity.

Audit interpretations around you:

- **Think of a person you know outside work of whom you can fairly say they limit their life. What language do you hear regularly? (Hint: “It’s not fair. I wish. You don’t know what it’s like. If only ...”)**
- **Consider the media and popular culture. What routine phrases suggest defeating views of life? (Hint: “There’s no leadership. It’s not my problem ...”)**
- **Consider again your work place and team/organization. What do you hear? Name the source and environment of the most troubling language and behavior in your team. Name the language and behavior. Name the alternatives you need to model. Identify a ‘place’ where you can begin to model these. What words and behavior must you ‘call’? What can you do to promise, commit to doing so at the next opportunity?**

WISE LEADERS NURTURE KINDNESS AND SUBVERT STATUS THROUGH THE ART OF GRACE

41. Grace & Kindness

Strom writes: “Grace is kindness and dignity without thought to rank or status. It restores heart but requires strength of character”.

Where and when have you seen kindness and thoughtfulness shift people, help a wrong to be righted, a hurt to be respected, a needless status distinction to be undone? Try to name simple kindnesses worth the risk.

42. Graceful leaders

Strom writes: “People do not first believe in a vision. People believe in a person. People will believe in a trustworthy leader with a credible story. People will believe in such a person who acts with dignity and kindness”. [...] Grace in no way softens the need to be strong. Leaders must assign accountabilities and hold people to them. The question is how we do this. Grace reframes strength. Grace is the antithesis of control. You do not need to control others to assert your own place in the world. You will know you are leading by grace when you let go off controlling others.”

Identify people to keep you honest, to keep you grounded. How do they approach status: their status, the status of others? Try to name how they lead by grace.

43. Room for others to shine

Strom writes: “Wise leaders create rooms for others to shine”.

Assess yourself in leading others

- ***Name where you have created room for others to shine.***
- ***Name someone you wish to encourage toward a truer and stronger naming of their own brilliance.***
- ***Name the ‘steps’ outlined above which speak most strongly of your own need to change in the context of helping others***
- ***Name the blockages in you***
- ***Name the acts of grace that could open new space in the relationship***

Chapter 7 – LEARNING TO LEAD

44. Failure

Strom writes: "Wise leaders acknowledge failure and learn from it."

A Zen proverb says: "The difference between a beginner and a master is that the master practices a lot more".

Describe your own leadership case, one in which you "failed", you did not achieve to help a person, a group, a team, a community or a business unit to adapt and thrive. Using as much as you can the concepts and approaches seen during the lecture and through filling in this personal investigation (as well as other sources), reflect upon why you failed and what you could have done to succeed. Draw the lessons from it and identify the actions you want to take to be more successful when another opportunity for you to lead will be offered to you.

45. Your views' evolution

How have your views evolved? What have you learned from filling in this questionnaire? About ethics, CSR, leadership, wisdom, their possible links and about yourself?

46. Main lessons

What are the 3 most important things you have learned from this course?

47. Missing questions

Are there questions that are missing in this personal investigation? Questions you would have liked to answer and that are not included? Suggestions to improve it, to formulate better some questions?

48. Monday Morning

Based on what you have learned, what do you want to do to commit yourself to these new insights and learnings? What do you promise yourself to do next Monday morning? Or even today, why wait? How will you "train", what kind of discipline will you follow in order to keep these insights & learnings alive?

Annex 1 : Leadership Case 1

Barbara Parsons & the Buchanans

Steve Buchanan was 42 years old when he noticed a pain in his back below the ribs on the right side. It was the fall of 1985, and Steve, a strong-minded carpenter, had done all right in the spiraling Boston housing market of those years. He and his wife, Connie, had married young, and their three children were already teenagers. Connie, who had been working in the home, had recently begun to contemplate what she might do now that the children were getting old enough to leave.

Steve called the doctor whom he had known for ten years since he had suffered and passed a kidney stone. To Dr. Barbara Parsons, Steve's current complaint sounded like a repeat of the same problem, except milder. Yet a routine study suggested something else, possibly even cancer of the stomach. Without further tests - a CT scan, endoscopies - and possibly surgery, she couldn't be sure.

Up until that moment, Steve Buchanan and his family had no cause for alarm. They assumed the pain was nothing serious. Yet the need for a CT scan might signal something different. When Dr. Parsons told Steve about the test, however, she buffered the news by saying that there was no reason to be alarmed, that they were just playing it safe and making sure. Parsons saw no need to generate distress before knowing all the facts. Steve's response was informative: he agreed to the test saying, "No sweat, Doc, I'm sure it will be O.K."

Dr. Parsons had only bad news. In fact, the tests did indicate cancer of the stomach. Major surgery would be needed to take out the stomach and to find out the extent to which the cancer had spread. That was the technical side. Yet what was Dr. Parsons to say, particularly after Steve's subtle "instruction" to have O.K. news to tell?

The situation was nothing new to Parsons. Only a few patients in her thirty years of practice had ever said, "Doc, I'm hoping for the best, but just tell me what I've got." Most people needed time to take in information that demanded a major reorientation of their lives. So she told Steve the bad news, but again in buffered form.

Parsons buffered the news in two ways. First, she simply withheld information about the kind of cancer, the odds of curing it, and the likelihood of its spread. Instead, she told Steve that he had a "form of stomach cancer that she hoped was localized to the stomach" and that surgery would be necessary to take it out. Steve didn't ask for details about the disease.

Parsons' second form of buffering was more subtle. By emphasizing all the actions that the medical team would be taking, Parsons conveyed a tone of activism and decision that relieved Steve from having to do more than agree at this point. She told him, "Sometimes we find tumor cells in lymph nodes and if that is the case, we will probably need to give you chemotherapy after surgery."

Steve's surgery revealed what his CT scan anticipated. Cancer had spread beyond his stomach, and not all of the cancer could be removed. Statistically comparing his condition with the outcome of other people having the same form and spread of cancer, Dr. Parsons thought that Steve had a thirty percent chance of living more than a year and a five percent chance of living five years.

After surgery, Parsons entered Steve's room looking for clues to Steve's readiness to listen. Connie was there, too. Dr. Parsons appeared serious but not somber. She started with a question, "Hello Connie, Hi Steve, how do you feel after the surgery?" Steve responded, "This can't be real. I'm not ready for this." Connie asked, "Tell us the good news, Dr. Parsons, Steve's going to be O.K, isn't he?"

Dr. Parsons responded in a hopeful way: "Surgery went well. We think we got it all out. But we found some tumor cells in some of your lymph nodes. They can be a problem, so we will need to give you some drugs to try to control the little that's left, and hopefully prevent any further spread." Steve responded not by pressing Parsons to elaborate but by saying, "Well that's pretty

close to what I expected. When will I be able to get out of the hospital and go home?" Connie smiled and remained silent, and the conversation focused on Steve's convalescence from surgery. Before leaving the room, Dr. Parsons asked if they had any questions, and they said they did not.

The rest of the week in the hospital Parsons acquainted herself more fully with Steve and Connie's world: their children, relatives, friends, and associates from work.

A month later in her office, after the oncologist gave Steve his first course of chemotherapy, Parsons raised the following question: "You know, there is always a possibility that the cancer can worsen in spite of the treatment. If that happens, people frequently don't survive. Have you two talked about that?" The response was a heavy silence. After a minute or so, Connie spoke up anxiously, "I've tried to put the worst out of my mind, but I haven't been able to do that completely." There was a pressured quality to her speech, "I had a dream the other night in which I was alone with our kids in a strange town; I was frightened. I haven't wanted to think about it." Parsons then looked to Steve: "How about you?" Steve responded quickly, "Yeah, I felt differently when I went back to work this week. I can't explain it."

Parsons said: "Steve, I really want you to get yourself covered at work. You see, I don't want to be concerned about scheduling treatments and having to worry about your job. It would be much better for me if you could hand off your major responsibilities to one of your associates so we can fight this thing." Steve squeezed Connie's hand tightly and smiled half-way.

Later on, when Steve and Connie asked her "what they should tell their children", Parsons did not respond directly, letting them understand they should make that up by themselves.

Fourteen months later, Steve died at home surrounded by his family. The last year had been meaningful. The three children spent precious time with their father; they were given the chance to talk about all sorts of things that would help them continue to grow up. Connie, having begun a training program, was gradually getting ready for a job outside the home. Perhaps more importantly, Steve and Connie had discussed many intimate questions that strengthened Connie's courage and desire to continue living as fully as she could.

What did Dr. Barbara Parsons (or did not do) and why? Reflect also on the question whether this is a case about leadership. Why or why not?

Leadership case 2

William Ruckelshaus & the Asarco Plant

On July 12, 1983, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), William Ruckelshaus, took unprecedented action in a case involving a copper plant owned by the Smelting and Refining Company (Asarco) near Tacoma. The Asarco plant was the only one in the nation to use copper ore with a high content of arsenic, and arsenic had been found to cause cancer. As authorized by the law, Ruckelshaus was expected to decide what to do about the plant; in particular, he had to determine what constituted an “ample margin of safety” in the plant’s operation to protect public health.

In the years since the Clean Air Law had been written, scientists were discovering that many hazardous wastes lacked a clear threshold of safety. Even a minuscule amount of “non-threshold chemicals” could produce adverse effects. As Ruckelshaus put it in his June 1983 address to the Academy of Sciences, “We must assume that life now takes place in a minefield of risks from hundreds, perhaps thousands, of substances. No more can we tell the public: You are home free with an adequate margin of safety.”

The Asarco plant had long been regarded as one of the major polluters in the country, but it had also provided employment to generations of people since its opening in 1890. By 1983, nearly one hundred years later, the plant employed about 600 workers in the town of Ruston. It contributed significantly to the local economy and provided revenue to auxiliary businesses in addition to paying significant amounts in state and local taxes. If Asarco were to close the plant, the state of Washington would have to pay substantial unemployment benefits. Closing the plant would be a devastating blow to a region where several major industries had not yet recovered from recession.

Yet all this did not fully convey the significance of Asarco Tacoma. A texture and a way of life had been woven around the Seventy-year-old Owen Gallagher, a former mayor of Ruston and an employee of Asarco for forty-three years spoke for many town residents when he told reporters: “I’ve worked in the plant all my life. So have my brothers, and so have my neighbors. We’re not sick. Our town was built around that plant. People came here looking for fire and smoke in the 1900’s to find work. Now the government’s complaining about that same toke and trying to take our children’s livelihood away.” The Asarco Company itself was well aware of the pollution problem. Under pressure from the regional air pollution authority, Asarco had spent a lot since 1970 in equipment and practices, such as converter hoods, to reduce emissions. Going further would require one of three options:

1. to develop a new technology to reduce emissions;
2. to ship in low arsenic ore at high cost;
3. to convert the entire plant to electric smelting at a high projected cost.

According to the company, any of these three options would force the closing of the plant. World copper prices had crashed between 1980 and 1982. At current prices it was losing money. The battle, like many environmental battles, was pitched between jobs and health. According to the EPA, installing the converter hoods as planned would reduce the risk of arsenic related cancer from four persons a year to one. Would this be acceptable? Did an “ample margin of safety” to protect public health require more? Should regulations demand zero emissions? Or was the livelihood generated by the plant worth the added risk of one case of cancer per year? Complicating these questions was the fact that the emissions, and thus the risks of cancer, were spread out over a twelve kilometer area that involved people even at a distance from the plant and its jobs.

Who should decide? By habit and statute, Ruckelshaus and the EPA were supposed to decide. The company and many of its workers looked to the EPA to confirm the acceptability of the actions they were about to take by spending more on converter hoods. They were using the best available technology to reduce emissions from their plant. They looked to the EPA to resist taking action that would push them economically over the brink. Yet many area residents, along with environmental activists, looked to the EPA to provide “an ample margin of safety,” and were quite willing to push the plant to the edge, if not over it, to reduce emissions significantly further.

Remarkably, Ruckelshaus, on July 12, 1983, refused publicly to decide on his own. On the contrary, he announced the EPA's intention to solicit actively the views and wishes of the people that would be most affected by the EPA ruling.

The same day, Ernesta Barnes, the EPA's regional administrator, spoke to the local press and announced that the usual public hearings would be preceded by "public workshops and other activities to inform you of the many technical issues involved."

Few people reacted positively. The press framed the issue starkly: "What cost a Life? EPA Asks Tacoma" one paper titled; "Smelter Workers Have Choice: Keep their Jobs or their Health" another wrote. A third newspaper ran an editorial that branded "Mr. Ruckelshaus as Caesar ... who would ask the amphitheater crowd to signal with thumbs up or down whether a defeated gladiator should live or die."

For Ruckelshaus to "impose such an impossible choice on Tacomans was ... inexcusable." The head of local union said: "It is up to the EPA to protect public health, not to ask the public what it is willing to sacrifice not to die from cancer." In the community's opinion as well, Ruckelshaus was neglecting his duties. Local citizens criticized: "We elected people to run our government; we don't expect them to turn around and ask us to run it for them."

Resistance to Ruckelshaus also ran high within the EPA itself. Never before had the agency pushed problems back into the laps of a community. They could not understand why they should organize the workshops and put out easily digestible information for the public.

As one might expect, the three public workshops held that August were controversial and packed with people, including a large number of smelter workers, union representatives, local citizen organizations, and environmental groups. The format was the same for all three, and all were covered by local and national television. After a formal presentation by the EPA staff, with graphs and charts to illustrate the technical facts regarding arsenic emission, dispersion, and the risk of illness, the audience was divided into smaller groups to facilitate individual responses. The EPA staff distributed several handouts with fact sheets, illustrations of how hooding helped control emissions. They then circulated among the groups to answer questions and record the comments of participants.

Many of the comments had little to do with verifiable facts. Hired by the EPA to observe, the dean of the School of Public Health at the Regional University remarked on how "the personal nature of the complaints and questions made a striking counterpoint to the presentations of meteorological models and health effect extrapolations." People asked whether or not they could eat food from their Vashon Island gardens, how much soil should they remove to make it safe, how would their pets be affected. One woman asked, "Will my child die of cancer?"

Several public groups asked the EPA to postpone the formal hearings, scheduled for late August, to allow them more time to prepare testimony. In the meantime, the public held more workshops on its own under the sponsorship of the city of Tacoma and the Steelworker's Union. Many more questions were raised, and not only questions about pollution and health, but about other options as well, like diversifying the local economy. Some comments bordered on the openly hostile, "I have seen studies which show that stress is the main source of cancer; the EPA is one main cause of stress".

One year later, in June 1984, although Ruckelshaus had not yet come to a decision, Asarco announced that it would close the Tacoma plant the following year. Precipitated primarily by depressed copper prices and shortages of high-arsenic copper ore, Asarco nevertheless spread the blame for the shutdown to federal, state, and local environmental agencies for requiring it to install costly converter hoods by the end of that year. Furthermore, Asarco claimed that the EPA would require a great deal more investment in the future, although this was not true, since Ruckelshaus had not yet made a final ruling. As one worker told reporters, "I'll tell you something, it's the EPA's fault!"

By the time the announcement came in 1984, a new goal had nevertheless been set: finding new jobs for the workers and attracting new industry to the region. When the plant closed in 1985, Tacoma and Ruston had begun the task of diversifying its economy.

What did Ruckelshaus (and did not do) and why? Reflect also on the question whether this is a case about leadership. Why or why not?