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Q10

Case study. You have done MBA from a reputed institution three years back but could not get campus placement due to COVID-19 generated recession. However, after a lot of persuasion and series of competitive tests including written and interview, you managed to get a job in a leading shoe company. You have aged parents who are dependent and staying with you. You also recently got married after getting this decent job. You were allotted the Inspection Section which is responsible for clearing the final product. In first one year, you learnt your job well and was appreciated for your performance by the management. The company is doing good business for last five years in domestic market and this year it is decided even to export to Europe and Gulf countries. However, one large consignment to Europe was rejected by their Inspecting Team due to certain poor quality and was sent back. The top management ordered that this consignment to be cleared for the domestic market. As a part of Inspecting Team, you observed the glaring poor quality and brought to the knowledge of the Team Commander. However, the top management advised all the members of the team to overlook these defects as the management cannot bear such a huge loss. Rest of the team members except you promptly signed and cleared the consignment for domestic market, overlooking glaring defects. You again brought to the knowledge of the Team Commander that such consignment, if cleared even for domestic market, will tarnish the image and reputation of the company and will be counter-productive in the long run. However, you were further advised by the top management that if you do not clear the consignment, the company will not hesitate to terminate your services citing certain innocuous reasons. (a) Under the given conditions, what are the options available to you as a member of the Inspecting Team? (b) Critically evaluate each of the options listed by you. (c) What option would you adopt and why? (d) What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by you? (e) What can be the consequences of overlooking the observations raised by the

Inspecting Team?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

Core demand of the question

- **MBA inspector in a shoe company:** a Europe-rejected export consignment is ordered to be cleared for the domestic market. Colleagues sign; management threatens termination. Dependent parents and a recent marriage
- (a) Options
- (b) Evaluate each
- (c) Adopt which and why
- (d) Dilemmas
- (e) Consequences of overlooking inspection observations

Revision summary

Management ordered a Europe-rejected shoe consignment onto the domestic market and threatened termination.

Signing, silent resignation, a fake dealer tip and a sample-free leak all fail.

The right option is a written dissent, refusal to sign, rework or destruction, and regulator notice if the lot is forced through.

Dilemmas are family livelihood versus buyer safety, not East versus West quality.

Overlooking defects brings injury, consumer fraud, liability, brand death and a habit of fake inspection.

Introduction

A large shoe consignment failed European inspection. Management wants the same defective lot sold at home. You are the one inspector who will not sign. Dumping rejected goods on Indian buyers is not a solution to the company's loss. Family dependence is not a reason to poison a foot.

Body

Stakeholders

- You, your dependent parents, and your spouse.
- Domestic consumers, including children, who will wear the shoes.
- The inspection team, the Team Commander, and top management.
- Workers whose jobs sit on the firm's reputation.
- European buyers and the regulator who already rejected the lot.
- Indian standards and consumer authorities.

(a) Options

- **Option 1:** Sign like the rest and clear the consignment for the domestic market.
- **Option 2:** Resign immediately without a written trail.
- **Option 3:** Quietly tell a dealer to reject the lot after it is cleared, while you sign.
- **Option 4:** Leak a half-story on social media without samples.

- **Option 5:** Refuse to sign, record defects in writing, escalate inside the company, and notify the competent consumer and standards authorities if the lot is still pushed; help the firm rework or destroy the lot; do not dump it.

(b) Evaluation

- **Option 1 merit:** salary continues; parents eat this month.
- **Option 1 demerit:** you certify a known defect for Indians that Europe would not wear. Rejected.
- **Option 2 merit:** personal distance.
- **Option 2 demerit:** the lot still ships with others' signatures; you have no record that you refused.
- **Option 3 merit:** none.
- **Option 3 demerit:** you sign a lie and hope a dealer saves the public; that is cowardice dressed as cunning.
- **Option 4 merit:** fear in the brand.
- **Option 4 demerit:** defamation, loss of samples as evidence, and possible harm to workers without a regulator's test.
- **Option 5 merit:** Indian consumers get the same safety Europe demanded; the company is forced to a lawful write-down or rework.
- **Option 5 demerit:** termination risk; that is why labour and whistle-blower channels exist, not why you should sign.

(c) Option to adopt

- Adopt Option 5.
- **Put the defects on a dated inspection note:** what Europe found, what you see, why the shoes are unsafe or unfit.
- Refuse to countersign the domestic clearance. Ask the Team Commander to record your dissent.
- **Offer a lawful business path:** repair, re-grade only if a standard allows a lower but still safe class, or destroy and claim insurance - not a two-tier human being, European and Indian.
- If management still moves the lot, send the note to the internal ethics officer and to the competent body - **Bureau of Indian Standards** where applicable, and consumer protection machinery under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.
- Do not take a bribe to sign, and do not demand one to stay silent.
- **Family:** use notice period, statutory dues, job search, and any lawful hardship fund. A termination threat "for innocuous reasons" is itself a fact to record for labour remedy.

(d) Ethical dilemmas

- Duty of care to unknown buyers versus duty to feed dependent parents.
- Loyalty to the employer who hired you after a COVID recession versus loyalty to the inspection role.
- Collegial pressure - everyone else signed - versus professional independence.
- Truth versus a termination dressed as a routine paper.
- Short-term loss for the company versus long-term brand and injury claims.
- There is no honest dilemma of "**India versus Europe**". The dilemma is whether an Indian body is cheaper to injure.

(e) Consequences of overlooking the observations

- **Physical harm:** poor soles, adhesives or finish can injure feet, especially of children and workers who walk far.
- **Consumer fraud:** selling a rejected export lot as a sound domestic product is a misrepresentation.
- **Legal:** product-liability and unfair-trade action under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**; possible standards offences; later criminal negligence if an injury is grave.
- **Reputational:** the next European or Gulf order dies when the domestic scandal is reported.
- **Organisational:** inspectors learn that signatures are theatre; the next defect will be larger.
- **Workers:** a short-term saved consignment can close the factory after a ban or a viral injury.
- **Personal:** the one who signed may be the named accused when the file is opened, while the manager claims "the team cleared it".
- **Public ethics:** a two-quality country, export-safe and home-unsafe, is a daily insult to **Article 14** equality in the marketplace.

Flow diagram

Europe-rejected lot -> Refuse domestic clearance
 Refuse domestic clearance -> Written defects
 Refuse domestic clearance -> Rework or destroy
 Refuse domestic clearance -> Consumer and standards notice
 Sign for home market -> Injury fraud and later liability

Conclusion

Europe's rejection is information, not an insult to be avenged on Indian buyers. Refuse the signature, write the defects, force rework or destruction, and call the consumer regulator if the truck still moves. Feed the family by lawful work, not by certifying a known bad shoe.

Facts & figures

Consumer Protection Act, 2019

The Union statute on unfair trade, product liability and consumer remedies; dumping a known defective lot is its core field.

Bureau of Indian Standards

Where footwear or materials fall under a quality regime, clearance against a failed test is a standards failure, not a marketing choice.

Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014

Aimed at public bodies; a private-sector inspector still uses internal audit, labour law and consumer authorities as the lawful doors.

Conflict of interest

Dependent parents, a new marriage and fear of COVID-era unemployment are private stakes that must not rewrite an inspection report.

Product liability

Once harm occurs, the firm and the signatories can be pursued; a manager's oral "overlook it" is a weak shield.

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