



CASE STUDY:

Get It Done

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Part I

It had been a remarkable year for Mark. Since joining Big National Bank's investment banking division almost two years ago, he'd worked on some extraordinary deals and had already established a strong track record for getting things done. It was a dream job. Still, the pace had felt a bit grueling lately. The latest deal he was working on had required what felt like nonstop work on his part for the last few weeks, and he was starting to feel the fatigue. But he was first to admit that his work was also thrilling. Mark felt that he'd been particularly lucky in his landing at BigNat, having fallen into the de facto role as Taylor Smith's go-to analyst.

Taylor was one of the most successful VPs in the group, and this past year was probably one of his best. Taylor had a very solid client base, and he was increasingly getting a reputation for his creativity and innovation in deal sourcing and structuring. Mark and Taylor had certainly been riding a wave together for the past twelve months. Mark had decided that he wanted to make a push for promotion to associate next year, and was hopeful that his close work under Taylor would help get him there. And so Mark was certainly rooting for Taylor's promotion to MD this year, too; with Taylor as a MD, Mark's prospects at the bank would definitely improve.

But things got a little hairy for Mark one Monday morning in early December. Taylor had recently been tasked with managing a new transaction for a very important client: the Hydrangea Group, a large corporate conglomerate. The bank had provided underwriting and advisory services to Hydrangea many times in the past, and the firm historically had been a demanding client. This time, Hydrangea's executives had made a strategic decision to expand into the shipping sector. They found what they believed to be an attractive target to realize this vision: a small but growing shipping and freight company based in a Latin American country. The deal, however, was contingent on closing by year-end because the seller insisted on receiving the proceeds in the current fiscal year for tax purposes. Hydrangea needed to finance the acquisition and therefore needed a loan from BigNat quickly.

Taylor's team had a good meeting with Hydrangea that morning to discuss the possibility of the new transaction. If the deal was structured right and



done quickly, it had the potential to be extremely lucrative for Hydrangea's investors, and that would win BigNat more of the company's business. Mark was excited. Taylor was sure to give him a piece of the credit, as usual. Mark would learn a lot on the deal, and it would shine brightly in his reviews. Everyone left that Monday morning meeting with a lot of enthusiasm and a feeling of urgency to get down to it.

But the transaction was going to be stressful. For one thing, there was the time pressure. Hydrangea had been very clear that the transaction had to happen before year-end. For another, Hydrangea wanted to use one of its foreign subsidiaries to purchase the new company (for tax and structuring reasons). This meant that, technically speaking, BigNat would be providing loan financing to a new legal entity (i.e., the Hydrangea subsidiary). But details about the entity were a little fuzzy to Mark after the meeting. This made Mark anxious about his ability to move things forward quickly, because onboarding a new client could be painful and time consuming.

Mark knew his role. Taylor was going to be focused exclusively on the credit memo, and getting that polished and through the risk and investment committees. It fell to Mark, as the analyst on the deal, to liaise with compliance to make sure the required "Know Your Client" documentation was ready to go, so that a deal could be cleared prior to its execution. Anticipating a bumpy (and possibly drawn out) process, Mark went straight to his desk after the meeting to call Jeff, the compliance VP with whom he normally worked. He walked Jeff through the information that he had, and Jeff told him that he could turn things around within ten days. "That's for you, Mark. I can't tell you how underwater we are. We're juggling a lot of issues that need compliance input, and don't have the staff."

When Mark hung up the phone, he went straight to Taylor's office to go over the timeline. As he was knocking, Mark overheard Taylor promising Luke at Hydrangea turnaround by end-of-week. Mark's stomach tightened; he knew Taylor would propose an aggressive timeline, but was surprised at how condensed this one felt. He also knew Taylor was not going to go back on his promise to the client. That was not how Taylor worked.

Mark felt stuck. He was worried about being the bearer of bad news. Shouldn't he be able to just get it done and not bother Taylor with this



compliance stuff, he thought to himself? Last year, in Mark's first review at the bank, the chief piece of feedback he'd received from Taylor was that if he wanted to be promoted to Associate in two years, he needed to be able to navigate through roadblocks better. This seemed like a prime opportunity to demonstrate that he could do that. Otherwise, Mark worried that he might permanently be pegged as someone who couldn't solve problems independently.

Discussion questions

- What does your gut tell you about what Mark should do?
- How is Taylor's leadership style and behavior influencing Mark's actions?
- Is it Mark's job to solve the problem with compliance?
- What is, in fact, the real nature of Mark's problem on Monday afternoon? How do you think he felt?
- Should compliance be more customer-focused?