

# Case Study 1: Losing Sight of Progress

This case study illustrates what happens when we lose focus on personal growth and development, and how it ties into The Craftsman's Code, particularly the principle: "The World Needs Me."



# Learning Targets

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1. Identify how personal habits and attitudes—like punctuality, humility, and coachability—affect success in the workplace, even when talent is present.
2. Reflect on the consequences of my actions and develop strategies to grow in professionalism and personal responsibility.



## Case Study #1 - Gary

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Think of a time when someone had the skills to succeed but struggled because of their attitude or choices. What happened?



## Case Study #1 - Gary

There was no doubt he was really smart when it came to anything mechanical. As a little kid, he always loved engines, learning to rebuild his go-cart motor before the age of 10. By the time he graduated from high school, he knew more about cars & trucks than almost anyone... and he knew it. It would have been a logical choice to become a mechanic, but he had bigger plans. His dream was not just to work on cars but to build engines and race them. Becoming a machinist was one more step towards realizing his dream.



## Case Study #1 - Gary



He came to work in the shop after finishing a one year machining program at a local tech school. Everyone saw he had talent. He asked great questions and picked things up really fast. There was no doubt this kid could be really great at his trade. He just needed more experience and time. But there were a few red flags that started to pop up. Rather than getting to work 5-10 minutes early to have plenty of time to get settled and ready for the day, he seemed to always barely walk in the door on time. Then it was a few minutes late. Pretty soon, it seemed like he was late more often than he was on time. His boss was not thrilled. The shop had been pretty informal in keeping track of employee's schedules. If someone was late, they were trusted to make up the time at the end of the day. But Gary was late so often, other workers were starting to grumble that Gary wasn't making up his time.





## Case Study #1 - Gary

Another red flag was Gary's attitude. Although he asked good questions, his questions started to go from, "How do you do so & so?" to "Why don't you do it my way instead?" Too often, he would spend too much time trying to figure out a new way to do a machining operation rather than listening to the journeyman that was teaching him. More grumbling from co-workers emerged that Gary was cocky and always insisted on doing things his way. Since he was still green and wet behind the ears (as the old timers would say), not surprisingly, Gary often didn't finish his work on time, and he scrapped too many parts. His boss wondered if this was because of his inexperience, his stubbornness in doing things his own way, or both.



## Case Study #1 - Gary

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Finally, one day, the boss had enough. Gary was pulled into the office to discuss his attendance and the quality of his work. Gary didn't believe he was late very often but when he was shown his attendance records, he was shocked. In the last 6 months, there wasn't one week that Gary showed up to work on time every day. Most weeks, he was late at least twice. The boss also explained the quality and timeliness of his work was becoming a factor, too. He really liked Gary but this couldn't continue. If things didn't turn around soon, he would be forced to let Gary go.



## Discussion Questions After Reading

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1. What are 5 negative and 5 positive character traits of Gary that contributed to the situation?
2. What are some possible outcomes for Gary?
3. What choices is he facing?
4. What would you do in this situation?





## The Rest Of The Story

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Over the time that Gary worked at Edgerton Gear, there were events that gave insight into his character. One time he borrowed a brand-new Corvette from a friend who had a Corvette dealership. For his fiancé's birthday, Gary wanted to impress her by taking her for a ride in a new Corvette. Going way too fast and not knowing the local road, they hit a sharp bend in the road and became airborne, barely missing two trees, but still totaling the car. Gary confided that he couldn't understand his friend's reaction when Gary told him he couldn't afford to pay for the car.

His friend became furious and said their friendship was over. Gary didn't understand this. His response to his friend was, "What's the big deal? Your insurance will cover it." Obviously, Gary didn't understand or care that the dealer could get in big trouble with their insurance company and the insurance rates were sure to skyrocket. After Gary had his meeting with the boss, he really turned things around. He became more punctual and seemed to be cooperative and humble in his work. However, this only lasted for a few months and Gary was back to his old ways. He always had an excuse for being late, but it got to the point where the boss finally had to let him go. Since Gary had a good relationship with the boss, he was given a two week notice so he would have time to find another job.



## The Rest Of The Story

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Over the next two weeks, Gary was phenomenal. He was energetic, hustled all day long, didn't scrap any parts, got along with his co-workers, and was simply a model employee. Towards the end of the two weeks, his boss came up to him and asked him what had changed. "Who are you, Gary? Since I gave you your termination notice, you've been the old Gary I remember. If you can keep this up, we'd be glad to have you stay on."

Gary responded that he didn't want to end things this way and knew he could do better. He said he challenged himself to be a model employee. If the job ended, at least he could go out proving he could do a better job. He also was thankful for the second chance and gladly decided to stay.

Once again, it didn't last long. Within six months, Gary was back to his old bad habits. When his boss approached for the third time, he and Gary mutually agreed it was time for Gary to move on. He took a job in another machine shop for less pay.

A year later, an employee of Edgerton Gear was talking to one of Gary's new co-workers and complained how arrogant Gary was. He always had to do things his way and wasn't very well liked. Shortly after, Gary admitted to a friend that he really blew it at Edgerton Gear as it was the best job he ever had. Since then, Gary finally did start his own racing engine shop and was supposedly making a go of it.



## Discussion Questions After Hearing the Rest of the Story

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- What do you think Gary learned from this experience?
- Do you think Gary will ultimately be successful? Why or why not?
- Why does this connect to “the world needs me” from the craftsman’s code?



A grayscale photograph of two young women in a science laboratory. They are both focused on using microscopes on a lab bench. The woman on the left is looking through the eyepiece, while the woman on the right is adjusting the stage. A third person's arm is visible on the right. The background shows lab equipment and a window. The text "Thank You" is overlaid in the center.

**Thank  
You**