

Big Opportunities, a New Car, and the Headache that Wouldn't Go Away

John Anderson—Summer Intern

Wednesday, August 3rd, 8:57 a.m.

“I can't believe how well everything worked out! I have to be the luckiest person in the world,” I think as I walk into towards the giant, rectangular building, with the massive “SC, Inc.” sign in front.

Thousands of college students applied for this internship and I got it. I'm sure it helped that my Uncle Peyton is a good friend of Dale Stevens, the Senior VP for Product Design, but I still had to work hard all year and keep up my grades. This is one of the most prestigious chemical engineering internships in the whole country. Serial Cereals, Inc. is the biggest manufacturer of corn-based cereals in the country and an internship here practically guarantees a good job after graduation. Not to mention that Serial Cereals is known for being a great place to work: the hours are reasonable, the pay for interns is actually decent, and, because the company wants employees to have fun together, they routinely sponsor social events and trips to concerts and ball games. Plus, they give out big bonuses at the end of the summer. It's their way of rewarding a job well done and encouraging loyalty to the company, so interns will come back for the next summer and consider working for SC after college.

Well, they don't have to encourage loyalty in me. I'm already hooked. Ever since I was little, Colonel Crispie's Crunchies has been my favorite cereal. When I was eight, I actually went through a phase when I refused to eat anything else. Now, I get to work for the makers of Colonel Crispie's and I get all the free cereal that I want! Also, I have the coolest summer job. SC is in the process of designing a new version of Colonel Crispie's (Colonel Crispie's Colorblast Crunchies) that turns different colors based on the temperature of the milk it's used with. My job is to help with the creation of the product. One of my job responsibilities is testing the new cereal. Because Colorblast Crunchies is the first food product containing Colortempcon (a temperature dependant food coloring soon to be patented by SC, Inc.), the company wants to involve a lot of people in the testing phase and all of the interns are being used for the study. So I'm actually getting paid to eat my favorite cereal!

Life is good and things seem to only be getting better. We have finished the design phase of the project. If everything goes well, CC's Colorblast Crunchies will be on the market by the end of this calendar year. The formula is pretty much settled, the box has been designed, and the ad department is busy making plans for the product launch. In just a few months, ads for Colorblast Crunchies will be everywhere. When I turn on the TV, I'll see commercials for a product that I helped create. By then, I'll also be the proud owner of the car of my dreams! I have been saving up for a while and the end-of-summer bonus will give me enough cash to make it mine. I can hardly wait!

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The last two months working here at SC have been great. And all of the hard work is already behind me. Because we got done the Colorblast product design ahead of schedule, my only job for the rest of the summer is being part of the testing group for Colorblast Crunchies. Could things be any easier?

Tuesday, August 9th, 6:47 p.m.

I can't wait to pick Elisabeth up in my new car. She'll be so impressed. In all the time that we've been dating, I have had to borrow my mom and dad's junky old station wagon. Now, we'll be riding in style in my new car. Dad didn't mind fronting me the money for it. I'll be getting a nice, big bonus from SC later this week anyway, so I'll be able to pay him back right away. Dad could have made me wait, but he agreed that I was getting a great deal and that the car might be sold if I waited for the bonus. Plus, I wanted to take Elisabeth in style to the big SC end-of-summer party.

The bonus is pretty much a guarantee at this point anyway. Only a few more days eating Colorblast Crunchies and my obligations to SC are over—until next summer, of course. My boss, Ana Felton, has told me that there will be a position at SC waiting for me after next school year. I'd be crazy not to take it.

By the time Elisabeth and I arrive at the party, I am feeling on top of the world. My mind is practically overflowing with thoughts of my good fortune and bright future. Almost everything in my life is perfect. If I could get rid of this nagging headache that I've had for the last couple of days, I would be all set.

Halfway through the party, I start to feel sick. My headache has become oppressive and I am starting to wonder if I should go home. Elisabeth can tell I'm not feeling well and asks me what's wrong. So I tell her how bad my allergies have been for the last few days and that I have had the worst headache.

"Yeah, I know what you mean," says Liam, another intern at SC, who overhears our conversation, "This summer has been a killer. I've had a headache for the last few days, too. Actually Teresa, that intern from State U., was feeling so bad that she had to leave work today. She couldn't even come tonight."

"That doesn't make any sense," Elisabeth says. "It just rained yesterday. That should have helped your allergies. Could it be something else?"

Now that I have the chance to think about it, several people on our project team have been feeling sick lately. I know it's not the flu because the other interns and the workers who aren't on our team are feeling fine. What could it be?

And then it hits me. All of us started feeling sick a couple of days after we began testing Colorblast Crunchies. Could there be something wrong with the cereal? Is it only because

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we've been eating the stuff practically non-stop for a week? Could there be worse side effects that we don't know about yet? Do I need to report my suspicions? If so, whom should I tell?

Thoughts race through my mind and my headache begins to get worse.

Just then, Uncle Peyton's friend, Sr. VP Dale Stevens, comes up to me. "John, this is a party and you're supposed to be having fun. You look miserable, kid. What do you have to be stressed about? The hard work is behind you. Just three more days of work and a few more bowls of Colorblast Crunchies and that big bonus will be yours. I was just telling Peyton how happy I am that you joined our team. Your work on Colortempecon and the whole Colorblast Crunchies project has been outstanding. We're all hoping that you choose to stay on as part of the Serial Cereals team. By the way, son, that's a great new car I saw you driving tonight. I've always wanted a classic like that. You sure are living the life! It all makes me wish I was young again!"

Case Study Questions:

- 1) What is John's main dilemma?
- 2) What factors will make it difficult for John to expose the potential problems associated with Colortempecon and Colorblast Crunchies?
- 3) What is John risking if he makes his concerns known?
- 4) What problems might arise if he does not?
- 5) Is John's dilemma an ethical dilemma or not?
- 6) What is unethical about the way SC has been testing their products?
- 7) What are some ethical issues surrounding SC's hiring and employment practices?
- 8) What values are involved in this case?

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