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61. A director of Beta Company suggests that Beta can improve its competitive position by hiring a significant number of former Alpha Company employees who have recently retired or been laid off. The directors reasoning is that because Alpha manufactures some products similar to Betas, former Alpha employees would be experienced and need little training, could provide valuable information about Alphas successful methods, and would be particularly motivated to compete against Alpha. The directors argument is problematic in several respects. First of all, the argument presupposes that Alphas methods are successful. This is not necessarily the case. To the contrary, the fact that Alpha has laid off 15 percent of its employees in every division and at every level suggests that Alphas methods may have been unsuccessful and that downsizing was necessary for the company to minimize financial losses. Secondly, the director assumes that the former Alpha employees hired by Beta will be well-trained and valuable. During a typical lay-off, however, the best and most experienced employees are typically the last to be laid off. By following the directors advice, Beta would probably be hiring Alphas least efficient and least experienced employees that is, those who would be least valuable to Beta. Thirdly, the author assumes that Alpha and Beta are sufficiently similar so that former Alpha employees could provide special value for Beta. However, we are

informed only that Beta manufactures "some products similar to Alphas." It is possible that former Alpha employees have experience with only a small segment of Betas product line, and thus have little inside information of any value to Beta. Finally, the claim that former Alpha employees would be motivated to compete against Alpha is partially unwarranted. While many of those who were laid off may be so motivated, those who retired early from Alpha probably departed on good terms with Alpha, and would in any event be unmotivated to reenter the work force. In conclusion, the argument fails to provide key facts needed to assess it. To better evaluate the directors suggestion, we would need more information about why Alpha reduced its work force, what type of workers left Alpha and under what circumstances, and how similar Alphas range of products is to Betas.

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