***Bus. R124 Case Study #3***

***Differing Perceptions at Clarkston Industries (Individual Attitudes and Behaviors)***

Susan Harrington continued to drum her fingers on her desk. She had a real problem and wasn’t sure what to do next. She had a lot of confidence in Jack Reed, but she suspected she was about the last person in the office who did. Perhaps if she ran through the entire story again in her mind she would see the solution.

Susan had been distribution manager for Clarkston Industries for almost twenty years. An early brush with the law and a short stay in prison had made her realize the importance of honesty and hard work. Henry Clarkston had given her a chance despite her record, and Susan had made the most of it. She now was one of the most respected managers in the company. Few people knew her background.

Susan had hired Jack Reed fresh out of prison six months ago. Susan understood how Jack felt when Jack tried to explain his past and asked for another chance. Susan decided to give him that chance just as Henry Clarkston had given her one. Jack eagerly accepted a job on the loading docks and could soon load a truck as fast as anyone in the crew.

Things had gone well at first. Everyone seemed to like Jack, and he made several new friends. Susan had been vaguely disturbed about two months ago, however, when another dock worker reported his wallet missing. She confronted Jack about this and was reassured when Jack understood her concern and earnestly but calmly asserted his innocence. Susan was especially relieved when the wallet was found a few days later.

The events of last week, however, had caused serious trouble. First, a new personnel clerk had come across records about Jack’s past while updating employee files. Assuming that the information was common knowledge, the clerk had mentioned to several employees what a good thing it was to give ex-convicts like Jack a chance. The next day, someone in bookkeeping discovered some money missing from petty cash. Another worker claimed to have seen Jack in the area around the office strongbox, which was open during working hours, earlier that same day.

Most people assumed Jack was the thief. Even the worker whose wallet had been misplaced suggested that perhaps Jack had indeed stolen it but had returned it when questioned. Several employees had approached Susan and requested that Jack be fired. Meanwhile, when Susan had discussed the problem with Jack, Jack had been defensive and sullen and said little about the petty-cash situation other than to deny stealing the money.

To her dismay, Susan found that rethinking the story did little to solve his problem. Should she fire Jack? The evidence, of course, was purely circumstantial, yet everybody else seemed to see things quite clearly. Susan feared that if she did not fire Jack, she would lose everyone’s trust and that some people might even begin to question her own motives.

**Case Questions**

1. Explain the events in this case in terms of perception and attitudes. Does personality play a role?
2. What should Susan do? Should she fire Jack or give him another chance?