

case 3-951-926
April 21, 2022

Andrew Hoffman

Polarizing Government Work: McKinsey & Co. and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

It was a bright morning in the summer of 2018 as Lucy Buckleyⁱ strolled past the White House on her daily commute. She often took a long look at the residence and marveled at how lucky she was to consider the president of the United States just another neighbor, given that she lived only a few blocks away. But this particular morning, Buckley did not take her typical look at the White House. Instead, she stared at her feet as she walked, her mind preoccupied with a potentially career-altering decision she would soon have to make.

A well-respected partner in the Public and Social Sector practice at the consulting firm McKinsey & Co., Buckley led the company's client service for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The ICE account had been lucrative for the firm, with over 200 practitioners assigned to full-time projects for the agency. Typical projects lasted six to twelve months and focused on topics such as creating a strategy for using new technology in the agency, conducting process improvements, supporting the execution of presidential priorities, or creating new strategies around hiring and recruitment for the agency's workforce.

Prior to President Donald Trump's election, ICE was rarely mentioned in regular news cycles for most Americans. But Trump had made halting illegal immigration a main point of his election campaign, and after his inauguration he quickly issued executive orders focused on expanding ICE, suspending refugee admissions, and barring entry into the United States from multiple Muslim-majority countries. As a result of these unprecedented actions and others, ICE was experiencing intense scrutiny from news media and the American public around the agency's treatment of immigrants and any potential human rights abuses.

Earlier that week, Buckley had been notified of an opportunity to extend McKinsey's contract with ICE in order to ensure efficiency and organization in the face of the president's immigration agenda. As a

ⁱ Lucy Buckley is a fictional character.

Published by WDI Publishing, a division of the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan.

© 2022 George Bardenheier, Benjamin Docter, Mari Mankey, Marissa Uchimura, Amanda Wheelock, and Bailey White. This case was written by University of Michigan graduate students George Bardenheier, Benjamin Docter, Mari Mankey, Marissa Uchimura, Amanda Wheelock, and Bailey White, under the supervision of Andrew Hoffman, Holcim (US) Professor of Sustainable Enterprise, a position that holds joint appointments at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business and School for Environment and Sustainability. The case was prepared as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a situation. The case should not be considered criticism or endorsement and should not be used as a source of primary data. The opening situation and protagonist in the case are fictional in order to provide a more robust student learning experience. This case was prepared from public sources.