

Ethics

Ethics

Ethics are the rules of right or wrong, good and bad. They form a system of behaviour and they can apply to an individual, a company, or a society. Ethics form the basics for:

- the kind of person you are
- the organization you represent
- the society you are a part of
- feeling guilty when you do something wrong
- how you treat other people

Examples

- rules of right and wrong behaviour
- codes of conduct like the Ten Commandments
- good and bad actions
- ways of being a good person; what good people do
- goals of someone who is virtuous
- what you do to create a good character
- the study of right and wrong
- the basis for praise and blame

Business Ethics

Business Ethics refers to rules of right and wrong but with a narrower focus, providing the standards for proper conduct by employers and employees in a business or profession.

There are many ethical issues that are of concern to the business world. A Conference Board of Canada survey of three hundred (300) companies, showed this rank-ordered result:

- Employee conflicts of interest (*Involvement in a project that is in competition with the employee's company or in a project that give an employee a competitive advantage due to his or her position.*)
- Inappropriate gifts to corporate personnel (*Gifts given to suppliers or other people who have been granted or hope to be granted contracts and other money-making favours.*)
- Sexual harassment (*Unwelcome sexual advances made by a co-worker or a person in a position of authority.*)
- Unauthorized payments (*Payments made to suppliers or others to reward or ensure favours.*)
- Affirmative action (*Employment and pay equity programs.*)
- Employee privacy (*Privacy of employee's personal lives if it does not affect their workplace behaviour.*)
- Environmental issues (*Such as pollution, proper storage of hazardous materials, packaging, and waste disposal.*)
- Employee health screenings (*Such as testing employees for viruses or use of alcohol or illegal substances.*)
- Conflicts between company ethics and foreign business practices (*Such as a difference in the environmental stance of a company and the environmental laws of the country it is located in.*)
- Security of company records (*Confidentiality of company financial records as well as business plans and production processes.*)
- Workplace safety (*The responsibility of employers and employees to ensure safe work practices.*)
- Advertising content (*Promotional material that honestly reflects a product or service and does not demonstrate prejudice or bias.*)
- Product safety standards (*Such as sample testing, written product standards, and required labelling on products.*)

ETHICS SCENARIOS

1. You are working at a bakery. At the end of each shift, employees are invited to take home any product that is more than eight hours old. You notice that some of your co-workers are taking items that are fresh and could be sold at full price. Will you speak to your supervisor about this and risk losing your friendship with your co-workers or will you speak to your co-workers instead? List the possible solutions.
2. It is your first evening working as a car jockey in a busy downtown car rental agency. You think that you are getting along well with the two full-time night employees, even though they are older and more experienced than you are. As business slows down, they go in the storage room to play cards with two of their friends who come by, and leave you to answer the phone, take care of the customers, and prepare the cars for use. At ten o'clock the owner calls to see how you are doing. What do you say?
3. The phone rings at your co-op placement and one of your colleagues asks you to answer it and if it is for her, to tell "whoever it is" that she has left for the day. You do it, but are very uncomfortable doing so. What do you say to her when you get off the phone, so that you will not have to do it another time?
4. You are a retail-store employee in a large mall. A group of five or six teenagers enters your store. Immediately, one of your co-workers says, "Here's trouble." He starts to follow them, asking if they are planning to buy anything. What do you do? Do you think his reaction would be the same if it were a group of senior citizens?
5. You discover a co-worker smoking in the washroom. Smoking in the workplace is against company policy. The smoke does not bother you, but you know another worker who is very allergic to it. What do you do?
6. You have been trained to observe all the safety rules at your part-time job. You enjoy working there because many of your friends also work there. You begin to notice that a close friend and colleague is taking short cuts when it comes to safety. She is not wearing her safety gear nor cleaning up spills right away. You are worried she will hurt herself or others. What do you do?

Ethical or Unethical?

Workplace Ethics

1. Sabrina decides which telephone company to use for the company's long distance service. The telephone company sent her hundred dollar bill with a "Happy Holidays" card. Sabrina kept the hundred dollars.
2. T.J. overcharged a customer for freight on purpose. This helped increase company profits.
3. When the paper supply truck came for a delivery, Chris stole an extra carton off the truck when no one was looking. He left it for the company to use. In this way, he helped build company profits.
4. During lunch break, Andre invited Marlena, a co-worker to come over to his apartment after work.
5. Chris calls in sick about a day a month in order to play golf. Since he is not paid, he feels that he is not hurting the company.,
6. Leslie hates wearing the silly plastic hat in the warehouse even though he is supposed to. He believes that it's his head and no one else would get hurt if he is injured.
7. Adnan ordered the wrong product by mistake for a customer. The customer got so mad that she went to a competitor. Adnan cost the company a lot of money.
8. T.J. sent Zainab, his boss, some flowers for her birthday.
9. Leslie is getting a new car. Leslie called some of his co-workers over the weekend and asked them if they wanted to buy his old car.
9. Sabrina was trying to put toner, that awful black powder, into the copy machine. It spilled on the floor, and she wasted \$50 worth of toner.

It's All About Attitude!

Confidentiality and Workplace Ethics

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Read the following situations and answer the questions.

1. You are working at a police station for your Co-op placement. A boy from your school is brought into the station in handcuffs and is charged with possession of narcotics. Later on that day, he is let out on bail. When you return to school the next day, you tell your friend, who promises to keep it secret. But later that day, all of your friends know. Soon, many people around the school know about the boy's arrest and charges. What would you expect to happen to you, for breaking your confidentiality agreement?

2. Your new co-worker at the warehouse, Mimmo, likes disco music and math class, and he dresses in clothes that you find very unfashionable. You don't have any common interests with him, but he is a good worker, and he can stack boxes just as quickly as anyone else. For a prank, one of your other co-workers, Ricki, eats Mimmo's lunch and hides his uniform. As a good employee, what should you do? Why?

3. In your job at the grocery store, you are expected to wear a shirt with a collar. You don't really like the way the shirt looks, so don't tuck it in, and you wear another t-shirt underneath and let it hang out, so that you look more stylish. By wearing the second t-shirt, you feel you can then keep your pants hanging slightly lower than your waist. How would you expect your manager to react to your "fashionable" approach to your uniform? Why?

4. You are working on designing a new software product at work. Your company's competitor invites you to dinner and asks you for information on the product, so that they can make a similar one. The competing company promises to give you a BIG "consulting fee" for the secret information. What should you do? Why?

5. You suspect that your co-worker, Jamie, is stealing from the retail store where you work. You confront Jamie about stealing and she tells you, "The boss owes me for overtime hours, so I'm just taking back what I am owed." As an ethical employee, what should you do?

6. You are managing a store, and your new employee, Hal, is late all the time. This lateness messes up other employees' schedules, since it is busy, and you have to ask some people to stay overtime to cover. As the manager, what should you do?
