
WORKPLACE ETHICS

What does Ethics Mean?

As per the ethics definition, ethics are a general set of rules that are important to be followed, to be a part of society. Moreover, it guides one to live in the right way in society. These certain rules are common worldwide. These ethical principles are inherited as well as are learned by the individual from their family's ways of living.

Every single individual possesses the same ethics and ethical behavior in different ways as the culture from which they are born and brought up are different.

Whenever we talk about the behavior of a person one of the most important things is ethics, whether the person reflects his ethics at home or office or in a professional environment, he should live with setting some set of rules, which make him acceptable in the society. There are some important ethical terms which matter the most in a professional environment.

Definition of Workplace Ethics:

Workplace ethics are nothing but the rules and procedures that should be carried out in an office by the employer and the employees to maintain a professional company culture and to build a better relationship with their customers by providing better services.

Workplace ethics plays an important role in company growth and development.

Examples of Workplace Ethics:

Secular values are the basis from where the ethics of the workplace have been derived from. Some of them are,

1. *Loyalty*
2. *Comradery*
3. *Citizenship*
4. *Trustworthiness*
5. *Integrity*
6. *Respect*
7. *Caring*
8. *Fairness*
9. *Responsibility*
10. *Accountability*

Most Important Ethical Terms and Principles:

1. Values:

The values of a person can be defined as the acts and actions which we make in our daily life. The true values of a person are **devotion, respect, hard work and love**. These acts of values make a person more valuable. These values tell more about a person's behavior and responsive qualities which he can possess during work.

2. Morals:

Morals are the certain duties which he needs to do for the betterment of society. Moreover, these are certain duties which make society work in a synchronized manner. These morals apply to every single human being of the society and they can't be judged in a specific manner, because the things in moral are either right or wrong.

3. Integrity:

Integrity means to be always honest and sincere under any circumstances. When any individual shows integrity in a professional environment and his work, it means that the person can be trusted as well as he is an honest man to rely on. The person who is honest and sincere always sustains for a longer duration in the company as compared to others.

4. Character:

The character is one of the most important ethics which in short describes a person. It tells about your behavior towards others and your reactions towards the different situations. A bad thinking mind can destroy your character and a positive attitude and healthy mind always keep you with a good character.

5. Laws:

These are certain rules and regulation fixed by you yourself. These rules define you and put a limit to events that are dangerous for your lifestyle. A man with rules always shapes up in the laws of the company and work accordingly in the best way possible, and a man with no rules always lands up in troubles. These laws give us the ability to differentiate between right and wrong.

6. Dedication:

This is also a person defining ethic. The stronger dedication in work is, the greater the output and results will be. Dedication in work makes a man stronger for tough situations and he also becomes a key player in motivating the others during the hard times.

7. Accountability of responsibility:

The more a person is responsible in nature, the more efficiently and responsibly he will do the given task. Responsibility towards everything such as parents, family, society, nature, works, office, etc are certain things which not only should be kept in mind but also these must be followed by every human being for a healthier environment.

These were the 7 ethical principles which matter the most in a professional environment and these ethics must be present in every human being so that he leads towards a successful and healthier life. Ethical behavior in the workplace helps us to remain healthy. Yes healthy, but healthy not only means to remain healthy physically but it gives you the mental peace of mind.

This experience is the most beautiful experience of life, when you don't have any regrets for anything and daily you are appreciated for who you are, gives your mind so much satisfaction and peace that in difficult situations when others can't think of any solution, you are the only one thinking calmly and quietly and finally coming up with the solution. This is the strength of the

stable inner mind of an individual. Moreover, there are some professional benefits which can be gained by professional ethics; let us see some of the benefits below.

Benefits of Ethics in the Workplace:

The following mentioned are few advantages of ethics in the workplace.

1. Asset Protection and Assurance:

When your workers possess an ethical working environment and ethical behavior in the workplace, your company's maintenance cost decreases to a remarkable extent because they are well aware of their duties and responsibilities towards the company.

They also realize that they should not do any damage to any of the machines and equipment are given to them as they are very valuable for the company and doing damage to these things will be a wrong act, so automatically things will be taken care of and everything will work systematically.

2. Productivity will increase:

When the working staff and the workers value the work given to them and then they will do all the given work in time and achieve their set targets, this will greatly affect the sales and the productivity of the company.

Due to this, it is assured that you will have a group of people who will sail your business even in the worst of the downfall of the market, and keep the growth of the company and business consistent.

3. Team Work will develop:

When all the workers do their jobs in a responsible way, then a time comes when they have achieved the target way before the given deadline, then a question arises What Next? So the situation automatically bonds up all the individuals into a team.

These individuals now work as a team and work in the benefit of the company for which they will be getting or achieving their incentives. This mutual understanding of the employees is a positive signal that the company will sustain for a very long period in the variable market conditions.

4. Public Image and Brand Value Increases:

Yes if all the members of the company are dedicated to work as well as figure out their values and responsibility towards the environment, then it is for sure that the type of cleanliness and the disposal of the waste product of the company will be unbeatable in the market, hence resulting in attracting a bigger customer base due to the clean and quality of the services or products.

Moreover, an increase in the public image and an increase in the customer base is directly proportional to an increase in brand value. In simpler words when you gain popularity amongst your customers you start to develop your company into a brand.

5. Adaptive to changes:

Workers with professional ethics in the workplace are definitely the master key to the lock of success. The team of understanding, trustworthy, reliable, motivate, concern and responsible people will defiantly adapt themselves into any kind of position and work they are filled with.

Moreover, in general, it has been seen worldwide that in the digressive market conditions, if the company asks for any changes in the production or changes in the kind of work then the workers oppose.

In some situations, the company is left empty-handed falling short of workers as they leave the company due to changes, but things are just opposite when you have a trustworthy and responsible bunch of people as they themselves demand changes according to the companies situation and let the company run even in the hard market situations.

6. Decision making and implementing is always easy:

Whenever there is a need to take a big decision then the best one made is by the advice of the employees of the company, and what will be better than every single employ respecting the decision and supporting the company to go ahead with their decision.

This is the power of ethics in the employers who respect the decision of the company and let it go along with the flow. This is very rare in the big companies but where this scene happens; the company turns big brands over the night.

7. Trouble-free working environment:

Generally, where everyone is unknown and moreover no one wants to know each other there are higher chances of great trouble and where there is a friendly, respectful and great workplace or environment between the employees there are fewer chances of the least troubles from the employees end.

If in case, a situation arises where there is some little misunderstanding between the employees, it gets solved within them due to a better and strong understanding between all the employees. Even the management does not have to bother about those small little things as they know that the employees will take better care of themselves.

8. There is no one left negative:

When people are detached from one another and someone gets negative regarding the companies' work then it has been seen that from that single negative employee many are affected.

Thus there is a sudden decline in the working of the employees, but when everything is good to go and everyone is concerned about one another then things become systematic and in case if someone gets negative, the positive and supportive environment works as a boost up for the person and again he/she starts working to their best.

9. Less Legal Issues:

When everything is systematic and functional and in addition your workers are cooperative and understanding then you won't be facing any problems or legal obligations from the employee's end,

because all the workers are treated equally and all are well known with their duties which the job requires from them.

When everything is managed and systematic then all the paperwork and the legal formalities are the primary things which are considered the most, so there is no question of any legal issues.

10. The company will Touch New level of Success:

When everything is so managed and systematic along with the understanding of the employees because of their strong ethics, the company will surely touch new heights of success and even the growth of your business will be assured.

When your employees become experts in their respective works and respective fields, then their dedication and will, to do the work will show true colors and give more fruitful results.

Workplace Ethical Laws in Business:

There are few Occupational Safety, Health Administration and anti-discrimination laws mandated by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. These laws help the employees to make sure that certain things are practiced completely unbiased, such as:

- *Anti-discrimination policies*
- *Anti-harassment policies*
- *Policies for interactions with clients*
- *Safety policies*

Examples of Workplace Ethics Violations:

Usually, violations of workplace ethics in companies are not tolerated. Strict actions are taken depending upon the level of violation done. It is better to know, understand and follow ethics as it helps you build a professional value in you.

Examples of ethical violations that can occur in the workplace include:

- *Asking a candidate whether she has children or no is the clear violation of ethics*
- *Discrimination of clients when quoting the price for a service is a violation*
- *The supervisor not taking any safety measures for their employees when doing the dangerous task*
- *An employee taking a step ahead for lying, making decisions even if he is not responsible for it.*
- *Spreading rumors about co-workers*
- *Not providing exact updates to the supervisor*
- *Not helping out a colleague who has experienced sexual abuse at the workplace, even after being a direct witness*

How to Teach Workplace Ethics?

Most of the companies include the rules and regulations the employee should follow, which must be relating to the ethics of the workplace in the employee handbook.

Usually, all these terms are not discussed during the interviews or hiring process. It is only introduced after the employee joins the company. The organization's ethical standard levels play an important role in its work culture.

Teaching workplace ethics must be mandatory especially to the employees who are new like freshers to the company culture. In most of the organizations, new employees undergo workplace ethics training to make them understand the importance and advantages of it.

Effective ways to teach workplace ethics:

1. *Role-playing complex ethical situations*
2. *Discussions about workplace ethics*
3. *Creating ethical dilemmas*

So, these were some of the importance of ethics in the workplace. Truly ethics play a vital role in a person's life, it decides all the characteristics that you will possess under different circumstances, moreover all the emotions, vision of your life, way of living, struggle, happiness, desires are greatly influenced by the type of ethics you have learned from, which moreover makes you a part of a society and people judge you from the ethics you possess in the society.

The more you take a hold on your ethics, the more stable and perfect you will become in your lifestyle. Ethic not only improves the way of our living but it also sets up a defined path which we can follow by following our ethics, and which will be finally leading you towards a final destination. The more you improve and travel on the perfect path, the more successful your achievements will be.

How to Manage Ethics in the Workplace

How to Manage Ethics in the Workplace. The usage of proper ethics in any workplace is vital to the success of the company. Unfortunately, companies fail and people sometimes even go to jail because of unethical decisions made at work. Follow these steps to manage ethics in the workplace.

Communicate the company's ethics policy clearly to the employees. Posting it around the office and distributing it to employees is great, but you should have regular meetings in which everyone spends some time discussing ethics. Ask people to talk about examples of different ethical decisions. Review the rules and the reasons for them. Make it clear that the company won't tolerate unethical conduct and outline the consequences for it.

Make it easy for employees to seek guidance when they need help making a decision. Employees may not always be sure what the ethical solution is. Therefore, it's the company's responsibility to provide the resources that they need to make the right decision. Someone should be available at all times with whom employees can discuss these issues.

Create an atmosphere in which employees can trust their supervisors and know they can report violators of the ethics policy. Supervisors should keep employees who report violators anonymous and not make them face penalty. However, employees shouldn't feel like it's their responsibility to report violations.

Set an example. Supervisors cannot expect employees to respect them if they don't follow the rules that they set. Model decision-making that embraces the ethical values that the company embraces. Employees will respect their supervisors more and will likely follow their example.

Benefits of Managing Ethics in the Workplace

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Many people are used to reading or hearing of the moral benefits of attention to business ethics. However, there are other types of benefits, as well. The following list describes various types of benefits from managing ethics in the workplace.

1. Attention to business ethics has substantially improved society.

A matter of decades ago, children in our country worked 16-hour days. Workers' limbs were torn off and disabled workers were condemned to poverty and often to starvation. Trusts controlled some markets to the extent that prices were fixed and small businesses choked out. Price fixing crippled normal market forces. Employees were terminated based on personalities. Influence was applied through intimidation and harassment. Then society reacted and demanded that businesses place high value on fairness and equal rights. Anti-trust laws were instituted. Government agencies were established. Unions were organized. Laws and regulations were established.

2. Ethics programs help maintain a moral course in turbulent times.

Attention to business ethics is critical during times of fundamental change — times much like those faced now by businesses, both nonprofit or for-profit. During times of change, there is often no clear moral compass to guide leaders through complex conflicts about what is right or wrong. Continuing attention to ethics in the workplace sensitizes leaders and staff to how they want to act — consistently.

3. Ethics programs cultivate strong teamwork and productivity.

Ethics programs align employee behaviors with those top priority ethical values preferred by leaders of the organization. Usually, an organization finds surprising disparity between its preferred values and the values actually reflected by behaviors in the workplace. Ongoing attention and dialogue regarding values in the workplace builds openness, integrity and community — critical ingredients of strong teams in the workplace. Employees feel strong alignment between their values and those of the organization. They react with strong motivation and performance.

4. Ethics programs support employee growth and meaning.

Attention to ethics in the workplace helps employees face reality, both good and bad — in the organization and themselves. Employees feel full confidence they can admit and deal with whatever comes their way. Bennett, in his article “Unethical Behavior, Stress Appear Linked” (Wall Street Journal, April 11, 1991, p. B1), explained that a consulting company tested a range of executives and managers. Their most striking finding: the more emotionally healthy executives, as measured on a battery of tests, the more likely they were to score high on ethics tests.

5. Ethics programs are an insurance policy — they help ensure that policies are legal.

There is an increasing number of lawsuits in regard to personnel matters and to effects of an organization's services or products on stakeholders. As mentioned earlier in this document, ethical principles are often state-of-the-art legal matters. These principles are often applied to current, major ethical issues to become legislation. Attention to ethics ensures highly ethical policies and procedures in the workplace. It's far better to incur the cost of mechanisms to ensure ethical practices now than to incur costs of litigation later. A major intent of well-designed personnel

policies is to ensure ethical treatment of employees, e.g., in matters of hiring, evaluating, disciplining, firing, etc. Drake and Drake (California Management Review, V16, pp. 107-123) note that “an employer can be subject to suit for breach of contract for failure to comply with any promise it made, so the gap between stated corporate culture and actual practice has significant legal, as well as ethical implications.”

6. Ethics programs help avoid criminal acts “of omission” and can lower fines.

Ethics programs tend to detect ethical issues and violations early on so they can be reported or addressed. In some cases, when an organization is aware of an actual or potential violation and does not report it to the appropriate authorities, this can be considered a criminal act, e.g., in business dealings with certain government agencies, such as the Defense Department. The recent Federal Sentencing Guidelines specify major penalties for various types of major ethics violations. However, the guidelines potentially lowers fines if an organization has clearly made an effort to operate ethically.

7. Ethics programs help manage values associated with quality management, strategic planning and diversity management — this benefit needs far more attention.

Ethics programs identify preferred values and ensuring organizational behaviors are aligned with those values. This effort includes recording the values, developing policies and procedures to align behaviors with preferred values, and then training all personnel about the policies and procedures. This overall effort is very useful for several other programs in the workplace that require behaviors to be aligned with values, including quality management, strategic planning and diversity management. Total Quality Management includes high priority on certain operating values, e.g., trust among stakeholders, performance, reliability, measurement, and feedback. Eastman and Polaroid use ethics tools in their quality programs to ensure integrity in their relationships with stakeholders. Ethics management techniques are highly useful for managing strategic values, e.g., expand marketshare, reduce costs, etc. McDonnell Douglas integrates their ethics programs into their strategic planning process. Ethics management programs are also useful in managing diversity. Diversity is much more than the color of people’s skin — it’s acknowledging different values and perspectives. Diversity programs require recognizing and applying diverse values and perspectives — these activities are the basis of a sound ethics management program.

8. Ethics programs promote a strong public image.

Attention to ethics is also strong public relations — admittedly, managing ethics should not be done primarily for reasons of public relations. But, frankly, the fact that an organization regularly gives attention to its ethics can portray a strong positive to the public. People see those organizations as valuing people more than profit, as striving to operate with the utmost of integrity and honor. Aligning behavior with values is critical to effective marketing and public relations programs. Consider how Johnson and Johnson handled the Tylenol crisis versus how Exxon handled the oil spill in Alaska. Bob Dunn, President and CEO of San Francisco-based Business for Social Responsibility, puts it best: “Ethical values, consistently applied, are the cornerstones in building a commercially successful and socially responsible business.”

9. Overall benefits of ethics programs:

Donaldson and Davis, in “Business Ethics? Yes, But What Can it Do for the Bottom Line?” (Management Decision, V28, N6, 1990) explain that managing ethical values in the workplace legitimizes managerial actions, strengthens the coherence and balance of the organization’s culture, improves trust in relationships between individuals and groups, supports greater consistency in standards and qualities of products, and cultivates greater sensitivity to the impact of the enterprise’s values and messages.