Ethical Challenges in the Workplace

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Mary, a long time employee of the business you manage, cleaned out her desk at home and found outdated tax documents and receipts she no longer needed.

She didn't own a paper shredder so she brought the old documents to work and used the office paper shredder. You encounter her in the act of shredding her personal documents.

Is this ethical? Why or why not?
Considerations

Shredding personal documents is not part of her job description (shredding while on the clock)

Using company equipment for non work related reasons without permission shortens the lifespan of the equipment and costs the company in electricity fees

What if every employee did it?
What are Ethics?

Ethics are systems of moral principles that guide behavior. (Gensler, 2011)

Ethics consider what people *ought* to do and what they *should* not do. (Gensler, 2011; Panza & Potthast, 2010)
Why Study Ethics?

Understand your own worldview and moral code (how you define 'right' and 'wrong')

Workplaces are filled with situations to engage in unethical behavior

Being ethical can be rewarded with trust and can lead to additional opportunities (Panza & Patthost, 2010)

Leaders need to be role models and should have a personal code of ethics to guide their actions
The Golden Rule

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Think about how you would want to be treated in the same situation.

It's a good starting point for making decisions in the workplace, but it does not go far enough.
3 Principles of Ethical Behavior

These principles can be applied to many situations that you will encounter at work and provide guidance for how to respond.

1. Rule of Publicity
2. Rule of Benevolence
3. Rule of Universality

(Mackenzie & Mackenzie, 2010)
Rule of Publicity

"Would it be acceptable behavior if everyone knew about it?"

(Mackenzie & Mackenzie, 2010, p. 19)

For example:

- Would you call in sick to work if you knew your boss would check in on you?
- Would you send an email gossiping about a coworker if you knew everyone in the office would see it?
Rule of Benevolence

The action should benefit the greater good for greatest number of people and cause the least harm to the greatest number of people.

For example:

Would you bend the rules for one person if you knew that you would have to bend them for everyone else?

Would you keep a staff member if s/he argued with everyone in your office, thus bringing down morale?
Rule of Universality

"Would it be acceptable if everyone did it?"

(Mackenzie & Mackenzie, 2010, p.18)

For example:

What if all your coworkers took home a ream of paper?

What if all your coworkers showed up late to meetings?
Time to Collaborate!

Now that you know the basics of workplace ethics, it's time to apply them!

Using your handout:
- Review the Principles of ethical behavior
- Read each vignette
- Discuss and decide if the behavior is ethical

Do not complete the chart on the back yet.

Break into groups of 4-5.
Vignette 1

Shay is a supervisor at ABC Industries, Inc. She has a good friend, Andrew, who has recently been hired and is her employee. Shay is responsible for providing support for Andrew, assigning him projects, and evaluating his work performance. In the past, Andrew and Shay have dated off and on. When he started at ABC Industries, they had not seen each other for several years. Since Andrew began working, they have been flirting in the office. Recently, Andrew asked Shay out for dinner. She did accept, knowing that this could lead to a romantic relationship.
Vignette 2

Jovan was driving to work, and she passed by a person, Callie, on the side of the road who had been hit by a car. No one else had yet stopped to assist Callie, and she was badly injured and in obvious agonizing pain. Jovan don’t have her phone with her, so she stopped and took Callie to a nearby hospital. This detour meant that Jovan missed an important meeting with a potential new client. Her boss and colleagues are unhappy as they worked tirelessly on this project.
Developing a Personal Code of Ethics

The chart on the back of your handout can be used to help develop a code of ethics to guide your own actions in life and work.

Down the left side, list some potential situations that you may face. We have identified a few to get you started.

For each situation, consider the three Principles and decide whether the action is ethically required, permissible, or forbidden.
## Developing your own Code of Ethics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Ethically Required</th>
<th>Ethically Permitted</th>
<th>Ethically Forbidden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the copy machine at work for your child’s homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a document for work that you also turn in as homework for your university course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving work 10 minutes early, but making up the time the next day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowingly submitting work with errors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removing yourself from the performance evaluation of a personal friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The table shows a partial list of actions and their ethical classifications.*
Pair

Share your chart with a neighbor.

Share

What interesting things came up in your discussions?
Wrap Up

Are there any questions?

This PowerPoint will be available on the NCCWSL site after the conference.

Now, it is time to complete the session evaluation.
Thank You!
References

