

Ethics in human resources assignment

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This paper explains how HER professionals can engage in operational stateless to further an ethical agenda. In Dalton, the HER department must protect the organization from breaking various laws and regulations with the use of unethical behavior. Ethical decisions can be easily made by following established policies. However, some issues may not be covered and become gray areas. An HER professional must also look for unethical behaviors that are not covered by laws, regulations, or policies. Finally, there are financial benefits that can be realized by Introduction Human resource professionals face ethical decisions on a daily basis.

Many times, these involve employee issues that conflict with company policies and procedures. In addition, management may desire to break company rules or government laws to achieve an organizational objective. The human resource (HER) department is the ethical conscience of an organization and must consider applicable laws and organizational standards, without personal bias, to reach ethical conclusions. The HER department sets the tone of this important aspect of organizational behavior. It is the responsibility of HER professionals to not only make ethical decision, but to also provide ethical oversight of the entire organization.

The HER department is usually the last line of defense that prevents an organization from getting into legal difficulties. HER professionals must have an extensive knowledge of government laws. These laws mainly pertain to hiring new employees, but also include the practices of promotion, compensation, and time-off. HER professionals that promote ethical procedures ensure that their organization maintains a positive reputation. Traditionally, the human resource department has been considered as Just a <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-in-human-resources-assignment/>

group of specialists that engage in training, compensation, and benefit functions.

It has only been recently that organizations have been redefining and broadening the roles of HR professionals. Many companies have begun to rely on HR professionals in the everyday business of the organization can lead to many benefits. First, HR professionals can aid managers with increasing performance. Second, HR departments are sometimes seen as being very isolated from the rest of the organization. Many times management and even employees may see HR as more of a hindrance than a help. More involvement with employees will change this image and help give HR legitimacy as a department that seeks to fulfill operational goals.

Last, the increased involvement will help the HR department monitor the ethical actions of its employees. They are able to see first-hand the challenges that the organization may face and can provide ethical solutions to fix them. Promoting Ethics There are several ways that an HR professional can promote ethical behavior. First, they should make it clear to everyone in the company that ethics is a top organizational priority. They should let it be known that any breach of ethics will not be tolerated. An HR professional oversees the ethical culture of the organization, but they need help from the leadership.

They must communicate to leadership the ethical standards that are to be followed. In turn, the leadership needs to pass on these ethical standards and expectations to all the employees. Second, HR professionals must

ensure that the correct ethical programs and policies are in place.

Government laws can change at any time and HER professionals must keep everyone informed. A strong ethical program may be worthless if it is outdated. Finally, HER professionals need to be on the lookout for emerging ethical issues both within and outside the organization.

Internally, they need to watch out for potential conflicts of interests that arise from doing business with organizational partners. Externally, they should monitor current ethical dilemmas that similar organizations are facing (Vickers, 2004). Constant scanning of both the internal and external environment is a great way to prevent future ethical dilemmas. Getting Involved In the past, organizations and their employees have viewed HER as an obscure department, set apart from the rest of the company. Members of the organization recognized the HER department as the people who issued the paychecks and monitored the benefit packages.

Even worse, HER departments have been tagged with stigma as the people who go around and terminate employees. While all of this may be true to an extent, organizations have been increasingly expanding the roles of their HER professionals. The new belief is that HER departments should no longer be separate operational entities, they should have free-flowing functions within the organization. A heavier involvement in operational activities can give organizational members the impression that HER is no longer a barrier to success, but rather a department that will help its members succeed (Gillie, et al 1999).

How does this improve or maintain ethics? If the HER department is kept as an isolated functioning entity of an organization, they are not able to understand the challenges that organizational members face everyday. Managers and employees may not wish to act unethically, but at the moment they see no way around it. Getting involved, gives HER professionals the ability to view these problems first-hand and provide ethical solutions. This enables the HER department to aid in the operational success of an organization by providing solutions, and not just act as the people who punish employees for breaking rules.

The department has been deemed as unethical. However, because the HER department has traditionally been an isolated entity uninvolved in other organizational functions, many times their directives have been ignored. A deeper involvement in organizational functions will give legitimacy to the HER department. More involvement not only includes providing ethical solutions. HER professionals can aid with training, coaching, and hiring. They can ensure that managers use and follow ethical standards when performing these functions (Gillie, Bought & Munich, 1999).

An organization that uses their HER department as an operational resource, rather than an isolated subset of specialists, can experience an increase of organizational performance, unity, and ethics. The Unique Power of an HER Manager A successful HER manager should be seen as someone who has the power to get things done in an organization. An HER manager will gain the support and trust of senior management and will be awarded the authority to make autonomous decisions. However, anyone possessing the capability of making autonomous decisions has the capability of abusing their position.

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An HER manager should refrain from inappropriately using their position to influence others or letting personal legislations with employees guide their Judgment on employee discipline. An HER manager may want to include others in some decision-making procedures to allow a system of checks and balances (Moore, 2012). Protecting the Organization The HER department has many responsibilities. One of the most important is ensuring that their organizational members are following various laws, regulations, and guidelines.

Educating management and monitoring their actions can help prevent lawsuits and protect the reputation of the organization. Many guidelines that direct the decisions of HER professionals are black and white, however there are ray areas that do exist (Gotten, 2005). In other words, many decisions are automatic, while others are not that easy. It is the responsibility of the HER professional to sort through all of the facts and make a proper decision. Hiring HER professionals must ensure that the hiring practices of their organization follow all government laws and regulations. This applies to whomever is making the hiring decisions.

If management is performing the hiring of new employees, the HER department must make sure that they know and observe the laws. Since these laws carry stiff penalties, the HER department should analyze the hiring process of the managers. They must confirm that the management's final decision on who is hired is based solely on who is the most qualified (What, 2012). Management cannot let race, sex, religion, ethnicity or even the attractiveness of female applicants become a factor in the hiring process

(Ethical, 2012). Another issue that can arise from the hiring process is sexual harassment.

HER professionals and management cannot use their positions as a means of sexually harassing both potential and current employees. For example, the individual performing the hiring process cannot demand sexual favors from prospective employees in exchange for hiring them. As for current employees, managers cannot threaten termination or demotion, or offer promotion, in exchange for sexual favors (What, 2012). Confidentiality HER professionals have access to confidential information regarding their employees. HER professionals must ensure that this information is kept confidential disciplinary information.

The confidentiality of this information may be so great, that even the supervising manager of the employee cannot be told. An HER professional should follow the letter of the law when they are in doubt about whether or not to disclose any information. This is the best way to avoid any potential law suits (Moore, 2012). Legal Issues Comprehensive ethics programs are the main safeguard that prevent an organization from encountering legal problems. Breaches of ethics in the HER department or the organization itself are likely to be reported to the Better Business Bureau and the Equal Opportunity Commission.

When an organization fails to follow the required ethical standards and laws, they are subject to both criminal and civil lawsuits. These lawsuits can result in jail time for the offenders or costly monetary settlements against the company (Ingram, 2008). The HER department should be involved in the

employee termination process. They have to make sure that all laws and company policies are followed. The most effective way for the HER department to protect their organization is to have a well written handbook. A company handbook is usually viewed as an implied contract.

HER professionals should encourage managers to document all instances of handbook violations. This will provide a record that can help the company in a possible wrongful discharge court case (Iverson et al 1992). Sexual harassment is unethical and illegal. Organizations that employ over 100 people can face fines of up to \$50, 000 for violations. Not only can this be costly, but the company's reputation may be severely damaged. HER should take the lead role with discouraging sexual harassment. HER should be proactive with educating the organizational members by adopting a sexual harassment policy.

This policy should be a written document that includes definitions of harassment, who must abide, how to report incidents, how possible violations will be investigated, and possible disciplinary actions. In addition, the HER department must investigate promptly and take appropriate actions. They cannot afford to ignore the issue and hope it goes away. Swift action and appropriate resolutions are the best legal defense (Iverson, Stack, Rowdier, Burr, Quadratic & Carlson, 1992). Grey Areas Gray areas are usually associated with internal company policies and not laws and regulations (Gotten, 2005).

In some cases, these gray areas exist because of a poorly written company handbook or a past failure to enforce its regulations. For example, if a

handbook has not been updated for many years, it may not cover new ethical dilemmas that have arisen. The HER professional will then have to judge if an offense would have been reasonably inferred by reading the handbook before approving possible punishment. HER also must encourage management to abide by handbook policies. Only enforcing certain aspects of the handbook can lead to problems. An example of this could be when a manager wants to fire an employee over tardiness issues.

If the manager has a past history of not enforcing the tardiness policy against other employees, it would not be ethically for them to use it against an employee they want to fire. Even though the manager has cause provided by company policy, it is unethical to treat employees differently (Iverson, et al. 1992). Ethics vs.. Law Ethics and law are closely related, but not synonymous. In many cases, unethical could be unlawful. An HER professional who strives to create an ethical environment must look for unethical behaviors that are not covered by the law.

Many unethical acts may be covered by a company handbook, but they are harder to detect than violations of law. For example, lying or showing favor could be deemed as unethical, but in many instances not unlawful. An HER professional must have the ability to detect these practices and discourage them. These unethical acts could lead to violations of the law and damage the reputation of the organization (Instead, 1999). Ethical Benefits Following ethical standards will not only prevent an organization from facing legal difficulties, but it can provide the company with various organizational benefits.

First, whether actual or perceived, a company's reputation can be helped or damaged by its ethical behavior. Second, good employees not only seek out ethical organizations, but they tend to stay loyal and pursue a career with the company. Finally, investors and consumers who are outside the organization prefer to support ethical companies. When money is on the line, these outsiders seek out companies they can trust. Ethical behavior can lead to positive reputation, better employees, and financial security (Ingram, 2008).

Company Reputation Avoiding legal trouble, by following ethical standards, will allow the organization to achieve a reputation as an ethical employer. Gaining this reputation will provide positive benefits for the organization. The best potential candidates who are seeking employment will be attracted to the most ethical organizations. On the other hand, organizations that are unethical will end up being labeled as a poor employer to work for. This reputation will spread and the organization will have difficulties hiring the best prospective candidates (Ingram, 2008).

Employee Loyalty Employees that are treated ethically tend to remain with the organization long-term. Long-term employees are more inclined to show trust and loyalty to the organization. Loyal employees learn the inner workings of the organization and their productivity and efficiency increase over time. Keeping these loyal employees benefits the organization by reducing turnover and training costs. Loyal employees also benefit the organization by purchasing company products and spreading positive information about their organization to their acquaintances (Ingram, 2008).

Investing and Consumer Loyalty Organizations that adhere to ethical standards can reap financial benefits. Public perception of an organization can provide a unique selling point. Investors seek out ethical companies to gain reassurance that their money will be used wisely. In addition, products or services that are associated with a particular company can lead to consumer loyalty. Consumers seek out trusted companies and give them their business. Therefore, practicing ethical behaviors can help with the bottom line (McKee, 2009).

Conclusion An HR department and their professionals have many responsibilities, but they are the face of organizational behavior. Aside from payroll and company benefit duties, they are the ethical conscience of an organization. The HR department must ensure not only that they act ethically, but must promote and teach the rest of the organization to behave ethically. Even this is not enough. HR must monitor the department to be more involved in the organization. HR should maintain a presence in the organization's operational activities by assisting with hiring, training, and coaching.

This encourages organizational members to see HR as a positive part of the organization and not a barrier to success. HR professionals have a duty to protect the company. They can accomplish this by implementing an effective ethics policy for all of its employees to follow. There are many laws and regulations that HR professionals must enforce. In addition, there are company policies usually contained in a handbook that should be followed. HR professionals must adhere to rules governing hiring, confidentiality, termination, and sexual harassment.

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