

Ethical behavior in an organization



How can an organization achieve and maintain a pattern of ethical behavior?

One of the ways in which an organization can achieve and maintain a modicum of ethical behavior is by adopting a Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics adopted by a business organization reflects its approach to business and also defines its values and standards. These sets of self-imposed rules originate from corporate social responsibility of business corporations, but can be extended to any sort of organization. It provides all stakeholders with a clear understanding of the procedures and processes at various levels of the organization. In other words it acts as the road map or set of guidelines to help the firm in acting and conducting itself in a socially and commercially acceptable manner. A well designed code of ethics will help highlight the resources available to achieve various goals set at the personal and corporate levels. A good code of ethics document will inspire confidence in all associates - like suppliers, clients and employees. Equally important is liaising with regulators, which is often overlooked amidst other pressing priorities. It is understood that a regulatory atmosphere conducive to fair and competitive business can help raise ethical standards of all parties involved. It is important that the code of ethics document exhibits a keen awareness of this reality. This would imply foresight and visionary thinking on part of its planners. (Blackburn, 2001) But it is crucial to understand that the entrenched profit-motive of many business organizations make ethical behavior hard to implement. A case in point is the Public Relations industry which offers its services to other manufacturing and service industries. The concept of marketing commodities in a consumer market had long drawn the criticism of ethicists. On a broader perspective, the inherently weak moral imperative of capitalist culture makes this outcome inevitable. Across the

world, more so in advanced societies, marketing strategies have attracted much flak and condemnation from judicious sections of society. Many companies interweave social issues with their advertisement campaigns to show they care about issues and causes dear to the general public, from illnesses such as AIDS to the environment to funding educational institutions. But usually, under this veneer of responsible behavior lie many unethical practices. (Marketing, 2008, p. 26) Hence, token gestures and nominal adoptions of code of ethics are only starting points for achieving high ethical standards. Beyond these, organizations need to adopt stringent accounting and auditing practices. Accurate records of time and expenditures have to be made. Compliance with corporate governance laws should be high priority. Also, respecting intellectual property rights of other organizations while also protecting one's own is vital. Leaders within the organization should be able to resolve conflict of interest scenarios in an unbiased and fair manner. The organization should enforce anti-discrimination and anti-harassment laws so that an atmosphere of camaraderie is created within its premises. One of the common pitfalls that top-managers face is the lure of kick-backs, gifts, free-lunches and other subtle forms of bribes. People in higher ranks should lead by example by avoiding or declining such opportunities. And finally, the organization should nurture a working culture that is free of nepotism and personal vendetta, so that fairness and justice always prevails. (Fisher & Lovell, 2006) Works Cited: Blackburn, S. (2001). Being good: A short introduction to ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press " Ethics of marketing: It's more than enough to make you sick." Marketing (Jan 23, 2008): 26. Fisher, C. & Lovell, A., (2006) Business Ethics and Values, Individual, Corporate and International Perspectives Second Edition FT Prentice Hall.