

Business ethics: case of hewlett packard

[Business](#), [Business Ethics](#)



To discern what is right from wrong is a lot easier than deciding which of the deemed “rightful things” is really the right thing to do. There are cases when someone is faced with the so-called ethical dilemma wherein one has to weigh the consequences of both decisions that, based on moral values and prevailing cultural norms, are right. Ethics therefore is not simply knowing the right thing and doing what is deemed right. The principle applies to ethics in the workplace.

“Business ethics in the workplace is about prioritizing moral values for the workplace and ensuring behaviors are aligned with those values -- it's values management” (Kirrane, Diane E. 1990). The workplace might have been one of the most typical examples of organizational set ups where a rich cultural diversity can be found. With this we can say therefore that moral standards may have the same level of diversity in just one organization which means that moral values are also diversified.

With that, what seems to be right for others may not be the same thing as with others. Therefore the organization sets up its own set of business ethics that would be most likely acceptable to organization as a whole. Kirrane got the point by integrating values management in the concept of business ethics. Looking at a more critical aspect of business ethics, there are authors who consider that business ethics is “a matter of dealing with dilemmas that have no clear indication of what is right or wrong” (Madsen, P. and Shafritz, J. M. , 1990).

This is the case mentioned a while ago wherein one has to decide on rightful things that require weighing of the consequences of each. Relative to this, one author said that “it is generally it's coming to know what it right or
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wrong in the workplace and doing what's right -- this is in regard to effects of products/services and in relationships with stakeholders” (T. Thompson, 1991). It is therefore but fair enough to say that business ethics is all about prioritizing a decision or action that would be most beneficial to all the stakeholders and the organization as a whole.

It is also important to note that business ethics should define the line that separates what is ethical from what is lawful. The logic would be that it is not conclusive that lawful actions are necessarily ethical but what is ethical could always be a lawful action. For example, to present receipts on certain reimbursable expenses even when they are not actually being paid by the employee is deemed lawful and yet is unethical. To make personal calls on your company service phone is deemed lawful and yet the action is clearly unethical.

This means that one can act within the limits of the law but can act beyond the scope of ethical considerations. Consider for example the case of Hewlett Packard wherein its chairwoman Patricia Dunn decided to hire a team of independent electronic-security experts to determine the source of leak of confidential details regarding long-term strategy. At an initial evaluation, one may say that there is something unethical, based on the concept of business ethics, in the said course of action undertaken by Dunn.

First, it may appear that hiring an independent team to make investigations on confidential information Dunn does not have confidence on the capability of the internal audit team to work out the matter. Second, it sounds like Dunn considers everybody in the organization a suspect since she does not allow or include anyone in the team to find out what went wrong and what

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causes it. Although the situation did not mention of previous internal investigation done, we would assume in our analysis that Dunn's decision to hire the independent investigation team is the first step done after the leak was discovered.

As we can see, Dunn acted within the scope of the law which means that her decision to hire independent security team is legal. Based on legal considerations, the action is deemed right and there is no question about that. However, if we are to look into the ethical aspect of the situation we can therefore say that there is something wrong in it. As mentioned earlier, the elements of trust and confidence on the part of the organizational members, especially those at the internal audit team or department are damaged.

In my point of view, it is not proper, based on ethical considerations, to immediately hire independent team to investigate leaks on confidential information without first placing the matter to the immediate attention of the internal audit team. Let us remember that business ethics, as defined by Thompson has something to do with the effects of an action to the stakeholders, of which, the internal audit team, as members of the organization are part of it. It would seem to be a direct by-pass of their given authority and responsibility.

This argument would lead us to the idea of Gandz and Bird who regarded business ethics as something “ that explains 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

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and qualities of products, and cultivates greater sensitivity to the impact of the enterprise's values and messages" (Gandz, J. ; Bird, F. G. , 1989).

Based on these considerations, we can say that there are moral values or cultural norms existing in the organization that were violated by Dunn's action. In that case, the proper initial action should be to refer the matter first to the concerned department (internal audit team) and let them do their job. If it happens that Dunn was not satisfied with the results, then she has all the right to do the next possible step and that is to hire independent security team. In consideration of Dunn's actions, we can probably look at the situation in another aspect, which is on the part of Dunn.

Let us assume that Dunn decided to hire the independent security team for the purpose of having independent and objective (unbiased) results. Let us also consider that Dunn might have a preconception of the possibility of some cover ups on the investigation when it is done by the team within the organization, a situation which is very much possible. We cannot blame Dunn for having fears of acquiring manipulated results of the investigation when done internally especially when somebody within the team or someone related to the team has something to do with the leak.

It is still another consideration that what is at stake is confidential information that only selected key personnel are supposed to have access to. Furthermore, Dunn has considered, besides the members of the internal audit team, the investors and clients who are also stakeholders of Hewlett Packard and in that case they deserve to have an objective investigation results. In this case, Dunn has undoubtedly acted ethically and in good faith. Combining the ethical considerations on both sides of the issue, and after <https://assignbuster.com/business-ethics-case-of-hewlett-packard/>

weighing their effects to the stakeholders, it is but fair enough to say that Dunn has acted legally and ethically. Read about business ethics reflection paper

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