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The Coca-Cola Company may be the biggest brand in the world, but its employees also experiences same problems as experienced by the employees of any other company. Coca-Cola employment contracts may look very tempting at the first look but they can be as bad and as unethical as any small or not well reputed company may offer.

The Coca-Cola Company stops its employees to say anything bad about the company in front of media. Although, employees are ambassadors of the company and should praise the company, but stripping them of their basic fundamental right to speak they want cannot be justified under any circumstances. It is the company's duty to inculcate such an environment in the company and practice such ethical behavior that employees have nothing bad to say about the company. Many companies, however, take the easier route, that is they coerce their employees to restrain from whistle blowing about the company.

One such contract, where an employee was restrained from speaking anything bad about the company was offered Charles F. Frenette. The contract stated that the initial offer to him about a stock option will e forfeited if he is found disparaging or using bad words about the company. This was like stopping him from speaking what he wants or what he may want to speak in the future. And punishment levied on him for his freedom of expression would be forfeiting his monetary reward. As discussed before, you cannot force an employee to restrain from speaking and instead you should inculcate such policies with the company that it may never indulge in any wrongdoings and hence does not come under bad wording by its employees.

Let's now look at the issue under the two most important ethical frameworks

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of deontology and utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is all about the good for the society. This principle states that every action should increase the goodness for the society in all cases. An action should only be taken if costs associated are less than the benefits attained from it. For example, if Coke's decision to stop its employees from whistle blowing or from telling people about any wrong doing of the company, this action would bring upon people very negative effects and will save only the reputation of the company. In other words, the costs inflicted in the society might be very high as compared to the reputation of the Coca-Cola that will be protected from any controversy. Under this ethical framework, the clause added by the Coca-Cola Company is never justified. They are inflicting costs on the society in order to prevent their own reputation. So, we can safely say that this contract clause cannot be permissible under this ethical framework.

Similarly, deontology framework is all about the motives behind an action. If motives are good then action is permissible, otherwise it is not. If motives are bad and outcome from the action is good, even then that action is not permissible. Since, Coke's motives are to save their own reputation at the cost of society, their contract is not ethically justified under this framework either.

Reference:

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