

The Art of being Morally Responsible at Work Place

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Professional ethics encompasses the personal, organizational and corporate standards of behaviour expected of professionals. Professionals and those working in acknowledged professions, exercise specialist knowledge and skill. How the use of this knowledge should be governed when providing a service to the public can be considered a moral issue and is termed professional ethics. Professional ethics helps a professional choose what to do when faced with a problem at work that raises a moral issue. Professional Ethics concerns one's conduct of behaviour and practice when carrying out professional work. Apart from codes of ethics, professional ethics also concerns matters such as professional indemnity. Furthermore, as will readily be appreciated, no two codes of ethics are identical. They vary by cultural group, by profession and by discipline. The former of these three variations is one of the most interesting, as well as controversial, since it challenges the assumption that universal ethical principles exist. In some cultures, certain behaviours are certainly frowned upon,

but in other cultures the opposite may be true.

Professional ethics are standards or codes of conduct set by people in a specific profession. A code of ethics is a part of the expectations of those involved in many different types of professions. People in a profession don't want to condone bad, dishonest or irresponsible behavior if it does occur by someone in their field. By setting out expected behaviors in the form of professional ethics, professionals work together to try to uphold a good reputation. Personal ethics refers to the ethics that a person identifies with, in respect to people and situations that they deal with in everyday life. Professional ethics refers to the ethics that a person must adhere to in respect of their interactions and business dealings in their professional life.

Importance of Professional Ethics in the workplace

Professionalism and ethical behaviour in the workplace can benefit one's career and

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improve the working environment. Understanding examples of professional and ethical behavior can help people to develop their own effective work habits. If the employees are conscious of how to treat co-workers and their workplace attitude and they can improve their productivity and effectiveness.

Ethical treatment of co-workers and managers means being respectful of the need for efficient and accurate communication. Employees should follow the instructions of organisation memos and should ask questions only after they thoroughly read the information. Asking questions about information that is clearly marked on company correspondence is unprofessional and presents the image of someone who does not follow instructions. Employees should refrain from repeating office gossip, as it helps in spreading false or demeaning information regarding a co-worker which is considered unethical.

Ethical standards guide individuals and the organisation to act in an honest and trustworthy manner in all interactions. These standards should encourage employees to make the right decisions for the organisation, not the individual, and give them the courage to come forward should they notice dishonest and unethical behavior. Establishing core values and working to develop a culture of respect, trust and honest communication represents a vital part of establishing and maintaining ethical business operations.

Responsibilities mentioned related with Professional Ethics

Professional responsibilities are considered to be the most basic and comprehensive professional virtue in regard with professional ethics. Responsibility refers to being morally responsible as a professional. Responsibilities related with professional ethics include a variety of specific virtues which are important in particular Situations. They are:

Self Direction

A self directed person is a person who has a strong set of values, who listens to others but takes the ultimate decision by himself. This person will never break his most important values, no matter what others say or do. This person is competent because he/she can do what others can't. He can do things better and faster than others.

The self-direction virtues in professional ethics are essential in exercising the moral autonomy and the responsibility. They are the virtues which give focus on understanding and gaining knowledge through perception and commitment and understanding the actions such as courage, self-discipline and perseverance, loyalty to commitments, self-respect and integrity, etc.

Team Work Virtues

These virtues are known as intellectual virtues. These are based on the proficiency of an individual about his technical skills and jobs. These virtues include competence ie. being well prepared for the tasks, diligence ie., alertness and careful attention to the tasks and creativity.

Moral Integrity

Moral integrity refers to the unity on the basis of moral concern and honesty. Integrity is the unity between the responsibility of an individual in his personal and professional life.

Virtues of self respect and pride in the job can be made possible only with the help of integrity. Integrity prevents the attitude among the individuals that they are not responsible for their wrong doings on the job. It creates an enthusiasm among individuals for achieving excellent performance in their job and also makes them to see the job is done well.

Maintaining integrity is only possible with the attitude of compromise. They are the possible ways to keep relationships when difference arises. Sometimes, they may lead to severe conflict between working life and personal life. So, for maintaining integrity, an individual must have the ability to identify reasonable compromises. Honesty is also basic thing needed for integrity in addition to unity. Honesty is based on the aspects of truthfulness and trustworthiness.

In professional ethics trustfulness and trustworthiness are based on the following virtues

- Honesty in speech means an individual should not mislead others by his speech, he should not tell lies and also not withhold the information pertaining others.
- Honesty in beliefs is nothing but intellectual honesty. An individual should not be deceptive and he should not avoid unpleasant truths and should not hide the

evidences favourable to others self-esteem and biases.

- Discretions mean that an employee should not interfere in the decisions taken by the employer. He should not interfere with matters of confidential information.

Honesty is the basic virtue which is essential for professionals to engage a good relationship with the society and to fulfill the requirements in professional ethics. Valuing oneself in some morally suitable ways is known as self-respect. Self-Respect is a moral concept. It has two forms: recognition and appraisal. Recognition is giving respect to other people as an individual. As per this, every individual has the responsibility to show recognition – respect towards others and respect the rights of others as a sense of their own rights. Appraisal means properly valuing ourselves as how well they face moral standards and personal aims. Because of their good character, some people deserve higher respect. This is a goal of professional ethics. A sense of honour emphasises the intensive feelings of self-respect and its minimum requirements. It conveys directly the pride in maintaining high professional standards, mental agony in failing to meet minimum standards of professionalism and a feeling of guilt for wrong doings.

Self control is the virtue of maintaining personal discipline in professional ethics. It implies how to avoid weakness of will because of lack of effort, half hearted commitments, temptation, self deception and excessive or distorting fear or hatred. Self respect gives a

strong motive for avoiding these weaknesses. Courage is the tendency to face dangers and difficult jobs in rational ways and with self control. On the basis of the dangers confronted – Courage takes many forms such as physical courage, social courage and intellectual courage.

Morality is a natural feature of human life. Human beings are social beings engaged in social interactions. As human beings, we cannot avoid making judgments about what is right and wrong, what one should do and what is valuable. We engage in ethics when we start to reflect on our moral judgments and actions. As human beings, we act in different capacities and roles. Moral judgments are made and moral acts performed in different social contexts, such as health care, politics, work and school. Professional ethics emanates from moral reflection in work. A relation exists between applied ethics and professional ethics. Professional ethics is based on the practice of a profession. It has been said that one way in which a society can be judged to be civilised is the extent to which it meets the needs of its most vulnerable citizens: a civilised society is therefore a humane society. Education plays a key role in the preparation of professional personnel who provides services for the vulnerable.

What, then, is the moral content of professional ethics? First are the moral norms and duties that are common to all or at least most professions. These norms and duties can be divided according to the relations that professionals have to other people:

1. Relations to people dependent on professional work and service

These relations include, for example, relations between teacher and pupil, doctor and patient, salesmen and customer. Such relations generate professional moral norms, like honesty, fidelity, care and safety.

2. Relations to workmates

Almost all employees have workmates and colleagues. The relation between workmates generates professional moral norms of loyalty and solidarity.

3. Relations to employers

Much professional work is performed as employment regulated by a contract. A professional stands in relation to an employer. Even these relations generate moral norms, for example, loyalty and confidentiality.

Professional ethics develops within a community of professionals. For older and established professions, professional ethics is the result of a tradition of moral thinking. A fundamental question is how to characterise a “good doctor” or a “good lawyer”. From this perspective, professional ethics can be described as a type of virtue ethics.

Professional ethics, however, may not be best portrayed through systems of compliance to a set of written principles. The ethic of a professional person might better be captured in the relationship he/she has with those whom he/she serves. The ethical stance is captured or discerned in that professional engagement. If you wish to discern the ethical behaviour of a doctor then look at his/her relationship with the patient; if you wish to discern the ethical

behaviour of a teacher then look at his/her relationship with the student; if you wish to discern the ethical behaviour of a lawyer then look at his/her relationship with the client; and so on. It is within that relationship that the ethic lies. Professional ethics are part of professional knowledge: uncertain, sometimes variable and changeable according to circumstances since it takes account of specific situations, and difficult to capture in a compliance document. They are better thought of as residing within the living experiences of service to others.

The professional persons ought to be clear about what motives they have for doing something. If not, matters such as profit, self aggrandisement, and self-interest can provide motivations that are questionable. This is not to say that profit or legitimate ambitions are to be treated as unworthy of a professional person. They can be legitimate and important motivators for some people at certain times in their careers. Executives, supervisors and other employees have an ethical obligation to accept personal responsibility for bad decisions or professional shortcomings — the morally right thing to do instead of blaming someone else for a mistake or creating other excuses. A supervisor making the wrong call on a decision should truthfully explain the incident when challenged by his bosses. Moral responsibility in the work place is the obligation to provide services while upholding the high and right principles. Honesty and good moral behaviour are some of the morals that are to be upheld. One has to do what is best for the company and respect fellow employees. Indeed, part of professional ethics

has to do with the fairness with which issues are handled and problems are solved. Professionals have a duty to report colleagues' wrong-doing and disciplinary measure may have to be taken. Procedural fairness is part of ethics, and so there must be adequate warnings, notice, a hearing of all sides and an even-handed and consistency in the sanctions taken.

Hence we can say that ethics or personal values, is a critical issue in today's workplace. If employees and employers don't consistently follow high standards of conduct, organisations cannot prosper. Ethics is putting principles into action. Consistency between what we say we value and what our actions say we value is a matter of integrity. In other words individuals should walk the talk. If these aspects are followed and practiced then the road to the goal achievement will not be difficult and people will not be at cross purposes. Being responsible at the workplace will make the individuals learn to be accountable and responsible for their actions. The accountability will help the individuals to do the work in better ways. Ethics is ultimately about caring. Professional ethics is being concerned about the welfare of others and co-existence in the workplace.



Let us be of good cheer,
however, remembering that the
misfortunes hardest to bear are
those which never come.

James Russell Lowell