

Importance of Workplace Ethics – What to remember and what to avoid?

Are you an employee of integrity? 'While many say 'Yes, of course, I am.', it is really surprising to note that only a few follow ethics in the workplace. Why is it so? And what is the significance of ethics in the world of work?

Workplace Ethics are the application of moral principles, a set of values and standards of behaviour to be followed by all the employees in an organization. Be it Personal or Professional, Ethics help us differentiate right and wrong behaviours. In the context of Workplace ethics, there are two important elements – Workplace Policy and Business Ethics. The former includes all the rules, regulations, laws governing business operations whereas the latter is about actions with respective customers/ client. Equal employment opportunity is an example of workplace policy and use of marketing campaigns to communicate their customers can be an example of Business Ethics.

To inculcate the ethical behaviour among employees, business leaders should respect and follow both Workplace Policy and Business Ethics. Here are some ways of promoting, and achieving ethical behaviour:

Implementing Workplace ethics

The best way to encourage employees to follow workplace ethics is to be very specific and careful during the recruitment process. Potential candidates must be recruited based on their ethical values that will match to our organizational values.

Human resource professionals must communicate to all their employees about the organization policies and code of conduct to make them understand about the expected behaviours in the workplace.

Listening to employees problems is another way to make sure they adhere to workplace policies. This can be facilitated by providing constant mentoring.

Transparency in treating employees, having fair practices in terms of recognition and compensation of employees.

Guide the employees on how they must behave in the workspace by sharing Code of Conduct. Few of them are as follows:

- Following proper dress code
- Being punctual to the office
- Respect co-workers/colleagues and superiors
- Avoid engagement in gossiping, harassment, nasty politics and so on

Some of the good ethical behaviours exhibited by the employees in the organizations are as follows:

- Staying productive and being accountable for actions
- Taking initiatives in the business actions
- Think critically to be able to solve problems
- Blowing the whistle
- Take pride in your work
- Immediately attempting to correct an issue
- Set the example – For other employees to follow them

Poor ethical practices that employees must avoid at workplace include:

- They must not engage in any illegal practices
- Stealing – Be it small or big is an offence and seen as poor ethical behaviour
- Ignoring the organizational policies and procedures
- Abusing confidentiality agreements
- Falsifying information
- Making decisions for your own personal gain
- Lack of communication or Withholding information

Despite stating the guidelines, there remains certain lapse in behaviour at an organization where the cause can be due to issues related to sanitation, logistics, reimbursement of bills, and utilisation of available resources. In today's work environment, unfair treatment, discrimination, conflicts, favourism are more prevalent. When employees understand the hostile work environment, they tend to engage in poor ethical behaviour as they don't see integrity and transparency in the processes. Hence, It should always be an organization's priority to run an ethical business rather "profit at any cost" business. Cultivating ethical practices creates a positive work culture in the organization and instils strong impact in building the company's value. Behaviour modelling by the leaders can also add up to adapting ethics among employees. It can be concluded that following ethics at the workplace means morally doing the right things and exhibiting right behaviours. At the end it is also one's personal choice on how to express their behaviour, nevertheless always remember that 'behaviour' is largely watched by the leaders who lead the organization.

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