



Positive Work Ethic



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Introduction

Overview

This unit focuses on behaviors in the workplace and how an employee's behaviors or actions affect the employee, coworkers, the company and customers. The unit will focus on workplace values such as: coming to work on time, being punctual with regard to lunch and breaks, abiding by rules and policies, respecting coworkers, being productive, and serving customers in a positive manner.

The unit will help you understand where values come from, the importance of respecting workplace values, and the importance of assuming responsibility for one's behavior. You will also learn how choosing appropriate workplace behavior contributes to the success of the company.

Objectives

The information, activities and practices provided in this unit will enable you to:

1. Define "positive work ethic" and discuss its importance in the workplace.
2. Identify actions which contribute to workplace success.
3. Explain how employees, the company, and customers benefit when employees demonstrate a positive work ethic.
4. Choose actions which will serve as ground rules for the class during CMS training.

Activity: What Ethics Means to Me

Ethics means different things to different people, depending on their beliefs, backgrounds, religion, experience, training and personal style.

The purpose of this activity is to determine what the word ethics means to you.

In the space provided, answer the following questions.

1. “What does ethics mean to you?”
2. “What are some ethical situations you have encountered and have had to deal with in the workplace?”



Ethics in the Workplace

Introduction

An individual's ethical values are developed in childhood and youth and are constantly tested in the workplace. The manner in which a person deals with ethical situations reflects his or her beliefs, background, training, and personal style.

You must be conscious of and respect the values of the workplace because behavior affects not only your reputation within the company, but may also contribute to the way in which you and the company are perceived by your customers.

Activity: Ethical Values

The following list includes several commonly accepted ethical values of our society. Indicate how you feel about the importance of each item in the workplace by placing a check in the appropriate column.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Honesty	_____	_____	_____
Fairness	_____	_____	_____
Helpfulness	_____	_____	_____
Dependability	_____	_____	_____
Compassion	_____	_____	_____
Loyalty	_____	_____	_____
Obedience to policies	_____	_____	_____
Respect for others	_____	_____	_____
Self-control	_____	_____	_____
Punctuality	_____	_____	_____
Productiveness	_____	_____	_____



Ethical Gray Areas

We understand the importance of truthfulness, honesty, respect, and loyalty in a work environment. However, there are often situations that may fall into gray areas concerning ethical behavior.

Activity: Positive Actions

The following is an exercise on values. Check those actions that reflect positive values for each belief listed in the left column of the chart. We will discuss this exercise when you have finished.

Positive Actions

Honesty

- You occasionally use the company van to run personal errands during work hours.
- You told your boss you got stuck in traffic when you actually overslept.
- You have a doctor's appointment so you offer to make up the time you are away from work.

Teamwork

- You are on a team with very productive people. You don't particularly like the project you are working on, and since you worked so hard on the last one, it's okay to coast a little since the others can easily pull the weight and not complain.
- You are working with a person who seems to have a negative attitude about work. You are talking with her during lunch and you find out that she's never performed the task she's been requested to do and she's afraid that she'll make a mistake. Since you've performed this task before, you spend some time with her to get her up to speed.
- You feel that your boss is unfair. During the day, some of your team members are discussing how much they dislike the boss. You join in the conversation since they feel the same way you do.



Company Image

- You are waiting on a customer who seems to be taking too long to make up his mind. In the mean time, the other sales person has made two sales while you've been with this customer. However, you continue to wait on this person until he decides to make a purchase.
- You are at a social gathering and several people you know are talking about your company's competitor. Since you don't like that company, you join in the conversation and talk about the lousy service the company provides compared to the company you work for.
- You've been having a bad day and you get a call from an irate customer. You are not in the mood to listen to someone complain, so you tell the customer that you cannot help her and then transfer her call to someone else.

Activity: Two Groups

Any group of people who live together, spend time together, or work together have a great impact on the group. We have all experienced this at some time or another.

The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate from your own past experience, how a group's values affect the actions and performance outcomes of the group.

Think of a group you have been a member of at some time in your life. This could be a family, a group at church, at school, at work, in the neighborhood, formal, informal. As you think of this group, recall the characteristics of the group that made it the best or worst group you have ever belonged to.

As you think of these characteristics, list them on the sheet of flip chart paper in letters large enough for the whole group to see. Later the instructor will ask each group to share their lists and explain them to the whole class.



The Power of Collaboration

Ethics in a business environment means being conscious of our actions as well as the complications and consequences of those actions. Maintaining ethical behavior in the work setting involves an awareness of:

- the need for complying with rules and policies set by the company and teams, the customs and expectations of the community, and general concerns of others.
- how actions can affect the products and services of an organization, its workers, the community, and its customers either positively or negatively.

Most problems in a work environment or in working teams are caused by lack of collaboration, which is itself a work value. Collaboration helps alleviate the types of bad experiences you've had with teams. We are seeing more and more collaboration in business today, such as using teams, participative leadership, flattening the organization, Total Quality Management (TQM), and developing partnerships with the customer.

Collaboration provides the following benefits:

- Collaboration builds an awareness of interdependence within an organization or within a team. When people realize the benefits of cooperating with and helping each other, they are more interested in working together to accomplish common goals. No one feels threatened nor competitive.
- When working for an organization, you abide by and respect the values/policies/rules established by that organization. When working in a team, members establish and abide by the "rules" set by the team.
- Collaboration builds and reinforces mutual support and recognition. Team members are able to see the results of their personal efforts, the efforts of others, and the overall achievements.

- People work together and encourage each other to achieve greater results. Since no one feels threatened, people are willing to share and test fresh ideas. When working on a team, team members gain confidence and support other members.
- Everyone feels a commitment to accomplish organizational goals, support each other, and provide the best quality possible to customers.

Summary of Learning

- You are responsible for your actions. Maintaining objectivity during ethical situations enables you to handle a situation in a positive and effective manner.
- Being a member of a group can be either a positive or negative experience depending on the values of the members of the group itself and how they decide to behave.
- Collaboration builds and reinforces mutual support and recognition.
- Collaboration ensures goals of the team, organization, and personal goals are successfully accomplished.
- Collaboration benefits you, other employees, the organization and your customers.



The Ideal Workplace

Introduction

We have been talking about groups in general. Now we are going to be more specific and apply some of this learning. So let us decide now, in the ideal workplace do we want to be a group that has the characteristics of the “best group” list or the “worst group” list? Why?

Activity: Our Positive Work Ethic

Imagine that you have begun working together, as a group, at the same location or department. Look through the behavior cards and select the top 10 that you like the best and your team agrees on. These would be behaviors that would help you create one of the “best” groups you have ever been in. You do not need to sort or rate these cards in order of importance yet. Your instructor will guide you through this activity.

Below is a list of the values printed on the cards, for your reference.

Communication

- We tell the truth.
- We welcome new team members.
- We have a sense of humor.
- We communicate openly.
- We encourage new ideas.
- We think positively.
- We are creative.

Cooperation

- We support one another.
- We are responsible and accountable for our job performance.
- We dress in an appropriate businesslike way.
- We accept differences in opinions.
- We accept each other as we are.
- We help one another.
- We value doing a job well.



Consideration

- We arrive at work on time.
- We come back from meals and breaks on time.
- We are at work every day and build a good attendance record.
- We keep our work area clean and neat.
- We maintain high morale.
- We respect our customers and suppliers.
- We respect our company.
- We enjoy our work.
- We treat our leaders with respect.
- We represent our company positively in our community.

Coordination

- We work at a fast pace.
- We exceed expectations of our customers.
- We complete daily tasks.
- We value learning.
- We welcome change.
- We improve continuously.
- We deliver quality products and services.
- We like challenges.

Activity: Our Ground Rules

Now we have a list of work values. We have to decide how we are going to make certain that they really work and that we will live by them.

If a member of the class feels that we are not paying attention to the rules, that person can call for a “Rules Check.” That means that we stop what we are doing and discuss the fact that rule is not being honored and how we could improve our performance in this regard.

In this way, we become responsible for our own behavior and are being proactive. We don’t wait until something negative happens, and then have to confront problems. We try to avoid them, or deal with them while they are still small.

Answer the following questions to indicate how employees, the company, and customers benefit from workplace values.

1. How do employees benefit from these ground rules?

2. How does the company benefit from workplace values as ground rules?



3. How do customers benefit from these ground rules? What would happen if you were a customer of a company that had no ground rules? How would you be affected by this?"

4. How would a supplier or internal customer benefit from these ground rules?

Just as the individuals of each group have different opinions that were “meshed” to develop each group’s list - the actions of different groups within an organization often reflect different values. This sometimes creates problems. World class manufacturing organizations let the “customer focus” be the guiding value that unites all areas of the company.

Companies have rules for a number of very good reasons. These benefit everybody. Rules are not made to punish employees or to purposefully make them unhappy. They allow everyone to work better together, provide a higher quality service to customers, and stay in business and be successful, and to continue to offer employment. They, just like we, are setting ground rules so that we can have a positive and productive experience together. That is why we set our ground rules earlier in this session.

In some cases, an employee may feel that he or she has been treated unfairly because the supervisor jumped to an incorrect conclusion, or didn't understand the circumstances. But without rules, there would be no standard to go by. The rules have been developed to produce a win-win situation for all parties. They facilitate the behavior and outcomes that we all want. They are a means to an end.

Guidelines for Ethical Behavior

The following are guidelines for ethical behavior.

- Consider the needs of others in general, your coworkers, organization, community, and customers - not just your own needs. View your organization's value system as a win-win process - you give and you will receive.
- Always be conscious of the goals and values of your organization. You are a part of the community and society. Remember, even when you are not at your place of work, you still represent your company.
- Obey rules, laws and cultural standards. Use common sense and assess the possible damage and consequences of unethical behavior before you act.
- Ask yourself, "Is this the right thing to do?" "Will this hurt fellow employees or the company?" "Is it honest?"
- Put your biases aside and look at any situation objectively. Don't let your personal opinion cloud the issue or create conflict with others.



Wrap Up

Can these same values you listed earlier guide this group as we continue as a learning group?

Think about your previous experience with good groups and bad groups.

- Would you add any additional values?
- Are some less appropriate for a learning group?

Let's decide which values we will choose as our own. These will become our "ground rules" while we are together.

We will revisit the "ground rules" you established during future classes and the flip charts, "Our Work Values" will be posted in each class during the course. Every 2 or 3 days we will take time out to discuss how well we are abiding by the rules and what adaptations we should make.

[illegible]



Summary

In this course, you have learned that ethics is a collection of values (beliefs) and behaviors (actions) which people feel are important and that our behavior is often a reflection of our values.

A positive work ethic is the collection of all the values and actions that people feel are appropriate for the workplace.

Ethics in a business environment means being conscious of our actions as well as the complications and consequences of those actions. Maintaining ethical behavior in the work setting involves an awareness of:

- the need for complying with rules and policies set by the company and teams, the customs and expectations of the community, and general expectations of others.
- the importance of assuming responsibility for one's behavior.
- how choosing appropriate workplace behavior benefits the employee and coworkers, the customer, and contributes to the success of the company.

Collaboration plays a vital role in the success of an organization. We are seeing more collaboration in business today with the establishment of teams, participative leadership, TQM, and developing partnerships with customers. Collaboration builds and reinforces mutual support and ensures goals of the team, organization, and personal goals are successfully accomplished.

Finally, companies establish rules which benefit everybody. These rules allow everyone to work better together, provide a higher quality service or product to customers, stay in business, and be successful.

