

Ethics Quiz: Ethics Quiz: How  
Ethical Are You?  
A Brief Exercise on Ethics in the  
Workplace

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Ethical Are You?

- With scandals like the Enron and WorldCom cases in recent years, it's become all the more important to understand the rights, the wrongs, and the gray areas of the business world.
- Mark the correct answer down on a scrap of paper as we will review afterwards.
- **Though more than one answer might seem possible, pick the best answer to the questions provided.**

Ethics Quiz #1

- You are an engineering office manager and one upper-level manager has repeatedly used the company credit card for personal expenses. How do you handle the situation?

Ethics Quiz #1

- a) I do nothing. The person is higher than I am in the company, so it must be OK.
- b) I confront the person and hope that this won't threaten my job.
- c) I confront the person and reveal what I know to a higher-level manager or someone in human resources.

Ethics Quiz #2

- You are an engineer with authority over human resources and an employee comes to you and says, "I want to tell you something about someone, but you can't tell anybody." He then reveals that someone pushed another employee in the company kitchen. Do you tell your boss?

Ethics Quiz #2

- a) I promised not to tell, so I don't.
- b) I find out if the employee was injured and decide based on that whether to tell.
- c) Even though it breaks my promise, I tell my boss so the incident goes on record.

### Ethics Quiz #3

- You are an engineer in a firm and although you're not an accountant, company policy now requires you to sign off on the tax filings for the department you oversee. You've never been a "numbers person" and don't fully understand the documents. What do you do?

### Ethics Quiz #3

- a) I sign it, figuring that if any problems are found, I can just argue that it's not my fault because I didn't understand the document.
- b) I ask someone with more knowledge to walk me through the report before I sign.
- c) I sign it, vowing to take an accounting course whenever I find the time.

### Ethics Quiz #4

- As an engineering manager responsible for hiring employees, you know it's illegal to ask whether a candidate for a position at your company is planning on starting a family, but during the course of the interview a woman candidate reveals that she intends to do that. Can you decide whether to hire her based on the knowledge she might leave the company sooner or take maternity leave?

### Ethics Quiz #4

- a) Yes, since she revealed it, it's fair game in deciding hires.
- b) No, it would be discriminatory to avoid picking her for that reason.
- c) If another candidate seems just as good and that's the only difference, it can become a factor to break the tie.

### Ethics Quiz #5

- You're a candidate for hire at a great company as a land surveyor, but you plan to move across the country in a year. Do you reveal that during the interview?

### Ethics Quiz #5

- a) No, they have no right to know I have relocation plans.
- b) Yes, I would feel obligated to tell.
- c) If the interviewer asks my long-term intentions, I'll admit to my plan.

### Ethics Quiz #6

- A coworker who is also a friend tells you that he has major concerns about a large project and plans to tell the vice president for engineering. You just learned the vice president has been known to fire people who have been too vocal against this project. Do you encourage your friend to be honest anyway?

### Ethics Quiz #6

- a) Yes, honesty is always the best policy.
- b) No, I reveal the dangers of the decision and encourage the friend to protect his job.
- c) I explain what I know but try to avoid encouraging my friend one way or another.

### Ethics Quiz #7

- A friend, an engineer, has just been fired from your company. You are an up-and-coming executive and your boss warns that if you're seen with this person, you could lose the respect of those who might promote you. Before leaving, the friend is upset and asks you to meet him in the conference room, something coworkers will likely see. Do you agree to go comfort your friend?

### Ethics Quiz #7

- a) Yes, human friendships matter more than any promotion.
- b) Yes, but you ask if you can meet at a different location.
- c) No, and you cut off all ties with the shunned employee.

### Ethics Quiz #8

- You're are an engineering manager and have been asked to work with the public relations department in writing a press release about a new product that didn't turn out quite as well as promised in earlier reports. How much do you reveal to the public in the press release?

### Ethics Quiz #8

- a) I don't hint at it. It's important that the company's image is not damaged by the flawed product.
- b) I write a more mildly enthusiastic, but honest, release than I would if the product were perfect.
- c) I'm completely honest, believing it will earn the respect of customers to be forthcoming.

### Ethics Quiz #9

- You're a land surveyor in charge of creating the budget report that goes to the board of directors of your company. Just before the next meeting, the president asks you to leave something negative out and just add it in next time. Do you agree to do this as a favor to him?

### Ethics Quiz #9

- a) Yes, one time will not hurt.
- b) Yes, but only after the president agrees to give you a bonus.
- c) No, one small thing can turn into many small things, which is a big deal.

### Ethics Quiz #10

- An employee casually reveals to you that he cheats on his wife. You're the engineering manager in a different department. Another manager is writing up a positive performance evaluation for this employee. Do you tell your co-manager what you learned?

### Ethics Quiz #10

- a) No, what's personal is personal.
- b) Yes, this behavior could eventually affect the company.
- c) I hint at it but avoid making any definite claim.

### Ethics Quiz #1

- "Personal Use of Credit Card" Case
- The correct answer: C
- I confront the person and reveal what I know to a higher-level manager or someone in human resources

### Ethics Quiz #1

- Talking to the person is not enough to ensure that the behavior won't continue. "Intervening directly is necessary but not sufficient," says Bruce Weinstein, Ph.D., who writes the column "Ask the Ethics Guy" for Knight-Ridder Tribune. Weinstein says management or human resources should monitor the person.

### Ethics Quiz #2

- “Promise Not to Tell” Case
- The correct answer: C
- Even though it breaks my promise, I tell my boss so the incident goes on record.

### Ethics Quiz #2

- Jenn Crenshaw, a professor at the University of Phoenix campus in Richmond, Virginia, says that a human resources manager should warn employees before they divulge a secret that her position and the law might require her to tell someone else. "Then they get to decide whether or not they're going to tell me," Crenshaw says. Even if she doesn't get a chance to forewarn the employee before sensitive information is revealed, she makes sure anything important, like physical assault, goes on the record by telling a higher-up.

### Ethics Quiz #3

- “Tax Filing” Case
- The correct answer: B
- I ask someone with more knowledge to walk me through the report before I sign.

### Ethics Quiz

- A signature can be legally binding whether or not the person had any understanding of the document signed. "If I was asked to sign something where I wasn't privy to all the details, I'd have two or three people reviewing it and have them sign off," says Charles Kerns, Ph.D., who recently authored the book *Value-Centered Ethics*. It also helps to have alignment with employees, which means employees subscribe to the manager's belief in ethical responsibility and quality work, says Kerns, a full-time faculty member at Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Business and Management.

### Ethics Quiz # 4

- “Maternity Leave” Case
- The correct answer: B
- No, it would be discriminatory to avoid picking her for that reason

### Ethics Quiz # 4

- Deciding not to hire a candidate because she (or he) is planning to have a family violates anti-discrimination laws. "It's impossible to know if the other candidate might be planning to leave in six months as well," suggests Jenn Crenshaw.

### Ethics Quiz # 5

- “Relocating Employee” Case
- The correct answer: A
- No, they have no right to know I have relocation plans.

### Ethics Quiz # 5

- Although this question depends largely on personal morals, a potential employee has no obligation to reveal future plans, which could potentially change. If asked directly, someone can instead focus on hopes for growth and promotion within the company to avoid lying.

### Ethics Quiz # 6

- “Retaliating Vice President” Case
- The correct answer: C
- I explain what I know but try to avoid encouraging my friend one way or another.

### Ethics Quiz # 6

- Personal ethics are important, but it's also important not to force those decisions on others, says Don Schierling, a professor at Regis University. Giving others information so they can make the best choice for themselves is generally the best option, Schierling explains.

### Ethics Quiz # 7

- “Fired Co-worker Friend” Case
- The correct answer: B
- Yes, but you ask if you can meet at a different location.

### Ethics Quiz # 7

- Sacrificing your career for a friend is probably more than he or she would ask of you. And yet, shutting someone out completely is probably more extreme than necessary unless their reason for being fired makes them unacceptable as a friend. Trying to find a middle ground can save the friendship and the job. "When an employee is labeled as a loser, if you want to move up, you do not associate with that person," Schierling admits.

### Ethics Quiz #8

- “Press Release” Case
- The correct answer: B
- I write a more mildly enthusiastic, but honest, release than I would if the product were perfect.

### Ethics Quiz # 8

- People in public relations must toe the line between talking positively about a company and lying outright. Since it's understood that a press release is going to put a positive spin on any topic, it's not expected to be fully frank about the flaws. On the other hand, a major disaster can sometimes be mitigated by an honest and upfront handling of the issue with the press. "Ultimately, you have to answer to yourself," says Schierling.

### Ethics Quiz # 9

- ““Presidential Request” Case
- The correct answer: C
- No, one small thing can turn into many small things, which is a big deal.

### Ethics Quiz # 9

- According to Schierling, starting down this slippery slope can be a dangerous thing because it's hard to know when to stop. "Crime seldom starts on a big issue. If you're willing to lie once, the odds are the second time's easier than the first. If you're able to do it twice, then you're able to do it a third time," he says. Kerns agrees: "When we talk to white collar criminals in jail, they say they made these incremental decisions."

### Ethics Quiz # 10

- “Adulterous Co-worker” Case
- The correct answer: A
- No, what's personal is personal.

### Ethics Quiz # 10

- If an employee's off-the-clock behavior could affect his or her job performance, it's important the company know about that, says Weinstein. However, adultery does not often affect job performance. "It's quite possible to be an adulterer and an excellent CEO or middle-level manager, sad as that is," he says. But he adds that the best thing to do based on personal ethics may be to speak with the employee about the emotional and health dangers to his wife.

Ethics Quiz

- Discussion
- Conclusion