

# ETHICS 101

**Ethics** - Principles that govern individual or group behavior; the moral correctness of specified conduct.

Most organizations or companies will have you to believe that “ethics” is primarily about values, leadership, integrity, quality, customer satisfaction, teamwork, corporate citizenship, embezzlement, and especially building “shareholder” worth. Unfortunately, noticeably absent from the aforementioned laundry list or so-called “principles” is being compliant with employment law. For example, every major employer knows that women and minorities are consistently paid less than and are frequently denied promotional opportunities comparable to their White male counterparts; nevertheless, the clear majority of employers have consistently failed to hire and promote qualified women and minorities comparably to their White male counterparts - *which is why the “glass ceiling” will always exist.*

***It's ethical as long as you don't get caught!***

Discrimination is beyond the scope of “ethics” because hiring and promotional practices (those typically ambiguous “principles” employers seek in candidates) are highly subjective, and there's little concern or effort about objective-based hiring practices until a claim of discrimination (EEOC, OFCCP) or legal action against an employer. Question: How is intentionally paying a qualified woman less than her male counterpart any different than a male employee engaging in embezzlement? Theft is theft, right? ***Is the atrocious act of stealing from an employee less “ethical” than stealing from an employer?***

As any attorney will tell you, company “principles and values” are not laws, and companies are free to deviate from any implied “principles and values” at their immediate discretion. The employment event itself exists like “Teflon,” as a nonstick pseudo-contractual relationship that provides for the arrangement of employment but without any true commitment; the contemporary metaphor nowadays is “friends with benefits,” because marriage (career-based employment) is completely out of the question. As written in every employee handbook, ***This Employee Handbook, and all statements presented herein are not intended to address all possible policies, and are subject to change at any time, with or without notice, in whole or in part, at our discretion; and neither this handbook nor any other document confer any contractual right of employment, either expressed or implied, and absolutely no guarantee or any fixed terms or conditions of employment are established. Your employment is not for any specific time and may be terminated “at will,” with or without cause and without prior notice, or you may resign for any reason at any time.***

So, in an environment where ethics and principles and values frequently falter, and employers routinely back-peddle like hypocrites whenever employees or customers attempt to hold employers accountable, why have an ethics program? Is an ethics program primarily a public relations event, and as such, is its true purpose to function only as window dressing? Plus, in the eyes of many employees, management is often found guilty of violating ethics policies, so why force rank and file employees to endure yet another edict, particularly when “enforcement” is bias? Why??

If consistently supported and enforced by executive management, a vibrant ethics program is woven into the strategic performance plans for all business unit objectives, and into the essential job functions and job standards for all positions. A strategically designed ethics program will dramatically increase revenue streams and dramatically improve service delivery - consistently. Unfortunately, a “best practices” model for a dynamic ethics program does not exist with any major employer (Boeing, Eaton, etc.), because too often they “back-peddle like hypocrites whenever employees or customers attempt to hold them accountable.”

To build and administer a dynamic ethics program requires a robust and integrated knowledge of human capital performance, compensation, HRIS and data management, organizational development, civic/community relations, and diversity/AA/EEO/ADA, which is why you should contact me now!

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