

Engineer's Responsibilities and Rights

Professionalism at the workplace

- Professionalism at work involves competence, a sense of fun and excitement, good conduct, and personal commitments
- Engineer' s main responsibility: Top performance and professionalism
- What are the key issues at work?
- Some things matter, some do not? Which ones? Many different perspectives...
- **Example:** Dress code?
- **Example:** Office space/decor “code”? Tech-inspire

Teamwork

- **Ethical corporate climate:**
 - Ethical values in full complexity are acknowledged
 - Responsibilities to constituencies affirmed (other teams, departments, administration, clients/customers)
 - Ethical language is acceptable (you can say what you think is right and wrong)
 - Management (you?) sets moral tone in words, policies, and personal examples, and each person does too.
 - **Examples:** Lunch/break lengths, work diligence, time sheets
 - **Procedures for conflict resolution in teams are important**
- Ethics is not just doing what makes the company money!

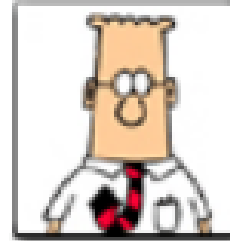


Teamwork

- Loyalty and collegiality:
 - Example: Acceptance of job offer, what do you owe the company? Can you interview? Take another offer?
 - As an employee, fulfill contractual duties to employer (get the job done to your best abilities)
 - Example: Has corporate loyalty to employees degraded? How easily can you get fired if you are performing well? Does this imply that your loyalty should degrade? Creates a bad tone!
 - Attitude (collegiality)
 - Willingly seek to perform duties
 - Enthusiastic, not “forced”
 - Closely related to loyalty
 - Over long time periods good attitude can be difficult to maintain

Teamwork

- Managers and engineers



- Respect authority, but...
- Your demands for professionalism, and appropriate professional tone set by the boss and in the workplace, are important!
- **Example:** Porn in the workplace
- Expert authority is important, a key aspect of professionalism, and something that should be respected (even if someone is not your boss)
- **“Company-orientation”** (engineering, customer, finances, marketing). What *mix* is best? You may decide this if you are the boss.
- How does the company manage conflict? Managers? Ombudsperson? Organizational structures?

Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

- Confidentiality

- What to keep secret?
- “Proprietary information” - disclosure to competitors would hurt the company. The company has a right to some secrets.
- What about a right to secrecy about poor practice, unethical policies and practices, etc.?

- Changing jobs:

- Confidentiality to old employer does not cease!
- But, there is a *soft boundary* as you always bring along your expertise and experiences (i.e., your brain)!

Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

- Management policies?
 - Mark documents as “proprietary”?! Make clear statements about what is and is not confidential.
 - “Employment contracts”
 - Have you signed one?
 - Did you read the fine print?
 - Example: Do you own work that you do at home at night on unrelated projects?
- Clear policies are critical! They help set a professional tone since they set clear boundaries. *Everyone then knows what is right or wrong.*

Conflict of Interest

- Situations that if pursued could keep employees from meeting obligations to employer:
 - Gifts, bribes, kickbacks? Have you done this?
Is it always unacceptable? When/where is it acceptable?
 - Interests in other companies (suppliers?)
 - Insider information (impact on stocks)

Rights of Engineers

- Professional rights
 - Right of professional conscience (moral autonomy)
 - Right of conscientious refusal (can refuse to be unethical just because you view it to be that way)
 - Right to recognition, fair pay

Employee rights

- Privacy (e.g., in computers). To what extent can the company pry?
- Equal opportunity, nondiscrimination, sexual harassment, affirmative action
 - Have you seen discrimination in the workplace?
 - Have you seen sexual harassment in the workplace?
- What should you do about it? Just because you see it, are you responsible?
- Examples: Should you date co-workers? Is it a good idea to date the boss?

Functions of Engineers and Managers

- ❑ **Proper Engineering Decision (PED):** a decision that should be made by engineers or at least governed by professional engineering standards because it either
- i. involves technical matters that require engineering expertise or
 - ii. falls within the ethical standards embodied in engineering codes, especially those that require engineers to protect the health and safety of the public.

Functions of Engineers and Managers

□ **Proper Management Decision (PMD):** a decision that should be made by managers or at least governed by management considerations because

- i. it involves factors relating to the well-being of the organization, such as cost, scheduling, and marketing, and employee morale or welfare; and
- ii. the decision does not force engineers (or other professionals) to make unacceptable compromises with their own technical or ethical standards.

Organizational Disobedience

- ❑ There are at least three distinct areas in which responsible engineers might be involved in organizational disobedience:
 1. **Disobedience by contrary action**, which is engaging in activities contrary to the interests of the company, as perceived by management.
 2. **Disobedience by nonparticipation**, which is refusing to carry out an assignment because of moral or professional objections.
 3. **Disobedience by protest**, which is actively and openly protesting a policy or action of an organization.
- ❑ In some situations, engineers find the actions of the employer to be so objectionable that they believe mere nonparticipation in the objectionable activity is insufficient. Rather, some form of protest, or “whistleblowing,” is required.

Whistle-blowing

- ❑ Whistle-blowing occurs when an employee or former employee conveys information about **a significant moral problem to someone in a position to take action on the problem**, and does so outside approved organizational channels (or against strong pressure).

- ❑ The definition has four main parts.
 - ❑ **Disclosure:** Information is intentionally conveyed outside approved organizational (workplace) channels or in situations where the person conveying it is under pressure from supervisors or others not to do so.

Whistle-blowing

- ❑ **Topic:** The information concerns what the person believes is a significant moral problem for the organization (or an organization with which the company does business). Examples of significant problems are serious threats to public or employee safety and well-being, criminal behavior, unethical policies or practices, and injustices to workers within the organization.
- ❑ **Agent:** The person disclosing the information is an employee or former employee, or someone else closely associated with the organization (as distinct, say, from a journalist reporting what the whistle-blower says).

Whistle-blowing

□ **Recipient:** The information is conveyed to a person or organization that is in a position to act on the problem (as distinct, for example, to telling it to a family member or friend who is in no position to do anything). The desired response or action might consist in remedying the problem or merely alerting affected parties.

Whistle-blowing

- ❑ **External whistleblowing** when the information is passed outside the organization.
- ❑ **Internal whistle-blowing** when the information is conveyed to someone within the organization (but outside approved channels or against pressures to remain silent).
- ❑ **Open whistle-blowing**, in which individuals openly reveal their identity as they convey the information.
- ❑ **Anonymous whistle-blowing**, which involves concealing one's identity.

Moral Guidelines

❑ Under what conditions are engineers justified in whistle-blowing?

1. The actual or potential harm reported is serious.
2. The harm has been adequately documented.
3. The concerns have been reported to immediate superiors.
4. After not getting satisfaction from immediate superiors, regular channels within the organization have been used to reach up to the highest levels of management.
5. There is reasonable hope that whistle-blowing can help prevent or remedy the harm.

Common Sense Procedures

- ❑ There are several rules of practical advice and common sense that should be heeded before taking this action
 1. Except for extremely rare emergencies, always try working **first through normal organizational channels**. Get to know both the formal and informal (unwritten) rules for making appeals within the organization.
 2. **Be prompt in expressing objections**. Waiting too long may create the appearance of plotting for your advantage and seeking to embarrass a supervisor.
 3. **Proceed in a tactful, low-key manner**. Be considerate of the feelings of others involved. Always keep focused on the issues themselves, **avoiding any personal criticisms** that might create antagonism and deflect attention from solving those issues.

Common Sense Procedures

4. As much as possible, **keep supervisors informed of your actions**, both through informal discussion and formal memorandums.
5. **Be accurate in your observations and claims, and keep formal records documenting relevant events.**
6. Consult trusted colleagues for advice—**avoid isolation.**
7. Before going outside the organization, **consult the ethics committee of your professional society.**
8. **Consult a lawyer concerning potential legal liabilities.**