



23 Ethical & Unethical Behavior Examples in Workplace

By Formplus Blog | Last updated: Dec 04 |

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Workplace ethics are a dynamic set of values that vary with people and their definition of a workplace. For some, it is a physical office they go to every day, while others, their home office.

It doesn't matter whether you work from home or commute to work everyday, workplace ethic is required to build a successful career. Organizations are known to embrace ethical practices and behaviors to increase productivity and uphold integrity—while setting a penalty for workers who default workplace ethics.

Following a predefined workplace ethic is a little harder for freelancers and business owners because there is usually no disciplinary committee to punish them for defaulting. It is however evident that for them to not lose clients, they need to imbibe workplace ethics into themselves.

What is Workplace Ethics?

Workplace ethics are the set of values, moral principles, and standards that need to be followed by both employers and employees in the workplace. It is the set of rules and regulations that need to be followed by all staff of the workplace.

These ethics are implemented by employers to foster both employee-employee relationship and employee-customer relationships. An organization may decide to put these ethics into writing or not—they are however meant to be followed.

There exist some general workplace ethics that do not need to be defined by the employer, but are common ethical behaviors employees need to exhibit. In the same vein, some organization-specific ethics may need to be defined in a company handbook.



Examples of Ethical Behaviors in The Workplace

Examples of ethical behaviors in the workplace includes; obeying the company's rules, effective

communication, taking responsibility, accountability, professionalism, trust and mutual respect for your colleagues at work. These examples of ethical behaviors ensures maximum productivity output at work. And could be pivotal for career growth.

- **Obey The Company's Rules & Regulation**

At the start of an employee contract, companies may need the employee to sign various documents, including the company rules and regulation agreement form. Also, the employee may be given a handbook that may serve as a guide.

Some common rules are tardiness, inappropriate dressing, and language, etc. Due to the excitement of getting a new job, some employees do not properly read these rules and may end up deferring them in the future.

Therefore, it is important that new employees properly read these rules & regulations in other not to defer them.

- **Communicate Effectively**

Effective communication is very important to avoid misunderstandings when dealing with issues in the workplace. Communicating effectively may mean different things to people at different points in time.

Let us consider the hypothetical situation of an employee trying to relay information to a French-speaking customer. The best way to communicate effectively with the customer is to have an employee who can speak French relay the information.

Effective communication may also have an employee breaking one of the rules and regulations of the company without getting penalized for it. An employee reaching out to HR that they will be coming in late due to some unforeseen circumstances may be spared for coming late if the situation is properly communicated.

- **Develop Professional Relationships**

Good professional relationships are not only a thing that fosters teamwork among employees, but also help with individual career development for employees. Developing professional relationships with coworkers or other professionals outside the workplace will also directly or indirectly improve productivity.

Professional relationships between low-level and high-level employees will make it easier for ideas to be shared and knowledge to be passed to junior employees. That way, the company can confidently have an intern work on a tough project to meet a pending deadline due to the guidance from older employees.

Salespeople, for one, need to build external professional relationships with professionals from other organizations—especially those who are potential clients. These relationships will help create a contact person in another organization in case they need to sell a product to them.

- **Take Responsibility**

It is important for employees to always take responsibility for decisions made both individually and in a team. This is, in fact, a leadership trait that every employee who is looking to take up a managerial position in the future should exhibit.



Understandably, employees may want to save their job and are therefore scared of taking responsibility for a particular event. However, they shouldn't let this fear take them out of the team.

For example, the communications team came up with a marketing strategy for the company and it failed. The team members are to jointly take responsibility for this failure, not individuals coming out that they weren't part of the decision making process.

If the strategy has gone the other way round, they wouldn't have said the same.

- **Professionalism/Standards**

There are professional standards that everything an employee does in the workplace. The use of informal words in a formal workplace is highly unprofessional.

These standards should be held high and applied to every part of an employee's activity in the workplace. This should include the way they speak, kind of work they deliver and their relationship with coworkers and customers.

- **Be Accountable**

Accountability is also a very good trait of an employee. One of the things that may short change a talented and responsible is the lack of accountability.

Lack of accountability may result in your boss thinking you have an "I don't care attitude" to the company's project or worst take you as a liar and may lead to job loss in the long run. For example, at the beginning of each year, a certain amount of money is allocated to each department.

The manager is meant to oversee how this money is spent. If at the end of the year, the manager can not make an account of how the money was spent, he may then be suspected of stealing company funds.

- **Uphold Trust**

An employee should not do anything that may make his or her employee withdraw trust. As an employee of a company, your employee trusts you to get work done perfectly on time.

Things like missing deadlines regularly or delivering work that needs to be revised over and over again will deny you a promotion. It may even leave the employer not giving you tasks to complete in the future—a nightmare for freelancers.

- **Show Initiative without being told**

Is the company running behind deadline and you feel you can stay a few extra hours after work to finish up? Do it.

You are a freelance designer and your client wants a particular poster designed but doesn't have a copywriter to write the content. If you can write the contents, do so. Don't delay a client's work because of a few contents.

- **Respect Your Colleagues**

It doesn't matter whether you are dealing with the intern, a junior, janitor, etc. they should all be

treated with respect. As a manager, treating your team members with respect will help improve their productivity.

Giving constructive criticism and saying kind words to them even when they are not able to deliver perfectly will help them strive to do better in the future.

- **Work Smarter**

Don't just work hard, work smarter. The reason why you see an employee promoted to the post of manager after just 2 years and a hardworking employee who has been with the company for 10 years failed to get a promotion is smart work.

Assume that these 2 employees are data scientists who collect data and analyze them. A smarter employee will use the Formplus data collection tool to collect data and receive real-time data analytics, while a hard-working employee will print paper-based forms and do the hard work of sharing it to respondents.

Unethical Workplace Behaviors

- **Lies**

Lying is a trait that is detested in and outside the workplace. It kills trust, affects relationships and may even put people in trouble.

There are different situations where employees lie in the workplace—with just one lie opening the floor for many others. It could be a sales manager lying about the number of clients they were able to get in a month or an employee calling in sick just to attend another job interview.

A lot of employees start lying from their CV, by adding experiences they didn't acquire, and the skills they don't have. Employees need to understand that lying about work may eventually get them in trouble and needs to stop before they lose their job.

However, we notice that employees lie due to fear of their employer—an employee will call in sick to go for interviews because companies frown against employees interviewing at another

company. HR should put up a more friendly culture that will encourage people to progress in their careers taking up other jobs and even support them throughout the process.

- **Taking Credit for Others Hard Work**

It is very common for managers to take credit for their team member's hard work when reporting to the management. A team member may have brought an idea that helped the sales team improve their sales by 200%.

However, when giving a report, the manager doesn't mention the team member's name but claims the idea as his. Employees need to reduce the use of "I", but embrace the use of " We".

By taking credit for another person's work, you will be denying the person a promotion, bonus or commendation for a job well done. This will discourage the person from sharing ideas that will benefit the company in the future.

- **Verbal Harassment/Abuse**

Employees need to stay away from using foul language on coworkers in and out of the workplace. This is very important when dealing with customers.

Customers are known to get angry and may result in verbal abuse due to a bad product or service. They may even get insult you when they are at fault.

As a customer care representative, salesperson or any other employee, it is beth important that you don't use abusive words on customers no matter how provoked.



- **Violence**

Similar to verbal harassment, employees should not be violent when dealing with coworkers and customers. Customers may likely provoke you, but it is better to keep shut and walk away rather than turn violent.

- **Non-Office Related Work**

A lot of employees have side hustles which they use to supplement salaries. This is very good and only very few companies are against employees working to make money outside work hours.

However, some employees still do non-office related work during office hours. Employees who have side hustles should try doing them on weekends or employing other people to handle some of the business logistics to avoid eating into office hours to get the work done.

- **Extended Breaks**

Companies give lunch breaks to employees and people take advantage of these breaks to do

other things outside office work like, go for interviews, meet with friends or even work on their side hustles. They are free to do whatever they want these lunch breaks.

Employees, however, take advantage of these lunch breaks and extend them beyond time.

- **Theft/Embezzlement**

Some employees are known for diverting company funds into their bank accounts—padding project quotations, invoices, etc. to deceive the company on how much was spent on particular projects.

This act is detrimental to the company because employees who steal sometimes replace quality products with counterfeits which are cheaper but causes damage in the future.

- **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is an offense that is not limited to the workplace alone. An employee accused of sexual harassment will not only face consequences in the workplace but also tried at a court of law.

Many companies have a zero-tolerance rate for sexual harassment in and outside the workplace. This may tarnish the company's reputation and the only way to curb is to make an example of defaulters.

- **Corrupt Practices**

Some common causes of corruption can be seen during the employment process of an organization. They invite so many people to send their CVs and come for interviews but only people with the same political affiliation with them get the job.

This is also common with companies that ask for contractors to bid for a project but the employees will only give them to their friends who may not even bid at all.

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Management/Employers Unethical Behaviors

Workplace ethics is not for employees alone. Employers are also bound to workplace ethics and may also be tried for unethical behavior.

- **Sex for Job/Promotion**

It is common for managers, employers and major decision-makers to use their position in the workplace to influence the hiring decision in exchange for sex.

- **Late Night Out/Unpaid Overtime**

Some employers take advantage of desperate job seekers and the competitive job market to use employees' leisure time as they wish. They do so with the mentality that they are doing employees a favor by employing them, not knowing that the favor is mutual.

Employees who are scared of queries or job loss are not able to protest the infringement into their private time by the employer.

- **Verbal Harassment**

It is common among employers to verbally harass employees when they make little mistakes. This will reduce employee morale and productivity.

Employers should always say kind words to their employees.

- **Undue Pressure**

Deadlines are a great way to make sure the work gets done on time. However, when employees are placed under undue pressure, they end up trading quality for on-time delivery.

An example of undue pressure will be giving an employee a 1-day deadline for a project that would normally take a week.

- **Nepotism**

This is a common type of corruption that happens in the workplace. An employee who has been working hard for years while influencing company growth may get sidelined for a promotion because of another employee who is a family friend, family or friend of the employer. Things like this are what reduces employee morale or even push talented employees from drop a resignation.

- **Unfriendly Work Environment**

One of the things that can mar productivity is an unfriendly working environment. This may come as a combination of abusive bosses, lack of commendation, nepotism, etc. An unfriendly environment is an environment that combines various unethical behaviors into one.

- **Unrealistic Expectations**

Creatives usually have it worse when it comes to having unrealistic expectations from employees.

How to Solve Unethical Issues at the Workplace

- **Have Rules**

Organizations need to have predefined rules and regulations regarding workplace ethics. These rules and regulations should be given to new employees together with their employment contract.

workplace-code-of-conduct

Also having the rules written at strategic places at the workplace will also help remind people about the rules. People tend to unconsciously imbibe things they see every day.

- **Accept Feedback/Complaint**

Make it easy for employees to send feedback or complaint in case of harassment, abuse or any

other unethical activities going on in the workplace.

With [tools like Formplus](#), you can create an online forms to receive complaint on [workplace harassment](#) or any other unethical behaviors

- **List consequences for unethical behaviors**

Consequences for unethical behaviors should also be placed alongside the rules at strategic places in the organization. That way, if anyone wants to ignore the rules despite seeing them, the fear of getting punished will stop him or her from going ahead.

- **Swift Justice/Disciplinary Action**

Some Companies often cover up issues of rape, sexual harassment, etc. when the perpetrator is a high ranking member of the organization. Things like this should not be accommodated.

Irrespective of who breaks the rule, there should be swift disciplinary action by the organization.

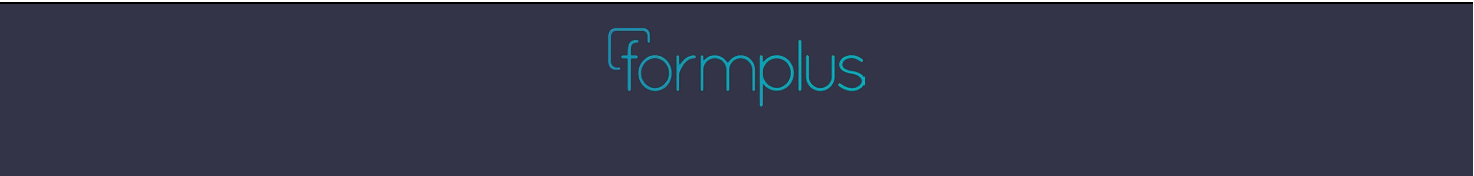


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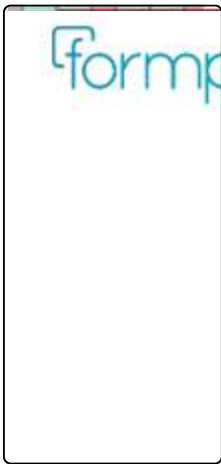
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