

A Question of How, Not What To Do

Item is no longer available. It was last available on Jun 27, 2007 11:55 PM.

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Most people have a clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong and what falls into that narrow, gray, fuzzy area in between. They can articulate the rules, they know the consequences, and they usually agree.

So why, then, do people have such a tough time 'doing the right thing.'

Here's an example: You are a student at UIS and have access to a full version, legal copy of MSDNAA (Microsoft) software. Some of the MSDNAA software that you can obtain free of charge costs hundreds of dollars at your local Best Buy store. Visio is a good example.

You really like your part-time job. You are learning a lot and enjoy the easy-going environment. More importantly, you really need your job. You wonder how you'd even eat if you didn't have that paycheck twice a month. Good jobs are difficult to get. In fact, you have several friends who can't find any job at all!

You are up for your first annual review. Lately the company has let a few people go and you are a little nervous about keeping your job. You think you are doing a good job at work, but you've heard that your supervisor's recommendation will carry a great deal of weight in deciding if you continue with your position. You have a performance review with your supervisor in five days. It is the beginning of the week.

Monday: Your supervisor stops by your desk and strikes up an easy conversation. He mentions his son who is in high school hoping to receive a college scholarship for a network design project he is working on for a state competition. You mention that he might want to suggest his son use a software package called Visio because it makes for a nice presentation and will allow him to show off his design nicely.

Tuesday: Your supervisor finds you in the hallway, stops you, and says he and his son went to Best Buy and found the Visio package you had recommended. Your supervisor expresses his surprise that it cost nearly \$800. He asks if you have a copy and you tell him that no, you don't. You've never needed it since you do programming, not network design. But you've heard friends really talk it up as a winning tool. Your supervisor is called to the phone.

Wednesday: Your supervisor stops by your desk and mentions that he sees you are on his calendar for your performance review on Friday. He's looking forward to it, he says. And, he continues, it reminds him that you are a student at UIS, and, he continues, isn't that where they have the MSDNAA program that gives students a free, fully licensed copy of software, software like Visio? In fact, he goes on, he's sure now that he thinks about it that you can get a copy and, since you've already said you don't need it yourself, you can give it to him for his son. It will be better if his son just registers it himself in case he needs to call for tech support. (He looks you straight in the eye). Now he'd really appreciate that, and, after all, it's nothing out of your pocket. Well, with the performance report he can write up about you, you might even get a company raise! He grins with comradery and turns to leave saying, "We sure could use that Visio package before Friday!" You swallow and say nothing. He continues. "Thanks, kiddo. I knew I could count on you. We support each other around here. See you later this week."

You know it is forbidden for you to give any MSDNAA product you receive to another person. You should have spoken up. But there wasn't enough time to think! You begin to rationalize that no one's really going to know anyway. And what's one little software package to an industry giant like Microsoft. Didn't they basically cheat other companies anyway to get to the top!

Still, on the ride home at the end of the day, you feel trapped. You really don't want to do something that seems morally wrong. But you also don't want to lose your job.

How can you get out of this situation, saving your job and staying on the good side of your supervisor? BE SPECIFIC. Tell me specifically what you can say and how you can say it. Or tell me specifically what you can do and how you would do it. Remember, your goal is to save your job, retain a good relationship with your supervisor, and not hand over VISIO illegally.

Remember to read all the posts that are part of the Discussion Forum so that you do not repeat what has already been said. For full credit you need to bring something new to the discussion. Instead of writing a new post, you may respond to another student's post so long as your comment is substantive and well thought out.

In fact, responding to another student's post is an excellent way to gain full credit when you are not sure you have anything new to add to the discussion in a new post. Instead you can find a sentence in another student's post that you disagree with and explain why you disagree. For example, suppose that Joan posts a message saying that she would do X in this situation. Brian would respond to the situation by doing Y. But as he reads through the posts in the forum, he sees that someone has already mentioned Y as a response. Since Brian's response to the situation has already been posted, he decides to respond to Joan's post. He disagreed with something she said and chooses to make that comment as a response to Joan's post. By responding to her post, Brian receives full credit. Linda doesn't agree with either Brian or Joan. She decides to react to Brian, explaining why she disagrees with his post. So long as no one else has made the same comment to what Brian said, Linda will also receive full credit.