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| **Essay 1 – Personal Ethical Dilemma**  Name: Jessica Hoffman  Course: CIS150-77  Date: 1/24/2016 |

When I was 17, I began my first job at a local Dairy Queen near my house. I have faced several ethical dilemmas throughout my two and a half years working there, but one in particular stood out in my mind. During the summer of 2014, while I was working drive-thru, a customer presented me a coupon that I suspected to be phony. The customer had ordered two ice cream cones and insisted on using multiple fake coupons that said, “Free ice cream cone from DQ” on them. My manager always made sure her employees were aware of which coupons were circulating and told us to ask her about any suspicious coupons.

The customer was furious that I would not immediately accept the fake coupons and give her free ice cream. Of course I did not accuse the customer of presenting fake coupons, I simply stated, “I have not seen these before, please allow me to show them to my manager real quick.” She refused to hand the coupons to me personally, so I called my manager over to the drive-thru window. My manager was holding the customer’s potential ice cream cone. The customer hesitantly handed the coupons to my manager; she confirmed that the coupons were invalid and that we could not accept them. The enraged customer snapped at my manager, demanding for her to give the coupon back (so she could try to rip off another Dairy Queen). When my manager informed her about the owner’s policy to confiscate bogus coupons, the customer leaped out of her car window, reached inside the drive-thru window, and snatched the ice cream cone and the fake coupon before speeding away. Since the customer legitimately stole ice cream from us, my manager tried to write down the customer’s license plate number and file a police report.

In this circumstance, I was faced with an ethical dilemma. Angry customers are difficult to deal with when you are young and lacking work experience; I have witnessed many new employees let deceitful customers take advantage of them out of fear of embarrassment or simply to avoid making a scene. Since my manager was in the back, I could have made a choice to accept the fake coupons and get the customers on their way without getting caught by my manager. This way, I could have avoided conflict and being yelled at. The other choice available, the one I chose, was to inform my manager about the suspicious coupons and refuse to give away free ice cream until I knew whether or not the coupons were valid.

The stakeholders in this situation were the customer, my manager, the owner of that Dairy Queen, and myself. Before the customer physically stole the ice cream cone, she had not done anything illegal by presenting us with fake coupons. She could have acted surprised and stated that she was unaware that the coupons were not real. During this fiasco, I had a right to protect myself and my job by making a moral decision not to give away free ice cream. The manager and the owner have a right to oversee the actions of employees in order to protect the business. The owner has a right to decide which coupons he will accept and to determine which coupons are completely invalid. He also has a right to pursue the customer through the police or court for stealing his products and creating a disturbance. As previously stated, one alternative to my decision would have been to accept the coupons secretly and give the customer free ice cream. This decision would only be in the best interest of the customer because it would have put my job at risk if my manager or the owner found out. If the owner or manager noticed a decrease in expected inventory or an unbalanced cash register, they may have checked the security cameras to see if any of their employees made a mistake or made a decision that sabotaged their revenue. Another alternative decision would have been to give the customer the ice cream cones and pretend to accept their coupons, but later on I could have added my own money to the cash register. This way, I had not done anything morally wrong since technically the ice cream was not really “free.” Also, I would avoid getting yelled at and keep the drive-thru line moving at a quick pace. This decision could still sabotage my manager and the owner though, since the customer would think that we accept bogus coupons and try to rip us off in the future.

Ultimately, I decided that the most ethical decision was to inform my manager of the coupons and wait to see if I should give the ice cream to the customer. If I had not escalated the situation to someone above me, I would have been held responsible for giving free ice cream to a customer and technically I would be the culprit for theft, not the customer. The decision I made allowed me to keep my job and also helped inform the manager and the owner that some customers were attempting to use fake coupons – a situation they may have been unaware of otherwise. With regard to the *Ten Guidelines for Making Ethical Decisions,* I believe my decision served as a model for many of these guidelines. To name a couple, my decision coincides with the utilitarianism principle and Kant’s Categorical Imperative. The utilitarianism principle is satisfied because my decision not only resulted in the greatest good for the greatest number of people, but it was the best decision when performing a cost and benefit analysis of the situation. My decision also satisfied Kant’s Categorical Imperative because my action could be viewed as a rule of behavior and universal norm – if I had chosen to unjustly give away free ice cream, my action could not have been a universal law because every ice cream company would go out of business.

Overall, my decision to inform my manager about the coupons and deny free ice cream to the customer was the most ethical decision I could have made in the situation. If I had not made this choice, my job would have been at risk and the customer would have benefited unjustly. From this life experience, I learned a valuable lesson about making ethical decisions in the work place.