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### Ethical Dilemmas in the Workplace

In a society that is so advanced technologically and full of imperfect people, ethical dilemmas are bound to arise. These issues can manifest in different ways, whether that be employees misusing time and company resources while they're on duty, employers and/or employees treating each other detrimentally, as well as many other issues. I will discuss in this paper common ethical dilemmas currently found in many work professional environments, the problem I think I am most likely to encounter and must try to resolve, a plan for one to handle/overcome those dilemmas, and an assessment of my current preparedness for dilemmas, and course of action to become more prepared for dealing with such circumstances.

According to Chron, a website for small businesses, and Michigan State University (MSU), there are a few dilemmas that frequently appear in workplaces today. Almost all the dilemmas found in organizations deal with human relationships and interaction. If not this, then the predicament is usually internal. It seems as if the most common issue, as it is on both the list from Chron and MSU, is questionable use of company technology, mainly to conduct personal business while at work. Michigan State University states that one survey found that 64% of employees visit non-work-related websites when they are at work. This seems as though it's a very minor issue, however the root of this dilemma can be traced to dishonesty. Whether intentional or not, conducting personal business on company time or machines is lying about the hours that you're working or the work you're supposed to get done. Following that trend of

dishonesty, a few more quandaries surface. A very serious matter is that of stealing from the company through money embezzling or taking other resources without permission. The above issues are in direct violation of *ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* section 1.3. Another common dilemma is someone taking credit for someone else's work. The Chron article states, "Employees often work in teams to create marketing campaigns, develop new products or fine-tune services, yet rarely does everyone in a group contribute equally to the final product." It goes on to say that resentment will form if someone gets too much or too little credit for the work that they did or don't do. Another form of dishonesty is laziness, which is yet another ethical conundrum. Three very important topics that should be discussed in terms of dilemmas at work and are on both the list MSU and Chron separately compiled are inappropriateness, whether in their language (vulgarity) or sexually (verbal and physical), and discrimination as well as harassment of all three kinds. The Bible says in Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV), "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..." and sadly, we see the affects of this all around us, often times in the form of sexual abuse/harassment and racism or other forms of discrimination. These actions disregard the principle of the *IEEE Code of Ethics* sections 7.8.1 and 7.8.8. A couple other morally questionable activities one may encounter in a work environment are co-workers slandering and disrespecting the employer and/or other co-workers simply because they do not get along or prefer the way something is being done.

Knowing many of the common dilemmas present in professional environments nowadays, it is difficult to try to foresee which one I am most likely to encounter. To some degree, I believe I will encounter most, if not all, of these issues at some point. While this is probably true, there is a higher chance I will encounter a couple problems more than others. Simply because employers try to create environments where people are grouped with people that

work well together, is a safe environment, employees are held accountable for their time, and company resources are generally protected, I think the two issues I am most likely to encounter are people conducting personal business on company equipment and/or time in addition to people bad-talking. I believe I'll see the first dilemma that I mentioned because it is very easy to do, even if you don't mean to. An example the article from Chron gives is when your spouse calls and tells you your children are sick. It's very easy to pick up the company phone that's at your desk, or even your cell phone, and call the doctor to schedule an appointment, which is only one scenario among many. The other problematic situation I think I am likely to find myself in is the second one mentioned above; people degrading other people behind their backs. It is very common for a human to think their way to do something is the correct way to do it, which causes them to dislike or resent their boss or co-worker when they don't do said thing in the way the individual would prefer. Therefore, it's very easy for me to imagine a circumstance where I am at work or at dinner with fellow co-workers, then someone mentions they are unhappy with the a certain operation or how they dislike a certain person in the office, then suddenly that escalates to everyone pitching into the slandering and degrading about said person or operation.

To avoid such events happening, I propose two things for each common dilemma. For the first, the best thing would be to go to check with one's manager or supervisor if a certain activity is permitted while at work. Second, to prevent the temptation of using company resources or time for personal business, one could put his/her cell phone away or on silent as to make sure one stays on task while he/she is at work, being attentive to what he/she is using the companies resources for company business. As for the second common issue found in the workplace, one could be very mindful of what they say around other people inside the company. And if his/her co-workers start talking poorly about someone, try to either steer the conversation to a different

topic, or focus on the good attributes of the person or operation. Also, one can refer to the *IEEE Code of Ethics* and the *ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* as references to find encouraged behavior in the workplace.

Personally, I feel somewhat well prepared for difficult situations that may arise at the workplace. My parents raised me in such a way and God has given me the blessing that doing the right thing is almost second nature. So, when it comes to having integrity of how I use my time at work, I personally don't struggle with that very much, if at all. As for talking bad about someone who is difficult to interact with or an operation that could be done better, I find it much more difficult to speak highly of people when I would do something differently. A course of action I could take to better prepare myself for all ethical dilemmas, not just the two I think I'm most likely to encounter, is to pray and ask God to give me more grace, strength, and patience when in the workforce. I can go read the *IEEE Code of Ethics* and the *ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*. Also, I can learn from others' past experiences. I could go talk with people older than me that have already been through tough situations and glean from their failures and successes. And if all else fails, I can always grow from trial and error as new predicaments arise.

Because of the imperfect and depraved sin nature of humanity, workplaces are not always the most ideal professional environments. Therefore, many ethical and moral dilemmas arise and occur more frequently than desired. However, if one knows about such issues before he/she enters the workplace, he/she can prepare him/herself and fortify the moral values to which he/she holds in addition to those that are common among humans as general courtesies.

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