

In *Is Business Bluffing Ethical?* Albert Z. Carr describes the scope of legal yet unethical decisions that are in daily business cycles. He describes how business makers battle their self-morals with the ability to make unethical required decisions to best benefit the corporation they work for. He also challenges the crux of the problem, which is why business executives must utilize Business Bluffing if they want to have an edge over competitors. I will argue with Carr, for his argument reasons that “Business Bluffing” is an accepted practice amongst the Business World and is not unethical. Even if we are to deem this Bluffing as personally unethical, we cannot apply personal morals to the Business World, because Business is a complex, system-orientated environment where personal beliefs and interests can impede on a business’s production.¹

My argument will develop as follows. First, I will use the normative claims made by Carr to analyze the premises of what Carr is trying to conclude. In the second part of the argument, I will present potential opposing thoughts about Carr’s claim. Though this argument requires more contextual research, there are no major refutes to Carr’s claims and conclusion from myself.

1. Contextual Clarity

The Business World functions differently than our personal lives. This is a money-driven society, where ethics are not the driving factor in constituting decisions. Carr contends that “the Business World operates by a set of rules that are different than personal life, and that bluffing is a necessary part of these rules.”² – reasoning that businesses have a right to protect their interests, and Bluffing is a tool that is commonly used to do so. Carr then describes how a Business will bluff to their competitors that they are stronger than they are, to create a perceived illusion that they have an advantage over competitors. This type of bluffing follows all constitutional rules set in place, and mainly occurs between inter-company relations. But that bluff is a double-edged sword, because everyone in the Business World is aware of bluffing, and always consults amongst each other to before creating an appropriate counter. Carr compares such behavior to “the bluffing of a poker player who seizes every opportunity to win, as long as it does not involve outright cheating”. Carr reasons that no one questions the ethics of a poker player, because Bluffing is instilled within the rules of the game.

With that being said, if someone is caught outright bluffing, that could affect future relations with that person and could negatively affect their connections. Carr shows an example where a young man had political newspapers lined up in front of him, and his employer told him to pick whichever ones he read daily. While he reads the radically left magazines, he chose the conservative options, to heighten his chance of working at a corporation which he knew supported conservatives. While this is not illegal, it heightened his chances of success.³ If he were to get caught further on, he would not face legal trouble, but would face interpersonal troubles with his coworkers and employers, who would presumably be upset that he lied to them. This setting relates directly to Carr’s 3rd premise: Carr seems to believe:

¹ Carr 1

² Carr 3

³ Carr 5

P1: Business is a game that has its own set of rules, and bluffing is one of the accepted practices in the game.

P2: Business bluffing is not the same as lying or cheating, because it involves using strategic deception to gain a competitive advantage, and both parties involved in the negotiations will use such tactics to gain leverage.

P3: Bluffing can also negatively affect a person or companies' image if poorly executed.

Conclusion: We should allow Business Bluffing because it is not considered cheating.

In the Business World, if the Bluffing doesn't break any constitutional rules, everyone in the Business World knows about it, then why is it unethical? It is simply a tool to create advantages and variation amongst industries by altering a business appearance and perception. Whoever plays the bluffs the best will reap the rewards – and whoever plays the bluff the worst will be put at a disadvantage.

2. Objection

Carr presents the argument that Business Bluffing is normal and unethical, but there are opposing reasons that may argue against the morality of bluffing. One may argue the importance of honesty, and how honesty can build trust and support amongst a system.

Honesty plays a large role when corporations choose to cooperate and work together. Honesty amongst each other, and employees creates a trusting environment, which increases motivation and productivity. objection to Carr's claim is that sometimes extreme bluffing can lead to legal issues. Things like accounting errors, tax reimbursement, those things happen on larger scales. But people illegally bluffing to gain advantage over others is a common mishap.

Carr provides an example of a 58-year-old man, who needed a job. Given the job opportunities, as well as his old age, he was struggling to find options. So rather than being honest about his age, he dyed his hair darker black to appear younger and claimed he was 40.⁴ Due to that change in appearance, he was able to find a job. In this situation, honesty got him nowhere in the Business World, and he had to bluff to create opportunities. If he were to get caught, he would face legal issues for lying about his age on his application. If this holds, we will have to alter Carr's conclusion to look something more like:

P1: Business is a game that has its own set of rules, and bluffing is one of the accepted practices in the game **if that bluffing is deemed legal.**

P2: Business bluffing is not the same as lying or cheating, because it involves using strategic deception to gain a competitive advantage, and both parties involved in the negotiations will use such tactics to gain leverage.

P3: Bluffing can also negatively affect a person or companies' image if poorly executed.

Conclusion: We should allow **legal** Business Bluffing because it is not considered cheating.

Because Carr makes many normative claims about the ethical wellbeing of Business Bluffing, we require more contextual awareness and knowledge before deeming a conclusion. But in many ways, we can understand by looking at Business operations how Carr's statements

⁴ Carr 7

are valid. He reasons that the Business World is a different realm than our personal life, hence there are different non-constitutional rules and values that shape how Businesses function. Business bluffing is a widely accepted method of negotiation and gaining comparative advantage if the bluffing remains set in a legal context. We do not have enough contextual knowledge to confirm the validity of Carr's conclusion, but we strongly support his arguments.

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