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# Ethics You Decide

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Mittle Electronics, a leading producer of well-known PC-related accessories, is the company that I work for as a sales manager.  One of our top accounts with over $27M during last year is Almighty Electronics, a chain store that sells a variety of electronic items whom Anwar Kareth is the senior buyer for.  One of our top senior salespeople who were known for his high work ethic was Brian Abernathy who called on Almighty Electronics for six years and has recently passed away.  Upon his passing, Kimberly Rowland, one of my salespeople, has taken on Almighty Electronics as her client.  After her meeting with Anwar, she comes to me to tell me about her first sales visit with him.  She was bothered by what happened at the visit and asks me what she should do.

There seems to have been some unethical behaviors between Brian and Anwar from what Kimberly has told me. However, we have to understand that ethical issues arise in virtually every aspect of selling. Yet for many salespeople and customers alike, there seems to be a sort of a tactic agreement not to refer to ethical issues unless it becomes absolutely impossible to avoid doing so. Moreover, how exactly can one define ethics? I would define it as a standard of conduct and moral judgment.

Anwar's company has been a great asset to my company and has been very profitable during the past few years. What Kimberly may think unethical, may be otherwise under my judgment. Thus I would want to sit down with Anwar and discuss business and what special treatments he got. A good sales person has to always be able to put themselves in the shoes of the customer. "How would I act if I were the customer?" meaning what would I do if I were in Anwar's position.

In the sales industry, deals can be incentivized if both parties are still profiting from it. Most of these incentives are to build trust and a good relationship. Based my conversation with Anwar, I would decide if Brian was incentivizing the account to gain long-term partnership. If it were then I would tell Kimberly that there is no unethical behavior and that she can confidently deal with Anwar. However If there are unethical behavior I would have to confront Anwar and tell him there are laws and regulations that are beyond my control that needs to be followed and that what Brian was doing is not longer allowed by the company. This will hopefully prevent the unethical behavior that Anwar has been expecting. There are two pragmatic reasons for choosing an ethical behavior to any account. One is trust and the other is credibility. Without them, no long-term relationship with a customer is possible. If I kept the up the same behavior with Anwar as Brian was, not only will the credibility of my company would be in jeopardy by also my company would lose trust in me.

None of us likes to admit our mistakes and failings. But, by ignoring or repressing them, we only ensure that we will repeat them. Even more dangerous, however, is the propensity to cover up blunders through lies or other unethical behavior. Don't run the risk of ruining your reputation and the valuable goodwill of your company simply to avoid taking responsibility for your own actions.

In conclusion, my interaction with Anwar would be very honest and open and face up to the mistakes Brian had made. I would set standards high from the beginning because I know I would be respected accordingly. Those customers who regularly cross ethical boundaries are less likely to propose or even hint at such behavior if they believe it will be declined.