

BUILDING AND ETHICAL ORGANIZATION

The influences of Ethics and Leadership development

Ethical Leadership

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Throughout this class I have had the opportunity to explore, reflect and engage with others about myself as an ethical person. The textbook has allowed me a greater understanding of how to frame my current ethical beliefs according to different theories. The workbook exercises have truly stretched my thinking and made me evaluate my initial response. The discussion form peers on various topics was powerful for me. I see myself as a person who takes pride in being ethical and operating daily in ways that are morally correct. However, this discussion has brought to the service perspectives of people who are immersed in the working industry. I have yet to experience so many things in life and therefore my ethical beliefs have yet to be challenged and tested. Despite the fact that I have many experiences and tests to come in the future I have confidence in my ethical foundation. I find that when evaluating situations, I operate somewhere in the middle of ethics of justice and ethics of care. I find that there are times when the law and justice come first however, I do believe there are circumstances where a person's well-being or care may override this. A great deal of who I am as a person is my ability to empathize with people who are in need at the time. I find that I identify most with the deontological theory in that I focus mainly on what is the "right" thing to do. I feel that by acting on what is "right" I am behaving with honesty, responsibility, integrity and compassion for humans. I also feel that my ethical foundation is one that operates daily with the goal to be a good person. I will therefore approach ethical leadership daily with the foundation of attacking everyday with the intention of being a good person and doing what is right. In order to build an ethical environment in an organization I will need to be an ethical role model, build and inclusive culture and operate using a principle based approach.

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I feel that my ability to act as a role model when in leadership of an organization is essential and at the crux of having the ability to find success. Practicing virtue is much more important than knowing what it's all about. Practicing truth, temperance and courage makes us a virtuous person. (Dion, 49) It is important to demonstrate the validity of our view as a leader by showing that it is true in every aspect of our lives. We must be ourselves in all situations including being a leader. If we try to lead in a way that is not true to who we are we will fail. Integrity is the link between what I say as a leader and what I do as a leader. This sets the overall tone in an organization. When employees can trust that my word has meaning and I will act accordingly this allows for trust. Being a manager and a good role model means more than just doing the right thing; it means helping your employees do the right thing. (Trevino and Nelson, 319) Another piece that I feel goes along with Integrity is not only standing by one's word but the willingness and ability to listen to the stakeholders in order to allow for constructive feedback. Employees must feel valued and heard within an organization. As reported by Kuenzi, Brown and Mayer one definition of ethical leadership that should be considered is the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision making (1). It is imperative to be both a moral person and a moral manager. A moral person is honest, fair and trustworthy. A moral manager is this person's ability to use transactional efforts such as rewards and punishments to reinforce desired behaviors and reduce undesired behaviors as well as communicating about the importance of ethics. (Kuenzi, Brown and Mayer, 4) When a person can be strong in of these areas it is then that they can have influence in the behaviors in those that they lead. When we have a positive

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influence on those around us we have become true leaders. Through this process we as leaders must remain humble. We cannot lead ethically if we have a higher perception of ourselves than we do those we are leading. Humble leaders are those seen as attractive and credible role models; others will want to mimic the behaviors of the supervisor and therefore avoid deviant actions. Being a role model in leadership is not a choice in my opinion it is a requirement. The ability to make sound decisions can only be learned through experience and this experience comes from being led by good leaders. Trevino and Nelson explain that the most important thing about a leader's job as a role model is that what they do is infinitely more important than what they say. (319) Proverbs 12:17 tells us "whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit" There can not be a disconnect between your words and your actions otherwise you lose credibility as does the organization that you represent.

Secondly, I feel that building a culture of inclusiveness is vital to any organizations success. It is my responsibility as a leader to motivate people to love what they do, be excited about coming to work every day and take pride in being part of the team. Regardless of a person's job title we should create a workplace environment that provides the encouragement for all to be the very best they can possibly be every day. A culture that recognizes an individual's talents and qualities focusing on the fact that we live in a society that provides for many truths. We must be able to exist in unity adapting to multiple truths. The Bible tells us, Phillipians 2:3-4, "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others". Our actions help us to understand the actions of others. The relative character of organizational members' self-understanding opens the door to various sense-making activities, such as values

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clarification workshops which should be open to all members regardless of the hierarchical status. (Dion, 52) By doing so we create a connection between self-identity and organizational identity. When employees feel they are being valued and their natural needs are being met they find purpose in their work. When we as leaders can increase an employee's satisfaction with their job we can increase their performance and their ethical behaviors. What is meaningless can only provoke the reflex of revolt. (Dion, 59) Therefore, it is important to reinforce meaning behind every position throughout the organizing. We must instill a belief that all parts of the wheel are required for the wheel to function. If one part is missing regardless of its size the wheel ceases to turn. When leaders engage in positive and negative behaviors toward others they create an environment where subordinates will likely reciprocate positively or negatively. (Kuenzi, Brown and Mayer, 4) This culture of inclusiveness often breeds a sense of fairness. When we treat employees with dignity and respect it makes sense that we would be able to talk with employees about their ethical behavior if they perceive the organization is behaving fairly toward them. (Trevino and Nelson, 193) If employees feel a self-worth they will be more likely to express themselves and display their full potential. When employees experience genuine respect and feel safe their moral increases. A leader must create a culture where people can be their true selves and experience self-worth.

Lastly, I believe that as leaders we must seek a mindset shift from rule based approach to a more principle based approach. For many years' society has operated from a rule based approach which provides for a set of rules that all parties involved have up front so that they know what is expected of them. This portrays that all ethical issues have been thought through and the decisions are complete once and for all. This reminds me of a script like mindset; a

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one-size fits all. As stated in my discussion this forces us into making decisions based on the “type” or “category” of the problem rather than looking at each situation uniquely according to the details. For example, when we enter college we are handed a student handbook which gives us all the rules to abide by while we are enrolled. When we are faced with a decision we often flip to the handbook and determine whether our action would break the rules. When in reality, each new situation should demand an ethical reflection based on ethical principles. We should provide guidance through a limited set of general principles rather than through comprehensive and detailed rules. (Kvalnes and Hemmestad, 62) This will require a more personal reflection that is more invested in the process of making a decision. All business decisions require us as leaders to apply our practical knowledge. Ethics is a dynamic, complex subject and should not be reduced to a rule book. According to Kvalnes and Hemmestad practical wisdom is developed through experiences in facing and handling difficult situations. It is an intellectual virtue developed through social interactions particularly with role models rather than through theoretical study (64). Two principles that are firmly rooted in ethical tradition are: The principle of equality and The principle of publicity. This means that Equal cases should be treated equally. A difference in treatment can only be justified by pointing out a morally relevant difference. While, one’s choice should withstand public scrutiny. One should be ready to provide justification for it and defend it publicly. When we guide ourselves with principles we can apply them to people with different moral outlooks and values however they provide for a common foundation for ethical reflection (65). This takes me back to the MBA Oath, which is based on a set of principles. This oath professing seven principles that as a business leader I will use to exercise my professional duties. (Trevino and Nelson, 14) Guiding principles within an

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organization could provide for reflection on dilemmas and help others reach beyond the stage where they feel that particular actions are right or wrong. By allowing employees to take a personal stand within the guiding principles brings empowerment. When employees have the skills to reflect on guiding principles during difficult situations they are able to make sound choices.

This class has provided a great deal of valuable information in a short period of time. I continue to believe that I am gifted with a strong foundation. As mentioned earlier intellectual virtue is developed through social interactions particularly with role models rather than through theoretical study. This is where I believe I have the greatest opportunity to grow in the field of ethical leadership. Many peers in my MSOL cohort are providing some of this through discussions. I look forward to continually encountering role models that can provide for experiences that I can draw from as I encounter a career in the business world. It is clear to me that in order to create and sustain an ethical culture as a leader we must empower and motivate our staff to uphold and protect the image and reputation of our organization.

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