

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND HUMAN VALUES IN WORKPLACE

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Abstract— The article proposes a framework Professional ethics and human values in workplace. This paper argues that spirituality can be described on a continuum varying from low to high at both individual and organisational levels in workplace. However, a specific aspect that has curiously not been explored enough is the role of individual spiritual orientation in the context of one's organisation. The argument is that all individuals do not have similar spiritual strivings or orientation. The interaction of the two continuums is then used to suggest a model to facilitate of person and situation factors and then depending on the compatibility of these two factors, look for specific ways to facilitate Professional ethics and human values in work. Some efforts have indeed been made to identify the ways in which professional ethics and human values can be integrated at work.

Key Words: Orientation, Individual Spiritual development, Continuum, Professional Ethics and Human Values

I. INTRODUCTION

Professional ethics and human values is recognised as one of the fundamental forces (body, mind, heart and values) of human existence. Workplace Ethics research has identified several positive results of encouraging human values and professional ethics at work which includes greater personal fulfilment, job satisfaction, enhanced creativity and commitment and greater organisational effectiveness. While the positive result arising out of workplace professional ethics have indeed been demonstrated, the next question that needs to be answered is how to integrate or facilitate human values at work.

Review Literature

A comprehensive model is suggested by Pawar (2009) to integrated spirituality at work. The oft-quoted 'Spiritual Audit of Corporate America' by Mitroff and Denton (1999a). The beliefs rituals and communities at workplace are also identified as three essential dimensions that integrate human values at work and help employees to see the link between their work and professional ethics and human values (Bandsuch & Cavanagh, 2010). Drawing from these and other

insights, attempts have been made to integrate professional ethics at workplace either at individual level with concepts like spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003) or at the organisation level by encouraging a corporate culture that promotes professional ethics and human values at work (Bandsuch & Cavanagh, 2010; Konz & Ryan, 1999).

Conceptualisation

One is at the individual level which is simply a reflection of one's personal values, another is at the organisational level which refers to organisation's healthy environment or culture; while the third interaction of these two levels. At an individual level of analysis, 'Professional ethics and human values' at workplace is manifested in various ways, viz., search for 'discovery of self' through work, 'meaning or higher purpose in work' and sense of being a part of larger community. However, while scholars discuss workplace professionalism at an individual level, the issue which goes largely unexamined is if all individuals have similar spiritual strivings.

Pioneering work by the psychologist Clare Graves explains human development through a model called 'Spiral Dynamics'. The model has been researched, validated, refined and not refuted (Wilber, 2004). Spiral Dynamics sees human development as proceeding through eight stages or memes, meme being a basic stage of development. Spiral Dynamics argues that each and every individual has all of these memes potentially available to them but people vary in terms of their 'meme systems' (Beck & Cowan, 1996; Wilber, 2004). As the higher order memes unfold, human values bond emerge that pull people and organisations together. For such individuals, work must be meaningful and these individuals enjoy doing things that fit who they are naturally (Beck & Cowan, 1996).

Leaders are often put in decisions where they must choose among options that vary in their degree of ethical behaviour. One of the reasons why this is a common issue for leaders is that there are often competing priorities for businesses¹. On the one hand, organizations exist to generate profits for their shareholders, which may encourage leaders to act in ways that are less ethical in order to cut costs or increase revenues. On the other hand, organizations are made up of human beings who are personally invested in the company and often live in the communities in which they work. If the individuals are harmed by decisions that

maximize company profitability, then the decision is not an ethical one. Only one stakeholder is getting their needs met, at the expense of other stakeholders.

II. SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES TO HELP YOU MAKE ETHICAL DECISIONS

A key reason why decisions that have ethical implications may be difficult for leaders to make is that they may be encountering situations that they have never had to deal with before. This lack of experience may be characterized by a great deal of ambiguity in terms of what to do. Some basic principles may be useful in helping to guide the ethical decision-making process:

- Don't allow personal gains to outweigh the good of the organization
- Recognize all perspectives when making an ethical decision
- Respect people and their rights
- Keep promises and honour contracts
- Use feelings to help decide moral dilemmas
- Get all the facts
- Treat all people fairly
- Define who you are, your company & personal values
- Always challenge your decision to be in line with your values, beliefs and morals
- Never compromise your integrity
- Ethical decisions must use fair procedures and account for unjust action
- Don't choose the easiest answer; consider all the options (don't just go for a quick fix)
- Don't overstep the bounds of what outsiders will tolerate while balancing company's & outsider's interest
- Consider the risk of setting & trying to achieve overly ambitious goals
- Communicate that all employees have a responsibility to keep the company's moral & ethical standards in check
- When in doubt, don't
- Instil proper checks & balances of ethical behaviour that don't create bottlenecks
- When possible seek the input of affected individuals at a moral crossroads

Value of Ethics at Workplace:

An ethical corporation is not an oxymoron: in fact it can be very successful. A company that conducts business in an ethical manner engenders respect from within the company and from outside. Employee retention is high at companies that promote ethical behaviours. Consumers demonstrate brand loyalty to companies that exhibit a strong sense of corporate responsibility and stewardship. The need for

corporate ethics is strong. In a marketplace of unfair competition, underhanded practices, and consumer distrust, the company that emerges with its integrity intact becomes a preferred consumer choice

Tips on Establishing an Ethics Program :

Establishing an ethics program is not an exact science. As with the development of other organizational programs, it involves the input, interaction, cooperation, decision-making, and ongoing commitment of many people. Proper planning is important, but the effectiveness of any association's approach also depends on characteristics that are unique to its culture, the leadership style of the executive director and executive team, the association's relationship with its board of directors, and so on. In addition, discussion of workplace ethics can raise sensitive issues. Some people in your organization may have difficulty or be uncomfortable discussing these issues.

HRM Practices for Reinforcing Human Values:

The HR Policies of the organization should be aligned with the human values of the organization. Such HR policies will aid organizations not only to attract and select employees who seek professional growth through work but also to develop their inner spiritual potential. By systematically implementing all of the eleven elements in the model, the organization will not only attract employees desiring to experience spiritual transformation through work on a daily basis, but also have in place structures, policies and processes that will aid their daily spiritual development and engage them in a transcendent vision.

Southwest Airlines has successfully implemented the HR practices that are designed to execute company's core values that are inclined towards professional. Recruiting new employees on the basis of their ability to work in teams rather than individual skills, taking suggestions for continuous improvement of company from the experienced employees, employee stock ownership, of Southwest Airlines HR Policies (O'Reilly & Pfeffer, 1995).

Earlier, we highlighted a list of potential benefits of ethics programs. Now we focus on two particular areas of interest to association executives: attracting and keeping good people, and building and sustaining your association's reputation. It may come as a surprise that some organizations are able to use their ethics programs as a recruiting tool, but it shouldn't. In many cases, the top-quality people you want to hire are those who are looking for more than a job - they want to feel good about their work and about the integrity of the organization they work for. In a recent conversation, winter relayed a story about a strong candidate that her company successfully recruited and hired. At the start of a day of interviews, the candidate's would-be manager took the time to talk in detail about the company's business practices. When winter met with the employee several weeks after the hiring, he told her, "I didn't need to meet another person at Baxter that day. I was hooked in the first 20 minutes." In a tight, competitive job

market, association executives shouldn't underestimate the potential impact of a good ethics program on attracting high-quality candidates.

Profanity, lack of personal space, unnecessary cellular chats, and poor eating habits top our list of behavioural blunders. Bad behaviour isn't good anywhere, but its worse at work where people witness it on a regular basis. Don't swear to make a point. It'll take away your credibility and make you look stupid. In addition to profanity, standing too close to a co-worker or being physical with them is also unwise. An office favours speech over intimacy, but that shouldn't include your cell phone. A sudden call at a meeting or lunch can be irritating, especially if you're talking loudly. Volume and rudeness are also bad when you're eating. Being loud and talking with your mouth full takes attention away from the conversation and puts any business talk on shaky ground.

However, maintaining the 'professional ethics and human values' is not an easy task; organisations should make sure that organisation does not get disoriented from their core spiritual values and 'spirituality' does not become a tool or an instrument to achieve other organisational goals. Some researchers caution us against the possible misuse of human values at work.

III. CONCLUSION

By suggesting the potential ways of implementing and supporting Professional ethics and human values in work environments, our aim is to help in a working atmosphere that helps in nourishing the human values and honour the more holistic comprehensive view of looking at things. As advised by Mitroff and Denton (1999a), 'Spirituality is the ultimate competitive advantage of the organisations.' In a highly competitive working environment organisations and individuals who are on higher side of 'spiritual' continuum have competitive advantage over others? A 'professional ethics and human values' of successful companies reveals that companies with human values are more powerful, have happy employees and are aware of their responsibilities towards other stakeholders and environment.

IV. REFERENCES

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