

# 3

## Work Ethics

### 3.1 Introduction

Hari works as a salesperson in a showroom. He is always late for work and wants to leave as early as possible everyday. While talking to customers he is often rude and does not show them the items that they want. He becomes quite irritated when customers make enquiries about the goods on sale. As a result, many customers get upset and leave the showroom without buying anything. Hari is often found smoking in the shop and gets angry when someone objects to it. The other salespersons do not like to talk to Hari and keep away from him. Hari's boss has been closely watching his behaviour and work habits. Do you think that Hari's behaviour is acceptable? Why? Can Hari continue working like this? Does he have good chances of promotion? How would you deal with Hari if you were his boss?

What are good work habits? What is its their importance? What habits should we develop? You will get the answer to these and other related questions in this lesson.

### 3.2 Objectives

After reading this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- explain the term 'ethics' and define 'work ethics';
- explain the need for 'work ethics';
- discuss some of the ethical problems with respect to the work environment;
- develop a code of work ethics; and
- list some of the factors that raise ethical standards in a work situation.

### 3.3 What are Ethics?

The word ethics deals with moral issues and with right and wrong behaviour.

Ethics tells us about our moral duties and obligations so that our behaviour is right, truthful and just.

#### **Definition of Work Ethics**

Work ethics are a set of standards and rules that are required by an individual for satisfactory work performance.

Work ethics may be of two types:

- a) Personal
- b) Specific to a work situation

Some work ethics are personal, i.e. a person adopts them on her own will. These may be :

- Sincerity
- Respect for the job
- Regularity
- Punctuality
- Seriousness

Work ethics specific to the work situation are:

- Keeping certain information confidential
- Maintaining cordial relation with the clients and agencies that a company has
- Being prepared to take up new tasks

These are dictated to us by the policies and procedures of our work place.

### **3.4 Need for Work Ethics**

Now let us find out why it is essential to have good work ethics and how they affect our work performance.

Any work situation has four major components: Work, Worker and the Work Place

- The Work is the actual job to be done
- The Worker is the person who does the job
- Work Place includes the place for doing the work, tools and equipment required and the storage space for them

You will agree that all the three components are inter-related and dependent on each other. Further, you will also agree that the worker is the most important component of any work situation. This is so because only the worker has the ability to think, analyse, learn and manipulate. A worker can acquire the art of effective management of the work, the work place, him/herself and the other workers around him. He can also be disloyal, lazy, a bad manager of the work place and thus ruin the business. Do you recall the example given in the beginning of this lesson?

Thus, for successful achievement of the goals and objectives of an office, for efficient utilisation of the resources available and to maintain discipline at work we need to develop and adopt certain work ethics. These work ethics can help us to do a job to the best of our

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ability in a fair, just and impartial way. They encourage us to develop and maintain a cordial work environment where all the workers can enjoy each other's support and confidence.

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**INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.1**

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1. Work ethics are of two types :
  - (a) .....
  - (b) .....
2. Mention five personal qualities that contribute to good work ethics :
  - (a) ..... (b) .....
  - (c) ..... (d) .....
  - (e) .....
3. Select the most appropriate answer from the choices given below :
  - (i) Work ethics means
    - (a) morality
    - (b) discipline
    - (c) work code
    - (d) norms
  - (ii) Work ethics means
    - (a) set of rules and standards
    - (b) set of norms and standards
    - (c) right decisions and standards
    - (d) set of rules and right decisions
  - (iii) Three components of work situation are Worker, Workplace and .....
    - (a) rules
    - (b) procedures
    - (c) tools
    - (d) co-workers
4. Tick mark the ones which go with work ethics :
  - (i) efficiency
  - (ii) discipline
  - (iii) get support and confidence
  - (iv) have cordial relations
  - (v) become confident
  - (vi) provide encouragement.

### 3.5 Ethical Problems Related to Work

So far we have learnt about work ethics and their importance. Now let us discuss some of the problems commonly faced by us today in a work situation.

Ethical problems related to work:

- Irregularity and lack of punctuality
- Rude and impolite behaviour
- Inadequate knowledge and skill
- Wastage of resources
- Disregard of rules and proceduces
- Disrespect for the job
- Disloyalty to the organisation

#### (a) Irregularity and Lack of Punctuality

Irregularity and lack of punctuality are problems which you will encounter frequently in any work situation. Some people frequently absent themselves from work for valid or invalid reasons. Others like to come late and leave early as a matter of habit or right. Some workers are never found to be at their seats during working hours. You may have witnessed the inconvenience caused to the public wanting to pay bills when counter clerks are either late or not found at their seats in banks, post, telephone and electricity offices. Irresponsible behaviour of such people spoils the discipline of the work environment, sets bad examples, causes inconvenience to the public and lowers the image of the organisation.

#### (b) Rude and Impolite Behaviour

How would you react when the clerk at a post office counter does not listen to your request carefully, telling you that he is busy, and asks you to come later? Would you like to associate with a colleague in your office who refuses to do his part of the work, talks rudely, misbehaves with ladies and junior colleagues and is always in an aggressive mood? Rude and impolite behaviour of staff can be quite disturbing and embarassing for an organisation.

#### (c) Inadequate Knowledge and Skill

Many people pose of having special skills and knowledge to impress others and enhance their job prospects. Suppose you have access to a computer but do not know how to operate, yet, you insist on operating it, who would be responsible if it gets spoilt or damaged. Many persons claim to be qualified doctors and treat patients for illnesses that they know nothing about. As a result they spoil the case. Many times people claim to be electricians without any knowledge about electricity or machines and cause heavy losses to the machine and public. Knowing the job is very important. One should not only be skilled but also ready to learn more and update ones knowledge and skills from time to time.

#### (d) Wastage of Resources

Lights and fans running in offices without anybody using them are a common sight in many offices. Items of office stationery being misused and thrown around are also a common sight. Misuse of office telephones and vehicles for personal work is a common occurence. You may have noticed that people do not close taps after drinking water and leave them running. Such habits cause tremendous wastage of resources for any organisation.

**(e) Disregard of Rules and Procedures**

In many work situations one finds that the rules and procedures laid for maintaining discipline, good employer-employee relationship and team spirit are disregarded. This is usually observed when promotions are given out of turn, or the management shows favouritism or when lower level employees and daily wagers are not given their due. In some work places you may find that people are discriminated against because of their caste, sex or physical handicap. In many cases women and children are paid less than men for the same job. Employing children in hazardous industries like manufacture of fire crackers, chalks, etc., despite strict Government regulations against it is also unethical.

Disregard of rules and procedures often leads to serious situations in the organisation. There may be an accident causing heavy loss to property or to human lives.

**(f) Disrespect for the Job**

Have you come across anyone who feels ashamed about the job he is doing? You must have wondered why he feels ashamed.

In our society it is a common practice to consider some jobs respectful and others disrespectful; some jobs high and others low and cheap. As a result, many people, despite enjoying their work, do not feel proud to tell others about it for fear of being looked down upon. For example, a man selling drinking water on the roadside should feel proud of doing so, neither should the passersby feel that supplying drinking water on the road side is a lowly job. In fact, everybody, including him, should feel proud that he is supplying one of the most essential items for life to the thirsty and tired passersby. He should respect his job and strive to supply clean and fresh drinking water.

**(g) Disloyalty to the Organization**

Some staff members indulge in activities that are harmful for the success of the organisation they are working in. For instance, a chemical engineer may quietly sell-off the secret formula of a new product to a rival company for some quick extra money. A corrupt union leader may call for a strike of a mill workers thereby stopping production at the mill leading to heavy losses. Taking bribes to grant special favours to certain companies and people at the cost of ones own organisation is a common occurrence today. Cheating one's employees and working for someone else while being in the employment of another are other examples of disloyalty.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.2**

1. Tick mark the statements which are ethically not correct.

- (a) Making STD calls to relatives from the office
- (b) Bank clerk opening the counter on time
- (c) Bank clerks shunting you from counter to counter
- (d) Manual typist using the office computer
- (e) T.V. producer using video equipment
- (f) Going to a party in the office vehicle
- (g) Closing the tap after use
- (h) Employees working as a team
- (i) Out of turn promotions
- (j) Bribing an official to get work done

### 3.6 Code of Work Ethics

Most of the problems discussed in the previous section can be overcome in order to improve work performance. A list that clearly states certain rules, standards and principles to guide our work behaviour is called a Code of Work Ethics. Following is a Code of Work Ethics for all of us to understand and follow diligently:

- Be regular and punctual at work.
- Be available at your seat and do the work assigned to you.
- Be polite, patient, courteous and respectful to all.
- Acquire the knowledge and skill necessary to do job assigned to you.
- Be prepared to learn more and update yourself.
- Find more and more efficient ways of getting your work done.
- Manage and apply your resources efficiently.
- Follow the rules, policies and procedures of your work strictly and uniformly.
- Do not indulge in favouritism and discrimination while doing your duty. Treat everyone equally.
- Have respect for all kinds of work.
- Do not accept favours that may negatively influence the performance of your work.
- Be loyal to your work and to the organisation to which you belong.
- Expose corruption wherever discovered.

### 3.7 Factors that Raise Ethical Standards at Work

What suggestions can you give to raise people's ethical standards with respect to work? Well, read the following suggestions and see if you agree with them.

#### (a) Public Disclosure and Publicity

Unethical workers should be held responsible for their actions. Such irresponsible people should be exposed and they should be suitably reprimanded/punished. Withdrawal of certain privileges and benefits may force them to change their wrong ways. Bringing their wrong doing to the notice of family members and colleagues can also create social embarrassment for them. This would also act as a warning for others who may be becoming slack.

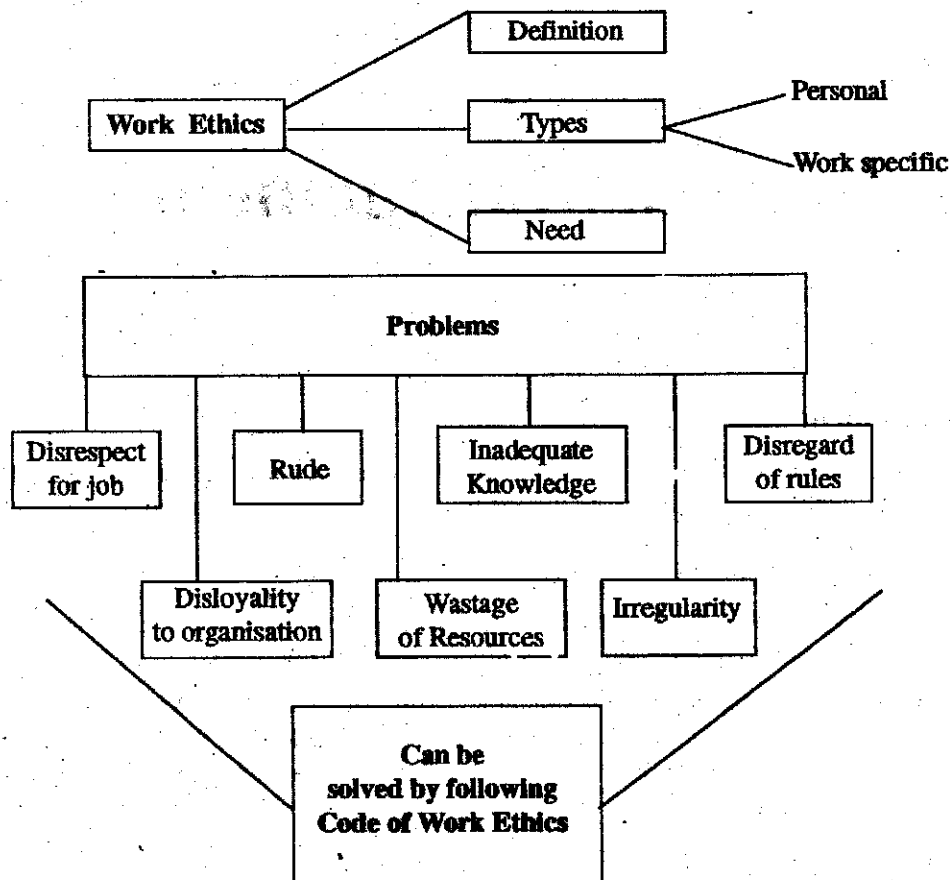
#### (b) Preparation of a 'Code of Work Ethics':

A clear statement of the work ethics in any work situation and their strict implementation is very vital. Such a code of work ethics removes any ambiguities and makes an organisation's expectations clearly known to the workers. This way the workers will be able to apply and integrate ethical concepts into their daily work routine.

#### (c) Teaching of Ethics and Values in Schools and Colleges:

So far work ethics were expected to be learnt by a worker on his own, through experience and informal guidance from others. Today, with cut throat competition, multiple challenges and a fast changing environment it is important that every worker be well trained and efficient. Only then can the worker give good work performance and expect to rise. Therefore, teaching of moral values and work ethics should form a part of our lives at an early stage. This way we will be able to develop a disciplined work force and build our nation.

### 3.8 What You Have Learnt



### 3.9 TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Why should ethics and values be taught in school?
2. Your friend is in the habit of reporting late to work and taking leave without permission. How will you explain to her that her habit is wrong?
3. What will you do if you come to know that your colleague leaks out confidential official information?

### 3.10 Answers to Intext Questions

- 3.1 1. (a) Personal (b) Work related
2. Refer to text
- 3) i) (c) ii) (a) (iii) (e)
4. (a), (b), (c), (d)
- 3.2 (a), (c), (d), (f), (i), (j)