

TOPIC: ETHICS & PROFESSIONALISM

INTRODUCTION

Many businesses have their own code of conduct and are committed to ethical and professional behaviour.

Codes of practices have been developed to ensure that these issues are being addressed.

Meaning of ethics

Set of standards of expected behaviour between the employer, employee and business partners.

Set of values that are morally acceptable when conducting business.

Business practices that is acceptable to society, a group or the community.

Inherently forms part of the employees' code of conduct.

Focus is on developing a moral compass to use in decision making.

Seeks to avoid harm while promoting benefit to others.

Meaning of ethical behaviour

Refers to acting in ways consistent with what society and individuals think are good values.

Ethical behaviour is expected from every employee in the business.

It means that the highest legal and moral standards are upheld when dealing with stakeholders.

Examples of ethical and unethical business practice

| Ethical business practices | Unethical business practices |
|--|--|
| Using fair advertising Clients and employees information are not used for the benefit of the business. Business deals are conducted openly. Paying fair wages Operating within the law Ensuring that the environment is not polluted. Not engaging in illegal business practices Not using child labour Adopting codes of good ethical practice. Establishing corporative social responsibility initiatives. Encouraging employees to adopt ethical behaviour. Treating all employees equally Shareholders and employees personal interest and business interest do not conflict with one another. | Unfair advertising Pricing of goods in rural areas Taxation/Tax evasion Starting a venture at the expense of someone else Paying employees unfair wages Disobeying the law Using bribery to gain business Engaging in illegal business practices Polluting the environment |

Meaning of professional behaviour

Professionalism is the term used to describe a certain standard of behaviour, a specific level of competence and adherence to an ethical code of conduct.

It is behaviour suitable for a job or profession done for payment.

It includes showing respect for others or taking responsibility for your work or performing according to a job description.

Meaning of professionalism

Refers to what is right or wrong and acceptable in a business

Set of standards of expected behaviour.

Applying a code of conduct of a profession or business.

Focuses on developing a moral compass for decision making

Includes guidelines on employees' appearance, communication and attitude.

Examples of professional and unprofessional business practice

| Professional business practice | Unprofessional business practice |
|--|--|
| Using polite language to colleagues. Good use of work time Keeping clients details confidential/Not using clients' information for personal gain. Treating all people the same. | Using rude language Abuse of work time. Discussing clients' information/using clients' information for personal gain. Giving some people special favours. Overstating the number of hours worked. Unauthorised use of business resources. |

Differences between professional behaviour and ethical behaviour

| Professional behaviour | Ethical behaviour |
|---|---|
| Refers to what is right or wrong or acceptable in a business. | Refers to the principles of right and wrong and what is acceptable in society. |
| Set of standards of expected behaviour. | Conforms to a set of values that are morally acceptable. |
| Applying a code of conduct of a profession or business. | Forms part of a code of conduct to guide employees to act ethically. |
| Focuses on developing a moral compass for decision making. | Focuses on upholding the reputation of a business or profession. |
| Includes guidelines on employees' appearance, communication, attitude and responsibility. | Involves following the principles of right and wrong in business practices or dealings. |

Theories of ethics

The rights approach focuses on individual rights where people are to be treated with respect and dignity.

Consequential approach focusses on decisions that promote the most good or generate the greatest value for society, while harming as few as possible.

The common good approach focuses on ensuring that the business' values and ethical principles are in line with society in which the business operates.

Principles of professionalism and ethics

| Principle | Explanation | Professional | Unprofessional |
|------------------------|--|---|--|
| Respect | Respect the dignity and rights of others and the image of the profession or organisation | Polite language to colleagues Helping others; Listening to advice from others Respecting differences in culture, language and religion Appropriate dress code | Using rude language Swearing at colleagues Nasty remarks about other people's ideas. Inappropriate clothing |
| Integrity | Work with honesty according to the law and the norms of the profession | Looking after equipment Keeping to work hours Not bending the law to suit oneself – bribery All dealings in the open | Using photocopier for private use Stealing stationery and equipment Not keeping to work hours Making excuses for work not done Open to bribery and secret deals Frequently taking sick leave without reason |
| Competency | Apply skills and knowledge for the good of society and the environment | Doing the best job possible Staying after normal working hours if necessary “going the extra mile” Helping colleagues with skills | Taking shortcuts with tasks Not completing work as agreed and required Not being prepared to learn and apply new processes |
| Confidentiality | Never give client information to others or use it for your own benefit | Never discusses clients with others Never criticising clients in front of colleagues Not using client information for own advantage | Gossiping about clients Discussing client information Using client information for own benefit |
| Objectivity | Act fairly and justly to all without bias or favouritism | Treat all people the same Apply laws consistently and properly Try to see both sides of an issue | Special favours given to some people One-sided view of issues |
| Development | Continuously improve own skills and help others do the same | Attend courses to up-skill Help younger workers Respect and learn from those with more experience Keep reading about your profession/occupation | Refuse to go on up-skilling courses Satisfied with current knowledge “know-it-all” attitude Not prepared to help others progress Disregard the experience of older workers |

Ways in which professional, responsible, ethical and effective business practices should be conducted

Mission statement should include values of equality and respect.

Treat workers with respect by recognising work well done.

Treat all their employees equally, regardless of their race, age, gender or disability.

All workers should have access to equal opportunities.

Plan properly and put preventative measures in place.

Pay fair wages or salaries which are in line with the minimum requirements of the BCEA

Ensure that employees work in a work environment that is conducive to safety.

Refrain from starting a venture using other businesses' ideas that are protected by law.

Engage in environmental awareness programmes and refrain from polluting the environment, e.g. by legally disposing of toxic waste.

Employers and employees need to comply with legislation with regard to equal opportunities and human rights in the workplace.

Businesses should develop equity programmes and promote strategies to ensure that all employees are treated equally regardless of status.

Employers should respond swiftly and fairly to reported incidents of discrimination in the workplace.

Tasks should be given respectfully and allow the employee to have a say in the manner in which the task should be performed.

TOPIC: ETHICS & PROFESSIONALISM – ACTIVITY

1. Explain the differences between professionalism and ethics. (8)
2. Identify the principles of ethics and professionalism applied by the employees of Forego Flooring in each statement below.
 - 2.1 They apply their knowledge and skills in the interest of society.
 - 2.2 Work is done according to accepted norms of professional conduct.
 - 2.3 Employees' behaviour towards others is fair and free from bias.
 - 2.4 Details of the business and customers are not shared with others.
 - 2.5 Employees attend training sessions on a regular basis. (10)
3. Read the scenario below and answer the questions that follow.

BIG FAIR WHOLESALERS (BFW)

Mr. Enoch is the owner of Big Fair Wholesalers and has hired 50 employees who are very happy and productive. Enoch observes human rights in the workplace by treating his employees fairly, with respect and dignity.

- 3.1 Name the theory of ethics that is applicable to the scenario above. Motivate your answer by quoting from the scenario. (3)
- 3.2 Explain to Enoch how to apply **TWO** other theories of ethics. (6)
4. Read the scenario below and answer the questions that follow.

KARABO CHICKEN FACTORY (KCF)

The employees of Karabo Chicken Factory are not happy as they work long hours without being paid for overtime. Karabo repackages expired chicken and sells it as new. She avoids paying fines by bribing health inspectors. She dumps her waste at night on open land and she does not pay tax regularly.

- 4.1 Quote **FIVE** unethical business practices from the scenario above. (5)
- 4.2 Advise the management of KCF on ways in which professional, responsible, ethical and effective business practice should be conducted. (8)