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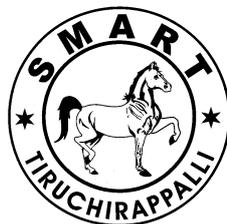
BUSINESS ETHICS AND LEADERSHIP WITH AN INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction :

The word 'ethics' is derived from the Greek word "ethos" which refers to character. Websters new collegiate dictionary defines ethics as 'the science of moral duty or the science of ideal human character'. In other words, moral principles, codes and postulates are considered as ethics. Ethics is the adoption of the right methods and means towards the rights ends and deals more with good than evil. According to Solomon and Hanson, ethics is thinking in terms of the larger picture, not ignoring nor neglecting one's own interest and well being but not overemphasizing one's own interest either.

Gene Burton & Manob Thakur say that ethics resides within individuals and that organization doesn't have ethics, only people have ethics. Ethics of individual depends on one's own personal attitude and beliefs concerning what is right or wrong, good or bad. The influence and quality of these forces differ from person to person the ethics of individuals also differs from person to person. What may be ethical behavior in the eye of one person may be unethical behavior in the eye of another. What may generally be accepted as ethical behavior in one societal situation may be generally unethical behavior in another. In other words, ethics is not absolute, but relative. Ethical behavior is in the eyes of the beholder. What is right or wrong is a personal individual matter and it is influenced by socially accepted norms.

The term ethics in the context of business becomes ethics that refers to the moral principles and rule of conduct applied to the business world. Business ethics means that business should be conducted according to certain self-recognized standards. Business being a social organ shall not be conducted in a way detrimental to the interest of society. Since ethics is a code of conduct, everybody should follow them but the problem is that there is considerable disagreement over what is and what is not ethical conduct. Ethics is a relative term that changes with time and space. Any activity which is ethically all right in western world may be unethical in case of India and anything which was considered unethical 50 years ago may have become ethical due to changes in societal norms and values. In short, there is no universally accepted ethics by any society at a particular time and place. An attempt is made in this empirical study to bring some of the facts behind the leadership and business ethics from an individual perspective

To be a leader, an individual should know the following things:

- Know yourself and your job
- Understand the nature of supervision and how it deals with work.
- Develop ability to live with and deal with conflict, change etc.

- Develop ability to manage work.
- Have faith in people and their ability to grow with responsibilities.
- Take the wear and tear of the office with equanimity.
- Develop ability to see relationship between people and their jobs.
- Try to harmonize interests of the individuals with the needs of the company.
- Develop ability to bring ideas and people together to communicate and understand sympathetically.
- Develop ability to gain wisdom.

Developing your supervisory capacity :

"A valid diagnosis of human situations requires knowledge of us. The administrator as well as the scientist must be aware of and ideally be able to measure the impact he has on the situation he is diagnosing. Fundamentally, this requires self- awareness…. It is impossible to understand others unless we understand ourselves and we cannot understand ourselves unless we understand others"[1]

"We have heard the saying that "to be master of men, one must first become master of oneself. " I am inclined to believe that a natural ability in group control results from the presence of reserves of this power over that necessary for the ordering of one's own life".[2] It is rightly said that in order to become a master of men, one must first become master of oneself. In order to become master of himself he should first justify whether he is following ethics in his life. The person who follows ethics can become leader of men. In the following pages we analyse how effectively a leader must focus his attention on some specific problems that arise in dealing with subordinates.

✎ **Rules :**

The manner in which rules and instructions are developed and issued has much to do with teamwork. All should bear in mind that the reason behind the rules is to secure united action towards common objectives. The additional rules are normally few- only as many as necessary for the work and the workers require. The supervisor should find out why rules are not obeyed and either modifies them or have them observed. Initiative is wanted but not in rule breaking, for teamwork demands coordination.

✎ **Reprimand and praise :**

A supervisor must be lenient and if he is too strict with his staff, he is likely to get into difficulties. Firmness, consistency, impartiality, justice, and self-control are required to maintain discipline. Praise can be given in the presence of others but reprimands should be private. If weaknesses are due to lack of ability or to other conditions, which probably cannot be corrected, criticisms are likely to result in damage rather than good. Possibly, better habits can be built up in time but the process demands tact.

Praise is one of the most valuable tools at the supervisor's command. It should always be used with discretion. To appreciate good performance is important but before giving praise, the supervisor should make sure it is deserved. To praise a person for improvement is good but not to praise someone who is doing consistently good work may cause hard feelings.

✍ **Friendly relations :**

Supervisor often asks, "How friendly should I be with my staff?" .It is difficult to determine how one should be friendly and take an interest in each member of the staff without too much intimacy. A certain amount of friendly contact outside the office, especially if the organization is in a small town, should do no harm and may do well. On the other hand, if it is known that the supervisor is intimate with only certain members of his staff, it is likely that his acts will be viewed by some with suspicion that he is favoring his friends. A supervisor who recommends a friend for a position could maintain their friendship from outside but it should not affect their relations in the office either during or after hours.

✍ **Confidences :**

The manager of trade association who gets a great deal of confidential information has said that not one percent of the people whom he has met will deliberately divulge confidential information. The ninety-nine men who do not divulge secrets, fail to realize how easy it is to spill facts. Maybe they will give only an innocent part of the situation, which is to be kept strictly confidential but someone else may give another part, and the secret leaks out. Often a person who is seeking information can get it by skillful questioning when the person with the confidential information is unaware of its leak.

✍ **Dealing with suggestions and requests from employees :**

Prompt action upon request and suggestions aids morale since delayed action may be interpreted as a sign that the supervisor does not think that the problem or the new idea is important. To secure flow of suggestions, it is important to reply promptly. Suggestions should not be laughed at, if offered seriously, even though it may seem ridiculous to a man with knowledge and experience. Many suggestions are made as a result of laziness, but efficiency might be defined as effective laziness, that is, getting the work done with the least expenditure of energy. It is wise to indicate to subordinates the problems on which a solution is sought.

✍ **Lateness :**

Numbers of companies in the United States have found that the average lateness is about four or five minutes, or only a little above one percent of the average working day. Lateness is unbusinesslike. It means that a person does not fulfill his part of the job. A habit of tardiness is likely to get worse, if not corrected, and it may also spread to others. Punctuality is necessary to teamwork. An office is essentially a team. It cannot function properly if a part of it is missing. Stress was laid upon the psychological impact on others and the fact that lateness often prevents others from starting on time. Some of the causes may be:

➢ Oversleeping
➢ Failure to allow enough time to reach the factory or office.
➢ Careless attitude or lack of interest.
➢ Lack of foresight.
➢ Laziness.
➢ Job too difficult.
➢ Overtime.
➢ Emergencies or unusual conditions.
➢ Transportation delays.
➢ Outside activities and interest including coffeehouse sessions.
➢ Chronic illness in family.

✍ **Absence :**

The problems of absence are about the same as the problem of lateness, although more complicated. Even under ideal situations worker absence occurs. A standard of satisfactory attendance is about as hard to get as one for punctuality. Some persons set eight days' absence per year, excluding vacations, as a reasonable average. Supervision has a direct effect upon worker absence. The kind of supervision received often aggravates personal problems on the job. Poor work management, boredom, discouragement, and bad relations with superiors and other people lead to absence. The supervisor should give prompt and fair consideration to requests for leave. He must weigh the needs of the work against those of the individual. In case of emergency, leave is usually authorized without question.

✍ **Wasting time :**

Wasting time, like lateness and absence, is a matter over which the supervisor has much influence, both directly and by the atmosphere he creates. The main cause of wasting time is usually poor organization of the work caused by poor supervision or general management. Waste of time is almost inevitable when the flow of work is uneven, when the department is over manned, when machines or other equipment are inadequate or improperly installed, and where there is a lack of cooperation between departments. Locating the worst offenders and dealing with them first may have a good effect upon the rest. Wasting time by taking time off in working hours may erode efficient work habits. If it is known that a worker produces well, his time wasting may be a challenge to the supervisor to keep him challenged and fully productive.

✍ **Stress, monotony and fatigue :**

Stress occurs when there is pressure, injury, or over stimulation. You may react, aside from physical hurt, with nervous tension (being keyed up) or emotional disturbance. Restraint, fear, frustration, and conflict are among the factors, which doctors think cause the wear and tear. You cannot avoid stress. You must adjust to people and events. You must face the frustration of doing things the way they have to be done even if it is not necessarily the way you think best.

Monotony does not affect workers equally. Some are happiest doing simple repetitive work. Many persons have less than average intelligence and they learn slowly, but once they have learnt it they will be contented with limited jobs. Supervisors often assume that a particular job is boring to everyone. It may be boring to them or boring to some of the workers who have tried it, but not necessarily to everyone.

Conclusion :

From the above discussion it is crystal clear that the person who is heading the organization should manage the things by observing the above points in the appropriate situations for the betterment of the Individual as well as the organizational growth.

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