

Ethical Dilemmas

“Everyone Else Does It!” Ethics Project

Student Handout – Page 1

1. In your computer applications class, there are several students who gather together to discuss the latest computer games. You play a couple of the games that are discussed, so you can occasionally add to the conversation. You would like to fit in more to their group, but you don't have all the games. You can get copies of the games from one of the students who burns copies for a small price. Do you get into the group by paying a small price for the pirated software?
2. Your busy schedule has kept you from really working on that science research paper. It is due in two days, and you have only a rough outline of what you are going to say. You need this paper to be good, to keep your sports and activities schedule from suffering. You need more supporting research. There is a web site that has “ready to use” research papers. In fact, you have found one that would work for your paper. Your science teacher is very busy with school business and doesn't always check the reports against online copies. Do you use the online copy to fit your schedule, or do you make room in your schedule to write it yourself?
3. As part of a student technician team, you work with teachers and students to keep the technology running. Because you are still a technician in-training, you can't always fix the problem or supply the answers. As a result, you see a different side of the teachers. Some of them can be rude and demanding when it comes to fixing technology that they rely on for their lessons, and others can be really nice. In your conversations with your friends at school, do you share all this “tasty gossip,” or do you hold back when other students talk about teachers?
4. You have an opportunity for an internship at a respected business in the community. Part of your qualifications comes from a senior project that you worked on with several other students. Through the interview process, you discover that you are given credit for a key section of the project that really impressed the company. In fact, another member of your senior team, with little input from you, did that section. How do you proceed?
5. You are a valuable member of the student store staff. You handle many of the cash box transactions, moving the daily cash between the store and the office, where it is held overnight. You remember that you needed to have cash to reserve your spot on the senior trip today, and your wallet is empty. You have the money at home, but forgot to pick it up this morning. You can't ask your friends because they don't carry that much cash, and no one is at your house to bring it over. You know how the money is moved around through the student store, and could “borrow” the money from the cash box until tomorrow, and nobody would probably know. How do you proceed?
6. You have been struggling in your Economics class. The content does not come easily, so you have put in countless hours to understand and do the assignments. There is another student who breezes through the assignments, getting high marks for the work he turns in. You know for a fact that he has used his college-aged cousin to do some of the assignments for him. You don't know how many assignments were turned in this way, but you are certain that he, in fact, did not do all the work. Your frustration increases over the last assignment that you worked overtime on, but did poorly. Of course, this other student scored well on the same assignment. You could drop the teacher an anonymous note about the implied cheating on the part of this other student. It might get the teacher to slow down a little, and help you in the long run. What do you do?

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Student Handout - Page 2

Ethical Dilemmas in Business (adapted from Carter MacNamara, PhD)

7. A customer (or client) asked for a product (or service) from us today. After telling him our price, he said he couldn't afford it. I know he could get it cheaper from a competitor. Should I tell him about the competitor, or let him go without getting what he needs? What should I do?
8. Our company prides itself on its merit-based pay system. One of my employees has done a tremendous job all year, so he deserves strong recognition. However, he's already paid at the top of the salary range for his job grade and our company has too many people in the grade above him, so we can't promote him. What should I do?
9. Our company prides itself on hiring minorities. One Asian candidate fully fits the job requirements for our open position. However, we're concerned that our customers won't understand his limited command of the English language. What should I do?
10. My top software designer suddenly refused to use our e-mail system. He explained to me that, as a Christian, he could not use a product built by a company that provided benefits to the partners of homosexual employees. He'd basically cut himself off from our team, creating a major obstacle to our product development. What should I do?
11. My boss told me that one of my employees is among several others to be laid off soon, and that I'm not to tell my employee yet or he might tell the whole organization which would soon be in an uproar. Meanwhile, I heard from my employee that he plans to buy braces for his daughter and a new carpet for his house. What should I do?
12. My computer operator told me he'd noticed several personal letters printed from a computer that I was responsible to manage. While we had no specific policies then against personal use of company facilities, I was concerned. I approached the letter writer to discuss the situation. She told me she'd written the letters on her own time to practice using our word processor. What should I do?
13. A fellow employee told me that he plans to quit the company in two months and start a new job that has been guaranteed to him. Meanwhile, my boss told me that he wasn't going to give me a new opportunity in our company because he was going to give it to my fellow employee now. What should I do?
14. A friend at my workplace asks to use my computer terminal while I'm away from my desk. He works in the programming group – why can't he use his own computer? Does he want to enter some data or program that he doesn't want his terminal ID to be associated with? How should I proceed?
15. I receive a certain weekly report that is necessary for me to do my particular job. It is marked "Company Confidential". I was called away from my desk while I was working with the report and I left it lying out. When I came back, I found a co-worker looking at the report and making notes from its contents. Why is she doing this? How should I proceed?