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Work Ethics

Stealing? No way!

CTAE-FS-9 Ethics and Legal Responsibilities: Learners commit to work ethics, behavior, and legal responsibilities in the workplace.

Understanding and Goals

Unit Understandings, Themes, and Concepts:

Enduring Understandings:

Students will learn how not using time effectively at work can be considered time theft and cost a company large amounts of money. Students should recognize that the unintentional theft of time still can greatly impact a company's profits and will discuss how companies should handle this problem.

Primary Learning Goals:

Essential Questions:

- Is time theft stealing?
- How should time theft be punished?

Students with disabilities:

For students with disabilities, each instructor should refer to the student's IEP to be sure that the accommodations specified in the IEP are being provided within the classroom setting. Instructors should also familiarize themselves with the provisions of Behavior Intervention Plans that may be part of a student's IEP. Frequent consultation with a student's special education instructor will be beneficial in providing appropriate differentiation within any given instructional activity or requirement.

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CSP Mini-Lesson 9, Spring 2008

Mini-Lesson Standards: (1) Evaluate personal attitudes and work habits that support career retention and advancement, (2) Demonstrate the application of essential workplace skills/knowledge such as scheduling, time management, and others, (3) Demonstrate understanding of the individual's role, responsibilities, and relationships in the organizational structure of a business.

Mini-Lesson Correlations: Workplace ethics, organizational effectiveness, time management

Stealing? No way!

Any way you look at it, taking something that doesn't belong to you is stealing. Chad, who considers himself an honest guy, found this out the hard way one day during a company-wide meeting on employee conduct. At his firm, Donway's Medical Devices, Chad works as a customer service representative, answering telephone calls from patients and giving advice on how to use the medical equipment.

Stealing? No way! (Continued)

The topic of the meeting was "Cutting Expenses in Every Department." At first, Maria Sanchez, the vice president of finance talked about general ways to cut expenses, such as using supplies efficiently and reaching productivity standards. However, once Ms. Sanchez started talking about "using time effectively," Chad began to feel uncomfortable, and he shifted his eyes back and forth to see if other people were looking at him.

Here are some of Ms. Sanchez's remarks:

"The purpose of today's meeting is to discuss ways that employees steal from a company without intent. We hope you will consider your own daily actions as you listen to the discussion. Do you take profits away from Donway's Medical Devices because of your conduct?"

- *"If you are on an annual salary and come in at 8:40 a.m. instead of 8:30 a.m. when you're due, you've stolen 10 minutes from our company."*
- *"If you leave 5 minutes early each day to 'beat the traffic' but don't give back those 5 minutes at another time, you're taking the company's money."*

Stealing? No way! (Continued)

Here are some of Ms. Sanchez's remarks (Continued):

- *"If you spend more than an hour at lunch, you're stealing the company's time—and time is money."*
- *"If you make personal phone calls during the workday, you're costing the company money."*
- *"If, as an hourly worker, you plan to be late to work and ask a friend to punch your time card in at the regular start time, you're cheating the company."*
- *"If you get up and walk around often or hang out at the water fountain or in the bathroom because you're bored, you're costing the company."*
- *"If you interrupt your co-workers to chat, you're wasting both your time and theirs and that's cutting into the profits."*
- *"If you send e-mails back and forth to your friends outside the company or you send non-work-related e-mails to your friends within the company, you're taking the company's money."*

Ms. Sanchez ended her remarks by asking: *"Do you steal time from our company?"*

State a Position

Do you believe that the examples given by Ms. Sanchez should be considered "stealing" from a company? Why or why not?

_____ Yes, this is stealing.

_____ No, this is not stealing.

Explain your position _____

Chad's Conscience

Chad earns \$12.43 an hour in his job as a customer service representative. After the meeting with Ms. Sanchez, he tried to remember all the instances in the last week when he might have done some of the things Ms. Sanchez described. The list he came up with is on the next page. How much money did he cost the company in a week?

Chad's Conscience (Continued)

Chad remembered:

**Amount Chad's action cost
the company in one week**

1. I overslept on Tuesday and came in 20 minutes late, but I called Lance and asked him to clock me in on my time card so my supervisor wouldn't find out. The supervisor's tough, and I didn't want to get on his bad side.

\$ _____

2. Every day I send a bunch of funny, non-work e-mails to my friends in the company. I don't see anything wrong with that since we all work at the same place. I don't e-mail my friends outside of work often—just two or three people a day. I bet I don't spend over one hour a week sending all of these.

\$ _____

3. I try to squeeze out an extra 5 minutes for lunch with Jillian, my girlfriend, every day. She works at a different place and our lunch hours overlap for only 30 minutes. If I don't take a few extra minutes, we hardly have time to eat.

\$ _____

Chad's Conscience (Continued)

Chad remembered:

**Amount Chad's action cost
the company in one week**

4. I wondered if Ms. Sanchez was talking about me when she made that comment about personal phone calls. Jillian or I call each other about twice a day. But we keep our conversations short—usually about ten minutes. And I always hang up if I see my supervisor coming.

\$ _____

5. Roaming around is not something I do, but Dave stops by every morning and tells me a joke or shows me a cartoon he found on the Internet. This only takes five minutes, not enough to worry about.

\$ _____

How much does Chad cost the company from time theft each week? _____

If ten of the 125 employees at Donway's Medical Devices spend about the same amount of time in non-work related activities as Chad, how much will they cost the company in one year? _____

Thinking About It

Compare a situation in which Chad has access to his company's cash register and steals the same amount of money he costs in time theft. How are the situations alike? Different? Should the punishment be the same? Different? Explain your answers.

Cash theft and time theft _____ Same _____ Different

Explain your answer _____

Punishment for these two situations _____ Same _____ Different

Explain your answer _____

Instructor's Guide

Students often do not think about how their low productivity can cost companies money, or how lost revenues from low productivity ultimately affect their own paycheck.

While managers do not believe that employees intentionally defraud the company by their time theft actions, the result is the same as with intentional fraud—profit reduction.

To expand the lesson, ask students to suggest other ways that employees engage in time theft without realizing what they are doing.

To further expand the lesson, increase the number of employees in item No. 7 who engage in time theft and recalculate how much the company loses.

As an additional critical thinking activity, lead a discussion on how time theft should be punished.

Related Materials

View the Web Site below for additional information on employees wasting time while at work. Please note that only the first article relates to the lesson.

<http://www.super-solutions.com/EmployeesWastingTime.asp>

Solutions to Activities

State a Position

The purpose of this activity is to engage students in thinking about how they use their time at work. The class may not be able to reach a conclusive answer, yet as shown in the next activity, time theft damages a company's profits just as stealing cash costs the company money.

Chad's Conscience

1. \$4.14 ($\12.43×20 mins/week)
2. \$12.43 ($\12.43×60 mins/week)
3. \$5.18 ($\12.43×25 mins/week)
4. \$20.72 ($\12.43×100 mins/week)
5. \$5.18 ($\12.43×25 mins/week)
6. \$47.65 (sum of No. 1 - 5)
7. \$24,778 ($\$47.65 \times 10 \times 52$ weeks/year)

Thinking About It

Another purpose of this exercise is to encourage critical thinking about time theft. The discussion is more important than the final answer, and answers will vary among classrooms. Punishments within a company generally start with a reprimand and continue with loss of promotion, docking of pay, and finally dismissal if the problem is not corrected.

Related Materials

Activities in this lesson are similar to the material found in *It's for Real Workplace Ethics. It's for Real Workplace Ethics, NEW Series III*, will available for fall classes. Samples will be available by mid-March. Please contact us if you would like to be placed on the list for a sample at csp@careersolutionspublishing.com or (888) 299-2784.

For more information about *It's for Real*, or other CSP products,
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