Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

4. Explain the significance of ethics-based decision making on the business environment.

8. Assess the auditing process for adherence to ethical practices.
   8.1. Identify ethical best practices used in the business environment.

Reading Assignment

In order to access the following resource(s), click the link(s) below:


Unit Lesson

*M*A*S*H* was a popular television series involving a team of doctors and support staff stationed in the 4077th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (*M*A*S*H*) located in South Korea during the Korean War. From 1972 through 1983, viewers raised the popularity of the show, leading to a successful 11 seasons. Generally speaking, the shows took on a comedic tone, but it could quickly turn sobering and even dramatic with the tragedies of war at the forefront. At the core of this plot was the main character’s (Hawkeye) aversion to the war and everything it represented. The idea of performing meatball surgery on young boys, only to send them back into war, seemed ludicrous to Hawkeye. Hawkeye referred to it as “senseless destruction.”
Although the characters did shift a bit during the 11 episodes, Hawkeye was a constant with his buddy, Trapper John, and in later episodes B.J. Hunnicutt. Through Hawkeye and Hunnicutt’s attempts to survive the injustices of the war, their constant shenanigans, while considered by some as unethical, presented themselves in a somewhat comedic sense. The regular army characters of Margaret Houlihan and Colonel Potter presented the straight-line, appropriate behavior ideals. Corporal Klinger brought in a dim-witted character, and Radar portrayed a young wholesome and very innocent character. Frank Burns, the nerdy bunk-mate, always seemed to bear the brunt of many of comedic situations.

Hawkeye and B.J. constantly involved themselves in mischievous doings that always tested the limits of ethical behavior. Examples ranged from calling Frank Burns “ferret-face” to the merciless pranks played on him. Another example stemmed from the drugging of Colonel Potter to perform an unauthorized surgery, which was believed to be necessary. Nurse Margaret Houlihan also served as the object of their fascination as they demonstrated a significant amount of sexual discrimination and bullying toward her. The character, Winchester, became the subject of significant bullying.

In today’s workplace, discrimination and bullying are not acceptable. One can define discrimination as the wrongful act of distinguishing an employee on characteristics other than merit. One can characterize discrimination as intentional or unintentional, but nevertheless, discrimination. Institutional discrimination is discrimination that results from actions of many people within the institution making discriminatory decisions on a routine basis. Some might consider M*A*S*H to be an example of institutional discrimination.

Current day affirmative action programs look to protect women, minorities, and other ill-represented groups. Affirmative action requires the proportion of these groups to be equal to that of the typical white male group. Outwardly, this program looks like a valuable tool, but it can promote claims of reverse discrimination. This situation might occur when an organization passes over more qualified white males due to an attempt to meet quotas, which require a number of women or other minority groups to be employed with the organization.

M*A*S*H depicts sexual harassment through Nurse Margaret Houlihan as she is the subject of unwelcome sexual advances and other verbal and physical contact of a sexual nature. A closely related type of discrimination is race discrimination. Although the actual storyline of M*A*S*H did not present race discrimination, a little irony exists with the casting of characters for the show. Spearchucker Jones, a black male, was a character depicted in the first season, and he served as a bunkmate to Hawkeye and Trapper John. Jones’s character ended quickly because no black doctors served in the Korean War during that time. This scenario is an interesting side note to the prevalence of discrimination accepted during that period of time in history.

Finally, one also needs to note discrimination based on age. Although this type of discrimination is frowned upon, in looking at the number of corporations downsizing their older managerial levels and replacing them with young people, one can raise the question of ethics.

Click here to view an interactive presentation that covers the key concepts covered in Unit IV.

Click here to access the Unit IV Presentation transcript.

Suggested Reading

The resources below highlight some of the challenges that employees may face in a work environment and how leaders can help eliminate discrimination.

In order to access the following resource(s), click the link(s) below:


