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ETHICS THE MAIN QUALITY OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE

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Abstract:

Through this paper I would like to remind and reinforce the importance of the ethical level of the human resource. More than that I would like to show that for any organization the ethical level of the human resource represents an important asset by itself

After a brief introduction are presented some theoretical aspects, regarding the definitions of ethics and ethic principles. Continuing it is shown how the ethical level of the human resource does influence the processes within any organization. Then some of the bad outcomes of not implementing ethical standards are presented and finally the conclusions are emphasizing the importance of the ethics for the resources management.

Key words: ethics and morality, quality of the human resource

1. Introduction

The human resource largely accepted as the most important resource of any organization may be described by different qualities like creativity, education, health status, age, morality or ethical level, specialization, and many others. These qualities may become more or less important according to the specific requirements of each position, but the ethical level remains same important no matter the domain of activity

Although the ethical level of the human resource is extremely important when we read a free position announce most of the times you may find no requirements on this respect. Still, a careful recruiter may add there that the candidate should not have a criminal record. That would be all. Does that means that the managers do not care about the morality of there employees? For sure not, because for this category of issues in almost any organization the punishment would most of the times be the direct dismissal.

Through this paper I would like to remind and reinforce the importance of the ethical level of the human resource. More than that I would like to show that for any organization the ethical level of the human resource represents an important asset by itself.

2. Definitions of ethics

Let us first see what ethics means and where this word comes from. It comes from the Latin *ēthicus* , Greek *ēthikós*, equiv. to *êth (os) ethos* + *-ikos -ic*. It represents:

- A system of moral principles: *the ethics of a culture*. [1]

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- The rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, culture, etc.: *medical ethics; Christian ethics*. [1]
- Moral principles, as of an individual: *His ethics forbade betrayal of a confidence*. [1]
- That branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions. [1]
- A social, religious, or civil code of behaviour considered correct, especially that of a particular group, profession, or individual; [1]
- The moral fitness of a decision, course of action, etc. [1]

As shown above there are many possible definitions however they are all showing that ethics is a set of rules and principles, a code of behavior considered correct, right or fair by a certain group, or organization. It is important to be noted that these rules are part of the culture of the organization. The manager should always be aware of the main traits of the organization's culture.

3. General ethic principles

Most of the ethical principles are basically the rules of common sense in almost any human collectivity, no matter the race, religion or level of education. Some of the most important of them are the honesty, the integrity, the loyalty, the accountability, the fairness, the love and respect for human fellows and nature, the respect for truth, the respect of real value, of age, of diversity, etc., and promise keeping.

To these, in the culture of most of the old nations responsible citizenship is also part of the general ethical principles. Going further, for different professional groups the ethical standards may differ. For example the honor, duty and complete dedication to the mission of defending the country are the core beliefs of all militaries in the service of their national armies.

Socrates (469-399 BC) who is considered to be the father of ethics was saying that the virtue can be learned and it is the most precious teachings. To do good you should know what good means, to be just, modest and brave you should know what justice, modesty and bravery really are. He also believed that “Our true happiness is promoted by doing what is right”. For Aristotle the moral education should aim to achieve the virtue of the logical reasoning, to become a man of a good judgment, who is thinking before doing, being wise.

4. Why should ethics be considered the most important trait of the human resource?

As the human resource of any organization is directly involved in all the processes taking place to achieve the goals of the organization it is obvious that the quality of the human resource will be imprinted on the final result of the organization. Also the culture of the organization, the quality of the work environment and its effectiveness will be directly influenced by the quality of the human resource.

A high level of morality and ethical standards of the human resource are bringing together the following characteristics and advantages in the same time:

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- The employees are doing their best by themselves without being supervised or waiting special motivating incentives. As a result the effort on the control and motivating means can be significantly reduced and use the released resource on the productive area of the organization;

- High level of discipline easily achieved with almost no special effort of the organization. Responsible and honest personnel would understand the importance of respecting rules, schedules, deadlines and naturally obeying and meeting them;

- Good accurate reports and correct use of the information channels. Honest, just and modest employees would always try to stay in respect of the truth without any exaggeration or abuse of the communication channel.

- Good cooperation and work environment. Respecting and supporting each other, having a natural respect for value, will create a healthy work environment encouraging cooperation and mutual respect.

- The correct distribution and use of the resources of all kind. Loyal and just employees would try to get the best result out of the resources available and they will not allow any subjective reason or “invisible string” to influence there judgment.

The list may continue because there is no specific process in an organization which may not be influenced by the quality of the human resource. However I would like to emphasize that the higher position in the organization the higher the need for a high level of ethics. This comes together with the implied level responsibility of making decisions over people, material resources and environment.

As shown above all the advantages of high ethical human resource are having a totally positive influence over the activity of the organization, kind of a guarantee for success.

5. What happens when ethics is poor or missing?

The cost of not implementing ethic principles in the life of any organization may be as high as the complete failure of the business. From one end of any business process to the other the lack of ethics may result in direct and indirect losses. Starting with the sourcing of the business and finishing with the delivery of the final product or service, at all stages the process may be compromised. To name a few of many possible examples I may mention:

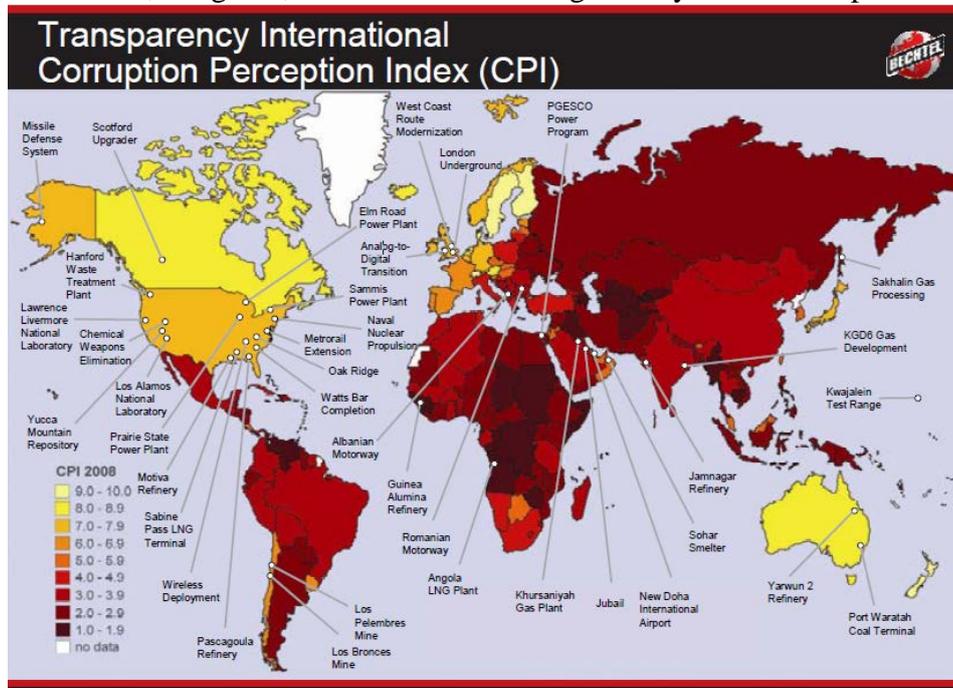
- costly or useless acquisitions;
- hiring unqualified personnel;
- waste of resources;
- abuses of any kind;
- faked quality controls;
- misuse of resources;
- failure to meet deadlines;
- failure to meet the quality standards;

No matter which is the ethical breach of the system, if not immediately addressed it will result in increasing costs, loosing of customers, failing the sponsors, and in the end the death of the business. Unfortunately for the state owned companies and governmental institutions when failing to meet the ethical principles, the loss will become public, harming the entire society. One may try to hide the problems of the system but the reality of the life shows that sooner or later the problem will pop up.

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As an example a 2008 report completed by Transparency International indicated that in a survey of 22 countries, construction in the public works sector was the most corrupt of 19 industry sectors.

Even though today the managers are expected to achieve good financial results with reduced costs and under the continuous pressure for a better and better quality of the products or services, the main cause of unethical behavior of the managers is one of the oldest human flaws, the greed, and the result of it is generally called corruption.



As shown in the same survey the institutional corruption is part of the every day life in throughout the world. However the bad effects are much more painful in the developing and poor countries, where each penny wasted or stolen is resulting in hunger, lack of medical assistance and death.

6. How can ethics be implemented?

First I have to mention that the ethics, the fundamental moral convictions are formed between the ages of 7 to 11 years old and the process may continue till around 18 when usually the main traits of the personality are crystallized [10]. That means that by the time of being employed the human resource already has its own level of morality which by no means can be evaluated. That is why it is very rare to see in the free position announcement any ethical requirement.

But this doesn't means that there is nothing else to be done in this respect. As I already said most of the ethical principles are rules of common sense. However because the common sense is not common to everybody the managers have to issue written rules and regulations which are meant to establish how one should behave, how responsibility is determined, what is considered fair and normal to be done. These books of rules are usually called codes of ethics. The minimum level of an ethical rule is to make sure that all your actions are legal. They should encourage the employees to always respect the truth, to respect and support each other, to respect the real values of the organization. They should also encourage the right way of managing a conflicting situations.

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After having established the code of ethics the most important rule is that this code should be always obeyed and especially by the managers. In order to promote them, all the issues of this kind should be made known by all employees and periodically reminded. The best way to promote an ethical behavior is by promoting the positive examples showing the good outcomes of a certain ethical attitude or action.

Today most of the big companies are making public their internal code of ethics trying this way to increase the trust of the customers in their company and why not to attract ethical employees.

7. Conclusion

In the nowadays world the role and responsibility of managers is higher and higher. To be sure that they are on the right way they should always observe and follow the ethical principles.

Mr. Michel Camdessus, former Manager Director of the International Monetary fund speaking about the causes of the financial crisis said that “at the root of the crisis is greed and lack of ethics”. He also mentioned that warnings were given by scholars and he mentioned Adam Smith, whom has first mentioned the importance of business ethics in his *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. He also said that ethical reforms are needed and these should aim to end the overexploitation of the resources and of the economic mechanisms.

By now we have learned that the benefits of implementing ethical principles are a guarantee for a strong organization and healthy work environment. It is at the hand of the managers to implement the ethical policies the compliance rules and more than that to practice everyday an ethical leadership stile, which by Socrates will lead the organization to the state of “happiness”.

Now, when the whole world is passing through the most serious financial crisis after the 2nd World War all governments in the world are analyzing the status of their economies, and reviewing their strategies, their policies in order to find solutions for actual problems and more, to resume the ascendant march of their economies and ensure a healthy and secure environment for their citizens. At these times any possible source of improvement should be carefully considered. However no matter what the new way to go will be chosen, the ethics should be taken along.

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