

What would you do if you found your friend and co-worker had committed a serious ethical violation? Facts to consider: The violation may never be discovered but it will cost your company many thousands of dollars in higher costs over the next several years. Your company has a stringent policy of firing employees who commit serious ethical violations. Explain your reasons for the action(s) you would take, if any.

When responding to your classmates' postings, it's okay to disagree and offer alternatives. There's no right or wrong answer, but you should justify your answer.

(See the discussion grading rubric under the Doc Sharing tab for guidelines for posts and responses.)

ANSWER:

The words "serious" and "will cost" stand out most to me in determining my course of action in this matter; however, what's missing is the word "intentional." A coworker of mine once discovered that he was not allowed a half hour lunch as part of his daily routine, and had been erroneously billing his lunch break to the client. This was a serious ethical violation and one that had cost the client thousands of dollars over the last seven years, but it was also completely unintentional.

The fact that he was open about his misconduct to his coworkers was a clear communication that he would correct his behavior in the future. We all agreed that it was a big mistake, but we also knew that he was a loyal employee who produced solid work during his tenure with us; therefore, there was no need to bring this matter to management's attention, which would inevitably result in his dismissal and possibly involve a lawsuit.

In contrast, a relatively new employee, who regularly expressed dissatisfaction with her job, was spending long hours online looking for better employment elsewhere and billing the client for her time. After some discussion among her coworkers, it was decided to bring the matter to management's attention, and she was promptly dismissed.

Both of these were serious infractions and both cost client's large sums of money; however, the employee's history and intention are extremely important factors in deciding how I would handle the matter.

I work with a number of IT folks who think it's perfectly fine to shop while they're on the clock, using company resources. Others (instructors) use company time to work on their school work (even while

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class is in session) arguing that it's for the benefit of the school and students !!

This is an interesting point. Where I work, management has the ability to monitor our online activities and will regularly pull metrics on browsing habits if they feel too many people are surfing the web too much. Because web-surfing at work is such a strong temptation, management instituted a policy that all employees are allowed two 15 minute periods to surf the web during the day. The client gets billed for this time; however, the client was also consulted on establishing the policy and agreed that it would benefit everyone.

I disagree. Ethics are analyzing what is right or wrong within the constraints of society, like whether to steal or not steal. You cannot "accidentally" commit an ethical violation.

Waiting to report the violation could cost severe consequences for more than the friend or co-worker. NOT reporting it would be an ethics violation.

I have previously worked in an environment where a violation of policy has cost the employee their job, fines were imposed on their company and the contract was terminated. The employee made bad decisions in terms of their job function and committed several ethical violations.

It is important to remember that, while many ethics are standard, different companies do have different codes of conduct. Things like whether to record your billable time to the nearest tenth, quarter, or half an hour are not standardized across all work environments.

Where I work, the government regularly gives all employee's "59 minutes" of leave to get a head start on a vacation weekend or as a reward for outstanding performance, but the details of how this works are incredibly convoluted. Sometimes the 59 minutes applies to all employees, other times only to government workers. Then there are rules about whether you can take the 59 minutes if you had already asked for the afternoon off, or whether you need to make up time. Ethics violations abound when a policy is inconsistently applied and ISO documentation standards are not enforced.