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May 2011

Tick, Tock - Watch Your Time

Ethics: the rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, culture, etc. - Definition on Dictionary.com

The statistics are shocking. An estimated 60% of all online purchases are made during regular business hours. More than 3.5 billion text messages are sent per day. More than 250 million people log into Facebook and users send over 140 million tweets each day. And employees admit using technology for personal purposes up to three hours a day at work. Ethics discussions of the past often included topics such as taking office supplies home or using the company long distance lines for personal use. The new ethics issue in the workplace is time. Can you steal time from your employer?

Computers are faster, workplace processes are more and more efficient, and work hours blur with employee access to smart phones and free Wi-Fi. Our challenge in this multi-tasking, 24-7 connected world is to ensure our work time is professional and productive. If you steal 15 minutes to check Facebook, and then shoot an email to your child's teacher and later make a couple phone calls to set up some doctor appointments, have you crossed an ethical boundary of using work time for personal business? As employees, if we are working more efficiently and working outside the normal 8 to 5 work hours, is there still a line that should be drawn between personal and work activities in the workplace?

We know what to do if someone tells us what is right and what is wrong or what we can and cannot do during our work hours or with work resources. Ethical dilemmas are rarely so defined, thus the reason they are so challenging. As technology changes, it is difficult or cumbersome for organizations to create clear policies on use and thus they rely upon the ethical behavior of their employees to manage work time most efficiently. And regardless of policies, organizational rules, or personal beliefs, conducting personal business on work time can impact your reputation and how others view your work ethic.

*"It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation,
and only one bad one to lose it."
- Benjamin Franklin*

Your reputation is the one thing that will stick with you through the rest of your career. You may be the best employee in your group, but if your manager interrupts personal phone calls every time she stops by your office, the perception of your use of work time may be in question. If every time a co-worker passes by your cubicle you are reading news online, how you allocate time might be questioned. If you complain about the amount of work you are asked to do, then post status updates on Facebook all day, your ability to manage time may be questioned.

Make sure that your actions surrounding the use of time in your workplace do not impact your reputation and career opportunities. Consider your ethical behavior and the reputation you may be building when it comes to stealing time from your employer. Whether it is personal activities or work activities during work hours, bottom line – Watch Your Time!

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EMPOWER Your Co-Workers
Gain the FREEDOM to Choose Your Destiny**



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