

Excellence through Ethics™

Session 13

Company Policies into Action



High School



Junior Achievement®



Excellence through Ethics

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Session 13

Company Policies into Action

Content: Ethics, Company Culture, and Employee Management

Methods: Role-Playing

JA Foundational Pillars: Ethics and Work Readiness, and Entrepreneurship

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Company Policies into Action

Overview

Students discover that written policies alone do not guarantee the ethical conduct of company employees. The interpersonal skills of leaders who are truly committed to business ethics are required. Students learn the importance of ethical behavior in a company's culture: the way a company conducts its everyday business. Companies and their employees should always strive to do the right thing. Ethics should be communicated in a company's mission statement, including vision, values, brand, code of conduct, training programs, and orientation for new employees.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Interpret written ethics policies.
- Recognize that private use of company property, workplace harassment, employee confidentiality, accuracy of expense reports, and whistle-blowing are ethical business issues.
- Evaluate the responses of business leaders to unethical behavior.

Preparation

Review the activity. Prepare the necessary copies and session materials.

Group work is incorporated into this session. You may consult with the teacher to determine how best to form the groups.

Post Key Terms and definitions in a visible place.

- **Ethics:** The standards that help determine what is good, right, and proper.

Discuss the activity with the teacher. Explain that the activity will involve two role-plays, one with the teacher and one with students. Review the introductory customer service role-play with the teacher. Ask the teacher to assist you in selecting 10 students for the second role-play.

You will need to make a copy of skit from Presentation Introduction below for the teacher. You will need a backpack, a stapler, two pens, and a box of paper clips for Skit One.

Recommended Time

This session typically takes 45 minutes to complete. Ask the teacher to help you keep track of time.

Materials

- Copy of Skit from Presentation Introduction below (1 per volunteer and teacher)
- XYZ Company Ethics Policies (1 per student)
- Role-plays (2 per group)
- Backpack (1)
- Stapler (1)
- Pens (2)
- Box of paper clips (1)

Presentation

Introduction (15 minutes)

Greet the students. Tell them that how a company conducts its everyday business must be part of the company culture that is communicated to employees. Companies and employees should always strive to “do the right thing.”

Tell students that you and their teacher are going to role-play a scenario in which a customer service representative in a media store is helping a customer who is trying to return a purchase.

Note: The Customer Service Representative is impatient, unfriendly, and rude. The Customer should show anger that builds to an explosive ending.

Customer: “Can you help me? I bought this CD last weekend, but it doesn’t play properly after the fourth song. I want to return it.”

Customer Service Representative: “Got your receipt?”

Customer: “No.”

Customer Service Representative: “Well, I can’t do anything if you don’t have your receipt. That’s the policy; it’s written on the wall behind me.”

Customer: “But the CD was brand-new and sealed. I didn’t expect to have to return it. No one keeps their receipts!”

Customer Service Representative: “Sorry. No receipt, no return.”

Customer: “But that’s not fair! I paid \$15.98 for it, and it doesn’t work!”

Customer Service Representative: “That’s not my problem. Next in line?”

Customer: “I’ll never shop here again!”

Tell students that you will now repeat the role-play with a few modifications.

Note: This time, the Customer Service Representative is polite and caring, but firm. The Customer is frustrated with the situation, but understands the company policy.

Customer Service Representative: “Good morning! How may I be of service?”

Customer: “Well, I bought this CD last weekend, but it doesn’t play properly after the fourth song. I want to return it.”

Customer Service Representative: “We’re really sorry that your CD doesn’t work properly. Are you familiar with our return policy?”

Customer: “No.”

Customer Service Representative: “We have a 100% money-back guarantee on all of our products. But, we do require the receipt as proof of purchase. May I see your receipt?”

Customer: “Uh, I threw it away. The CD was brand-new and sealed when I bought it, so I really didn’t think there would be a problem.”

Customer Service Representative: “I’m very sorry, but I really do need the receipt because it proves when and where you purchased the CD.”

Customer: “But that’s not fair! I paid \$15.98 for it, and it doesn’t work.”

Customer Service Representative: “I understand your frustration. I’d be angry too if I bought a broken CD and couldn’t return it. I’d really like to help you, but I still have to enforce our company’s policies. While I can’t accept the return without a receipt, I’ll tell you what I can do. I can give you a coupon for \$5 off on your next CD. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

Ask students what the customer’s reaction will probably be. Will the customer ever shop there again? Have students explain why or why not. Ask students what made the second scene so different from the first. Is an employee’s attitude really that important?

Activity

XYZ Company Role-Plays (25 minutes)

Tell students that today they will be examining business ethics policies and the relationship of interpersonal skills to policy enforcement.

Ask for a volunteer to define **ethics**. **Answer:** Ethics are **the standards that help determine what is good, right, and proper**.

In corporate America, compliance means conforming to the letter of the law, and ethics is the spirit of the law – doing the right thing.

Explain that many companies have ethics policies to guide employees in making the right decisions.

When employees are faced with ethical dilemmas, they should ask themselves the following questions:

- Is your action illegal or unethical?
- Are you being fair and honest?
- Would you be embarrassed or unwilling to tell your family, friends, or coworkers?
- Will you sleep soundly tonight?
- Would you want to see it reported on the front page of a newspaper?
- Could someone’s life, health, or safety be endangered by your action?
- Does the intended action appear inappropriate?

Distribute XYZ Company Ethics Policies to students. Allow them a few minutes to read the information.

Tell students these are the ethics policies at the XYZ Company. Ask for volunteers to explain the policies in their own words. Make sure students see how the company and its employees benefit from such policies.

Next, select 10 students to role-play XYZ Company employees. Assign each student a number between 1 and 10. These numbers will correspond to the roles they will play. Then, give each of the 10 students a copy of Role-Plays. Give them a few minutes to read over the directions for their roles.

Tell the rest of the class they are to watch the role-play carefully. If they see any XYZ Company employees breaking any company ethics policies, they should write down the names of the “guilty” next to the policy number that was broken.

Tell the class they will do one skit at a time.

- After each skit, ask which “employees” are guilty of violating the ethics policies?
- After Skit One, ask what Student 2 could have done differently. Point out that many people justify unethical actions by saying, “Everyone does it.”
- After Skit Two, ask what Student 5 could have done differently. Point out that supervisors have a special responsibility to make sure everyone follows the rules.
- After Skit Three, ask why Student 7 probably made his decision. Point out that the decision was a good one. He was not the supervisor of Student 6, but he showed good leadership skills by setting a good example.
- After Skit Four, ask students if they have seen similar behavior in school. Does this sort of treatment usually make people work faster, better, or more cheerfully?
- After Skit Five, ask what Student 9 should have said. Point out XYZ Company demands that unethical behavior be reported. In this case, the supervisor is asking for information to help make the workplace safer.

Summary and Review (5 minutes)

Briefly review the vocabulary introduced in the session.

Good ethics policies will help company employees work together more productively. However, for policies to work, everyone in the company must understand them, follow them, and encourage others to follow them. It is the special responsibility of company leaders to create an atmosphere that supports ethical behavior. Leaders must use their interpersonal skills to build rapport and influence others in this area. Employees must be trained on what and how to report.

Explain that some companies have employee help lines or hotlines to report issues, or appoint an Ethics Officer to help employees resolve issues. Anonymous help lines can assist if employees are afraid to report, or feel uncomfortable going to their manager or supervisor.

Briefly discuss the notion of good corporate citizenship. Good ethics is good business, and companies have a social responsibility to their communities. Just as it is important for each of us to be good citizens, companies have to be good citizens, too.

Thank the students for their participation.

Session Outline

Introduction

- Greet the students.
- Tell them that how a company conducts its everyday business must be part of the company culture that is communicated to employees.
- You and the teacher role-play two scenes that show the different ways written policy can be carried out.

Activity

- Tell students that many companies have ethics policies to guide employees in making the right decisions. Mention that when faced with an ethical dilemma, there may not be a clear-cut guideline or rule to follow. In corporate America, compliance is adhering to the letter of the law, and ethics is the spirit of the law – doing the right thing.
- Distribute the XYZ Company Ethics Policies.
- Have the class watch the student skits and identify unethical conduct.
- Discuss how the ethical issues in each skit could better have been handled.

Summary and Review

- Briefly review the vocabulary introduced in the session.
- Make sure students understand that good business leaders create an atmosphere that encourages ethical behavior. All employees need to lead by example, but senior management needs to set the tone.
- Thank the students for their participation.

XYZ Company Ethics Policies

1. There shall be no private use of company property or supplies.
2. Information about employees' personal lives, health, and work evaluations shall be kept confidential.
3. Employee expense accounts shall reflect only those costs related to company business.
4. Every employee shall have the right to a harassment-free environment.
5. Employees shall report any violations of the company's ethics policies.

Role-Plays



Skit One (Students 1 and 2)

The scene opens with both students working in an office. Student 1 is the supervisor. Student 2 is the subordinate. Student 1 is speaking while placing a stapler, box of paper clips, and two pens in his backpack. Student 2 has his back to the audience.

Student 1: “I think you have done some great work today. Don’t forget to get that report finished—I need it first thing tomorrow morning. I need to go home a little early today, but you have my cell phone number if you have any questions finishing up the report.”

Student 2 (turning to the audience): “That’s a great idea! I think I’ll just take some supplies home, too. I really need some paper for my computer printer. If the boss does it, it must be okay.”



Skit Two (Students 3, 4, and 5)

The scene opens with Students 3 and 4 talking together.

Student 3: “Did you hear the news, Paige got the low score on her last evaluation!”

Student 4: “Yeah, and I heard Charles didn’t do well either, probably because he’s stressed out about his kid getting expelled from school.”

The scene changes as Student 5, the supervisor, enters the room.

Student 5: “Yeah, it’s a shame about Charles’ kid, but I just don’t know what’s going on with Paige.”





Skit Three (Students 6 and 7)

The scene opens at an office, where Students 6 and 7 are filling out paperwork.

Student 6: “Wasn’t that a great trip to Orlando, Florida?! I never knew business could be so much fun.”

Student 7: “Yeah! I just wish we didn’t have to fill out these expense reports.”

Student 6: “Oh, it isn’t so bad. You just need to learn how to come out ahead.” (Then winking an eye.) “I’m writing down that my taxi from the office to the airport cost \$8.50.”

Student 7: “But we both took the bus for a buck.”

Student 6: “The boss doesn’t know that.”

Student 7: “ True. But, my job’s worth more than \$7.50. I think I’ll just stick to the truth.”



Skit Four (Students 8 and 9)

The scene opens with Student 8, the supervisor, walking past a chair where Student 9 is sitting.

Student 8 (patting Student 9 on the head and speaking in a baby-voice): “Have you stopped crying and finished your work yet? I’ve been waiting for your ‘messy papers’ since noon.”



Skit Five (Students 9 and 10)

The scene opens with Students 9 and 10 in a conference.

Student 10: “Now, I want you to know that this meeting is confidential—everything you say stays in this room. All I want is an honest evaluation of how your supervisor treats you. Has your supervisor ever treated you badly?”

Student 9 (lying): “Uh. No. Everything’s been real professional.”

Appendix

Welcome to Junior Achievement's

Excellence through Ethics

As a Junior Achievement (JA) volunteer or teacher, you are joining other teachers and volunteers from across the United States in providing students with a unique educational experience. Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics* offers students learning opportunities to share knowledge and information regarding ethics in business. JA strives to show students how business works, and to better evaluate organizations that conduct their operations in the right way.

Excellence through Ethics is designed to equip volunteers and teachers with supplemental, ethics-based activities for use with JA in-class programs for grades four through twelve. All these activities provide students with current and essential information about business ethics.

These activities are designed to reinforce students' knowledge and skills, teach them how to make ethical decisions, assist them in learning to think critically, and help them to be better problem-solvers. All the activities are hands-on, interactive, and group-focused to present the material to students with the best instructional methods.

Within these supplements, you will find sections to help you effectively implement the activities in your volunteer experience. Materials include: (a) an introductory discussion of business ethics, marketplace integrity, and the growing capacity of students for ethical decision-making; (b) activities and student materials that connect to and expand current classroom-based Junior Achievement programs; and (c) a functional glossary of terms relating to a wide spectrum of ethics, quality, service, and social responsibility considerations in business.

JA greatly appreciates your support of these important and exciting activities. If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org.aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the “*Excellence through Ethics* Survey” link located in the middle of the page.

Appendix

Introduction and Overview

- *How do I do the right thing in this situation?*
- *Should I be completely honest, even if it puts others in jeopardy?*
- *What kind of community do we want to be?*
- *How do we do what's best for the long term?*
- *Who should cover the cost of "doing the right thing"?*

These are all questions having to do with business ethics. They are valid and necessary questions, and good business people have asked them for generations. They form the backdrop of vital discussions as business, community, and political leaders grapple with significant issues. Many students would ask these questions, even if Junior Achievement hadn't developed this ethics curriculum.

Business Ethics Discussions Are Here To Stay

Business ethics has been in the spotlight for much of the past decade, especially as examples of wrongdoing come to light in the media. New technologies and international competitive pressures cause a steady focus on the question, "Is it possible to be competitively successful in business today and still operate in an honest and ethical manner?" The past decade has seen individuals search for deeper personal meaning in the workplace, which has contributed to lively ethics discussions in the business realm. For these reasons, the discussion of business ethics is not a passing fad; it's here to stay.

Many graduate schools of business have either required ethics coursework or integrated ethics principles throughout all areas of study. That is commendable. We believe this vital area of exposure and instruction also should happen at earlier ages and continue throughout the students' educational journey. Many of today's students haven't had access to a well-rounded education in economics and free enterprise or have come to see these in a very negative light. They have limited awareness of the extent to which good business leaders engage in the challenging exercises of ethical decision-making amid heavy competitive pressures. As students learn the general principles of economics and business, it's critical that these be underpinned with a strong foundation in ethics. This will accentuate the best in American business traditions, while laying the groundwork for students' continued evolution into future generations of leaders.

Integrity in the Marketplace?

Many adults and young people choose to believe that the marketplace is driven only by greed. They view it as bringing out only the worst in human behavior, demoralizing the human spirit, and driving out any sense of idealism. While elements of greed and extreme self-interest among some individuals cannot be denied, solid research has shown time and again that companies with a long-term focus on ethics and a broad consideration of stakeholders' interests are much more profitable than those lacking such a focus.

James A. Autry, in his book *Love and Profit: The Art of Caring Leadership*, said it well: "I do not doubt the presence of greed in the marketplace because I do not doubt the presence of greed in people. But, I also do not doubt the ennobling aspects of work, of the workplace, of the community, of endeavor, of

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the marketplace. So I choose to believe that most of the marketplace is driven by people who want to do good work for others and for themselves.”

Excellence through Ethics accepts the challenge of educating youth in the basics of economics and business while establishing a positive balance on the side of well-informed, ethical business practice. This may appear to place a heavy burden on Junior Achievement volunteers, who are not trained ethics experts. The following informational pages will not turn you into an ethics expert. That’s not what we’re striving for here. What students need most is meaningful interaction with people who are willing to engage in a discussion of these vital issues.

Lively Practitioners Rather Than Dry Theorists

This program is more about day-to-day ethics practice than the nuances of ethics theory. Some believe that working in business requires a disconnect from one’s personal ethics. We do not believe this is the case. Students need to know that what they learn about fairness and honesty in general also applies to business. While business ethics may address some specific areas of business practice, it’s not a separate and distinct specialty to be set apart from the general ethical principles that apply in other areas of life. Young people need to encounter the wisdom of age and experience that volunteers bring to the classroom.

Students’ Growing Capacity for Ethical Decision-Making

Excellence through Ethics is designed to foster discussions at the appropriate level for each age group. The curriculum developers have designed the ethics activities with sensitivity to student’s mental maturity. At the late elementary and middle-grades levels, students’ capacities for ethical reasoning tend toward good personal behavior as determined by adult rules and authority. In relationships, personal trust, loyalty, and respect are of paramount importance. For these students, corporate ethical behavior is viewed in much the same light as their own personal behavior: it’s governed by rules.

As students advance into high school, their ethical decision-making moves into the larger arena of social contracts and systems that guide and govern societal and group behavior. Here the rationality and utility of laws are scrutinized, as students become more capable of higher-ordered, principled thinking. Students are increasingly aware of the diversity of values among different cultures and communities. At this level, students’ capacities for processing the complex, ethical dilemmas that may be encountered in business are greatly enhanced.

You will gain confidence as you come to realize that conducting a robust, provocative discussion with students is more important than “having the right answer.” The activities have been designed to leave room for lively discussion and multiple points of view. Having the courage to share your own experiences is very valuable to students.

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You don't have to apologize for the excesses students may see in business. Don't assume responsibility for actions that are not your own, and do not try to defend the indefensible. While accentuating the fact that most businesses operate ethically, it's okay to scrutinize the unethical players in the marketplace who give business in general a bad name.

Continuing Education

Teaching this material to students will no doubt strengthen and enhance your own ethics awareness and continuing education. Some students will challenge your best reasoning capacities. Having your own support network of professional colleagues with whom you can share and discuss some of these issues is very valuable. It's also helpful to seek out colleagues with philosophical views that differ from your own. This serves as a valuable "cross-pollination" function because you will be able to understand and discuss a variety of views with students, as well as share students' perspectives with your colleagues. In this way, everyone learns.

Finally, please be assured that your contributions here have tremendous value to students and will serve to upgrade business ethics in the future. We're dealing with the future generation of leaders in their formative years. We can take pride in the fact that we've had a hand in shaping the very people who will be responsible for business ethics and social responsibility in the future.

Appendix

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Many educators, economists, businesspeople, and consultants have contributed to the development of *Excellence through Ethics*. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups for their efforts, creative talents, and support in creating these materials:

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Appendix

Excellence through Ethics Evaluation

Junior Achievement has discontinued all paper versions of program surveys. However, we greatly appreciate your comments and feedback about *Excellence through Ethics*. Please help us improve the quality of *Excellence through Ethics* by sharing your comments through our new online survey process. The online survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org/aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the *Excellence through Ethics* Survey link located in the middle of the page.

Thank you for participating in JA!



Excellence through Ethics Volunteer Survey

1. Including this session, how many individual sessions of Excellence through Ethics have you presented? _____

2. Do you feel that the students were engaged through this session?
 - A. Not at all
 - B. Somewhat engaged
 - C. Engaged
 - D. Very Engaged
 - E. Unsure

3. Do you feel the session was relevant to students?
 - A. Not relevant
 - B. Somewhat relevant
 - C. Relevant
 - D. Very relevant
 - E. Unsure

4. Do you feel students are more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?
 - A. Significantly more prepared
 - B. Somewhat more prepared
 - C. Somewhat less prepared
 - D. Significantly less prepared
 - E. Unsure

5. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being excellent), how would you rate the overall quality of the Excellence through Ethics session? _____

6. After this JA experience, how likely are you to volunteer for JA again?
 - A. More likely to volunteer
 - B. Less likely to volunteer
 - C. No more or less likely to volunteer
 - D. Unsure

7. What comments or suggestions do you have regarding the overall session (including format, content, etc.)?

Optional: City _____

State _____ Country _____

Email _____

Excellence through Ethics Student Survey

1. What grade are you in? _____

2. Please fill in the circle that best describes how you feel about the following statements.
There is no right or wrong answer.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This topic is very important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to apply what I learned in this session to the real world.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The activities were interesting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned something about ethics from this session.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Do you feel more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?

- A. Significantly more prepared
- B. Somewhat more prepared
- C. Somewhat less prepared
- D. Significantly less prepared
- E. Unsure

4. I saw someone at my job taking money from the cash register, I would:

- A. Ask someone I trust what I should
- B. Tell a supervisor
- C. Talk to the person taking the money
- D. Do nothing
- E. Not sure

5. To help us better understand who you are, please answer the following questions: How do you describe your ethnicity (family background)? (Fill in all that apply)

- A. African American
- B. Asian American
- C. Latino (a) or Chicano (a)
- D. European American (white)
- E. Native American
- F. Other – how do you identify yourself? _____

6. Do you have any additional comments regarding this session?

Optional: City _____ State _____ Country _____