

Making Ethics Real

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You've read the Standards, seen the video, and attended the briefing. You've spent the required time learning enough about Northrop Grumman's ethics policies to stay out of trouble. That's important, but is it enough? Are you using what you've learned to make better decisions? Did anything really change after you completed your ethics training, or could you be doing more to apply what you've learned to your job?

Sometimes, we think that our individual actions won't make much of a difference. Our responsibilities aren't big enough to affect the whole company, and besides, isn't it up to management to make changes? Management did take the first step by making sure that all employees had training about the importance of ethics. The next step is up to *you*.

Take a Closer Look

Before you can make changes, you need to take a look at what's going on around you. How would you answer these questions, both for yourself and for others in your work place?

- What is the overall atmosphere in the office? Do people work as a team? Do they treat each other with respect, even when there's a conflict? Is the work environment healthy and safe?
- Are associations with outside contacts, such as vendors, contractors, suppliers, or competitors, completely honest and ethical? Remember to look not only at actions or intentions, but at the way others might perceive those actions.
- Are you using the company's resources—such as office equipment and the company computer network services—responsibly and safely?
- Are you completely familiar with any special laws or policies that apply specifically to your job?
- In your personal life, do you have any interests, financial or otherwise, that might be in conflict with your job or with the company?
- Is all sensitive information properly secured? Do you ever discuss it with people, even other employees, who don't really need to know?
- Is there something that doesn't feel quite right, but you've never questioned it because you thought someone would say "we've always done it that way" or "it's no big deal"?

Take a few minutes to jot down some notes about these questions. When you size up your list, you'll begin to see where you can take action. *If you discover a serious issue, where a law or regulation is being broken or someone's safety or security is at risk, report it immediately.*

It's more likely that you'll uncover some "gray areas" or areas where things have been overlooked for a while.

Some of these may seem fairly harmless, but remember that small things can add up to big trouble. All of our actions contribute to the overall reputation and atmosphere of the company. Ironically, the small things are often the easiest to correct, if only someone will take the time to do so.

A Plan of Action

Now you should be ready to form your plan of action.

- Review your list and select two or three items to address. It may not seem like much, but it's better to achieve a small goal than it is to make big plans that are never accomplished. When you reach your goals, you can always come back to the list and do more.
- If the solution to the issue is clear, write it down. For example, if your job is governed by special regulations that you haven't read since your new-hire training, your plan might say, "Review the bidding procedures for purchasing items for international locations." If you're always late in submitting your expense reports, you might write down "I'll get my reports in by the 15th of this month."
- Old habits can be hard to break, so post a little reminder to yourself or ask a co-worker to make the change too, so you can remind each other.
- Don't be intimidated if the solution seems to require a change that's beyond your control, such as a revision in existing responsibilities or procedures or additional training. Work the solution through and present it to your manager, along with your reasons for suggesting the change. Northrop Grumman is committed to doing the right thing.
- Sometimes a solution feels out of our control because the problem involves others. For instance, people may be in the habit of gossiping or telling off color jokes at the lunch table. Try to come up with one thing that you can do to improve the situation. Maybe you can change the subject at lunch when the jokes begin, or politely state that you find them offensive. Your action doesn't have to be heroic or dramatic, but if nothing is said or done, nothing will change.
- If you're not sure how to handle an issue, seek help from your manager, HR Generalist, or Ethics Office.

Positive Change

Ethics training is an important step in our personal and professional growth. But don't just "check the box" that says you completed a training requirement. Follow through and make changes that put the principles into daily practice.

If you take the time to evaluate your situation and write a plan of action, you are likely to achieve positive results. Don't forget to share those results during your performance evaluation. If your manager wasn't involved in your plan or actions, be sure to tell him or her about your ethics goals and achievements. Chances are, he or she will be pleased to see that you're serious about applying what you've learned.

For information on this and other Ethics subjects, including training requirements and opportunities, log on to the Ethics web sites:

Intranet-<http://w789900.md.essd.northgrum.com/> and Internet-<http://sensor.northgrum.com/ethics/default.htm>.

Ethics Q&A

- Q: *One of my co-workers isn't always completely honest with our customers. I know he's just trying to make the sale, but I don't know how to handle the situation. Should I report him?*
- A: Before you report him, try talking to your co-worker about his actions. Remind him that making the sale isn't worth risking his reputation or the company's. If for some reason you're not comfortable speaking to your co-worker about this, then you should mention the situation to your manager.
- Q: *When I attended ethics training I realized that my work with government agencies has special implications that I was not aware of. Should I get more training on this particular issue?*
- A: Raise your concern with your manager. He or she will arrange for you to have more specific training if your job duties require it. Also, check the ethics web site for specific training requirements and opportunities.
- Q: *In looking around our office I noticed that we have some heavy cabinets installed without being properly secured to the wall. What should I do?*
- A: Contact building maintenance and ask them to correct the problem immediately. Northrop Grumman wants the workplace to be safe for everyone, and it's up to us to report the small things before problems occur.
- Q: *Our area is required to complete a weekly quality control form, but most people just fill in numbers without really keeping an accurate count. Even though I know it's important, I don't want to be the one to make a fuss about this.*
- A: You don't have to "make a fuss" to make your point. Try to urge other people in your group to take the form more seriously. Talk to them about the implications of falsifying the numbers, and how our customers or reputation might be harmed. What if a family member was the end customer? Most people are willing to do the right thing if they understand why it matters. If you aren't able to gain their cooperation this way, speak to your manager about the situation.