Solidifying Your Ethics in Human Resources

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Working in human resources means you're often dealing with large numbers of people every day. You're the point person in hiring new talent, dealing with employee issues, enforcing the rules of management and sometimes letting staffers go. Unlike a computer or a machine or even a piece of paper, people can be messy to handle sometimes. A great HR professional is one who not only performs well with people, but does so in a way that's fair, unbiased and responsible. Maintaining your ethics is a crucial pillar when working in the field, so it's good to be reminded of some of the key points of being an ethical HR professional.

Being responsible

When working as an HR professional, the first thing you want to demonstrate to your peers, supervisors and potential employers is that you are responsible for your actions. Being held accountable is an essential principle in working with people. Employees want to know they can trust you, after all. If you make a mistake in how you handle a situation, you'll want to be able to admit fault and not defer responsibility to someone else who may have had only a limited stake in the situation.

Human resources requires professionalism, fairness and responsibility.

At the same time, what this means is that you should hold yourself accountable in any given situation, even those that have only a small effect on the rest of the company. The CFP Board recommends displaying competence in what you do and constantly keeping up to date with whatever information is needed to perform your job. This can include any adjustments to employment laws such as wages, taxes and exempt status on workers, as well as discrimination rulings. In addition, you should show that your work is in line with what is expected of your role. In consistently demonstrating responsibility for your work, everyone you work with will see you in a better light.

"You should avoid situations with people that create conflicts of interest."

Being fair

Along with responsibility, fairness is a clear indicator of ethics and professionalism in human resources. In other words, any action that you undertake toward a given employee must be fair and unambiguous, according to the Society for Human Resource Management. An employee or manager who is caught breaking the rules should be punished appropriately, according to management guidelines. Someone who has done an excellent job should be rewarded for what they've achieved.

However, fairness exceeds the discussion of how to enforce the rules and guidelines of the company, as Santa Clara University points out. You must be careful to create situations where [there aren't conflicts of interest.](#) For example, a client or friend may look to the person to handle a situation involving another employee in a way that favors his or her interest. This creates a conflict of interest at best from helping out someone at the expense of the company. However, at its worst, displaying such unprofessional actions opens up the door to favoring specific employees at the expense of others and building up corruption through acts of nepotism and cronyism. By refusing to help people you're close to, you'll be able to establish yourself as a fair judge of any issue that arises, improving your reputation as an HR professional.