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Code of Ethics for Interviews

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Benefits of Working for Ethical Employers:

- Ethical employers create a culture of corporate and personal responsibility.
- They attract capable and qualified prospective employees, who are rewarded on work performance.
- These firms tend to provide guidance to help employees make ethical decisions.
- These organizations do not ask employees to compromise their personal ethics/values.
- Companies with ethical reputations treat employees fairly.



*Recruiters at leading schools rank ethics/personal integrity/ethical conduct as one of the most important attributes (along with communication, teamwork and leadership potential) that they seek in both MBAs and undergraduate recruits.**

Ethics Questions Job Seekers Can Ask Companies and Recruiters: (Answers to some of these questions can be found on firms' websites. Only a couple should be asked during an interview.)**

- Is there a formal code of ethics? How widely is it distributed? Is it reinforced in other formal ways such as through decision-making systems and informal ways such as through supervisors?
- Are employees at all levels trained in ethical decision making? Is ethics an integral part of "Leadership Development" programs? Are employees encouraged to take responsibility for their behavior or to question authority when asked to do something they consider wrong?
- Do employees have formal channels available to make their concerns known confidentially and nonpunatively? Is there a formal committee high in the organization that considers ethical issues? How does leadership encourage "getting bad news early," for example?
- Is misconduct disciplined swiftly and justly within the organization?
- Is integrity emphasized to new employees and then regularly to all employees?
- How are senior managers perceived by subordinates in terms of their integrity? How do such leaders model ethics-related behavior?

Unethical Behaviors Job Seekers Should AVOID:

- Misrepresenting background and skills (in a job interview or embellishing a resume).
- Misrepresenting job seeking status (e.g., number of offers).
- Accepting on-site interviews when they are not seriously considering the prospective employer.
- Canceling pre-arranged interviews unless they have accepted another offer.
- Exhibiting unprofessional behavior (e.g., making disparaging comments about other companies or applicants).
- Declining a job offer after initially accepting it—either ask for an extension or say no.

* Respondents (over 650 recruiters) to a survey conducted by Notre Dame's Career Services Department in February 2006, Graduate Management Admission Council, "Corporate Recruiter's Survey—Executive Summary of Key Findings: 2005," and Harris Interactive, "The Business School Survey: Year 2005 Recruiter Insights."

** Adapted from Treviño, L. K. & Nelson, K. *Managing Business Ethics: Straight Talk About How To Do It Right*. 4th ed. NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2007.

Benefits of Hiring Ethical Individuals:

- Ethical employees are more values-oriented and will support a positive company culture.
- They save the firm money by being less likely to cheat or engage in questionable actions under the guise of helping the company.
- They have a “broader” sense of responsibility.
- They are more committed to the employer–employee relationship.
- They increase retention rates and promote a work environment of high positive morale.



*Survey of 800 MBAs from 11 leading North American and European schools found that ethical reputation and caring for employees rank fourth and fifth among 14 attributes (intellectual challenge, geographic area and financial package- 1st, 2nd and 3rd) and 97% said they were willing to forego financial benefits for a caring employer.****

Ethics Questions Recruiters Should Consider Asking Job Applicants:

- Have you taken a course in business ethics? What does “business ethics” mean to you?
- How have you dealt with a specific ethical issue either as a student or employee?
- Whom would you consult (first) if you were faced with an ethical issue in the workplace?
- What elements of your personal code of ethics influence you to make ethical decisions?
- If you were asked by your supervisor to undertake an action that you thought was unethical, how would or did you respond?
- If you were asked by a co-worker to do something you thought was unethical, how would or did you respond?

Unethical Behaviors Recruiters Should AVOID:

- Using exploding job offers (failing to allow applicants to participate in the entire recruiting season, or giving applicants less than two weeks to decide at other times).
- Tying signing bonus to exploding job offer.
- Using high pressure interviewing tactics on campus or during firm visits.
- Revoking on a job offer to a candidate.
- Withholding relevant information in extending a job offer (e.g., salary, relocation allowance, starting date, job title, etc.).
- Exhibiting unprofessional personal behavior (e.g., fraternizing with applicants or harassing them).

*** Alice LaPlante, “MBAs Seek Caring, Ethical Employers,” Stanford Business Magazine, May 2004, reporting on research of Professors David B. Montgomery and Catherine A. Ramos.

For additional copies of this flyer,
please contact Deb Coch, Administrative Assistant, Institute for Ethical Business Worldwide,
255 Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556
(phone 574-631-6072, email Coch.1@nd.edu).