

HAVE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS CHANGED THEIR PERCEPTION OF BUSINESS ETHICS? A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study was to determine if human resource managers in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area have changed their perception of business ethics. A similar study was completed in 1999. This study analyzed the current views of human resource with those in the 1999 study. For example, in 1999, 43 percent of the respondents indicated that ethics instruction was "Very Valuable." In the 2004 study, this percentage increased to 73 percent.

INTRODUCTION

Interest in business ethics has grown significantly over the last few years. Most organizations still focus on maximizing profits for investors but many also emphasize appropriate and conscientious operational conduct and its effects on employees, investors, customers, and the entire business community. However, as evidenced by recent events, not all companies follow ethical tenets. Furthermore, in some cases, what a company publicly espouses may be vastly different from what is actually practiced.

Business ethics is currently one of the most important topics in business education instruction. AACSB has studied this issue and is considering how it should be incorporated into the business curriculum. It is increasingly clear that current and future business graduates need information about acceptable business practices in order to perform effectively in ethical business environments.

PROBLEM/METHODS

The problem of this study is to determine if human resource managers have changed their perception of business ethics. A questionnaire was developed and mailed to the human resource managers in the 200 largest firms in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. A similar questionnaire was sent to the same response group in 1999. A comparison of the responses will be made. In light of recent business scandals, it is hypothesized the human resource managers will be more concerned about ethics now than they were in the past.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are to compare the results of the 1999 study with those from the 2004 study. Comparisons will be made for the two years:

1. to determine the value of business ethics
2. to determine if business ethics CAN and SHOULD BE taught at colleges and universities
3. to determine if the participants' companies have a formal code of ethics
4. to determine if the participants' companies provide training in workplace ethics
5. to determine the communication channel(s) used to inform employees about ethical codes
6. to determine what ethical topics that should taught in a business curriculum
7. to determine the methods and materials that should be used in teaching business ethics.