Reflection Paper

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# I. Markkula Ethics App and Ethical Theories

While thinking of an ethical dilemma that would allow me to test the app, I thought upon a decision that was made by higher-ups in relation to my most recent employment. We were slated to move offices, allowing us to be a more prevalent resource to our students and faculty. Whether the decision was something of choice or directive from above is unknown to me, but ultimately the move happened, making this a retroactive look at management’s decision to move our office.

While there were arbitrary units affected, the directly affected units were the department staff, faculty and students. The overall idea that moving our office would improve the relationship across campus with our faculty and students was paramount to the decision. The decision was not a popular one in the eyes of the arbitrary units. The most good that comes from the decision allows easier access to our services across campus, to both faculty and staff. While the new location will subject the office to more unintentional foot traffic, potentially distracting from the primary responsibilities the staff has on a daily basis, the overall impact is not significant enough to outweigh the positive implications of the move. The decision to make the move was rated with a score of 87 on the app (Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, n.d.). Given our purpose will be better aligned with the overall mission of the college to make sure students have the help that they need to be successful in their educational endeavors, I agree with the ethical rating and the decision made by management to move our office, regardless of unpopular opinion of the topic throughout campus.

# II. Logical Fallacies

Our department’s move on campus stirred a lot of gossip and further fed the logical fallacy of emotion, misinformation, and generalization. While many other departments on campus felt they deserved equal treatment or felt they should have been first in line, many of their overall judgements were based upon feelings of past management within those areas. In the past there was a rift of dissatisfaction between departments, causing some to feel betrayed in the name of the services they offered or time on the job. While nobody was disputing the value of the services they offered per the departments in question, the emotion behind it coupled with the over-simplifying of what we do gave way to many sour attitudes. The dissatisfaction spread amongst many who originally had been unaffected, further hindering the ability to remain amicable amongst peers and placing emotional roadblocks to common goals. The final outcome produced was a very diluted experience for external individuals, those that we are supposed to be focusing on and serving.

Many generalizations and much misinformation still exist about what our department specializes in or is able to accomplish. Although we remain fully staffed with able-bodied and friendly individuals, the service we support is frequently frustrating to many. In turn, many of our faculty regularly associate our services with those frustrations, making it difficult to overcome the stigma they have developed regarding the product. The overall generalization that our department produces a frustrating product is detrimental to our purpose. Our software is that of a third-party in which we do the best we can possibly do to educate and make well the minds that use it. We offer many trainings, of which have poor attendance rates, to educate our faculty of the uses of the software. People would rather be angry than expand their knowledge on a topic, it seems.

Until we are able to overcome these fallacies, our students and faculty will continue to struggle with the software. However, our staff works diligently every day to make sure we are changing those opinions one day at a time attempting to make a difference for the Common Good (Santa Clara University, 2015) of the college. We continue to smile and devise creative ways to interact and educate, aligning our goals with that of the college’s. The goals of the college are sound, and eventually we will make a dent in these fallacies, and my confidence comes from that of our leaders.

# III. History of the Company

While most managers are immediately responsible for their actions in one way or another, it is not equally represented that way when it comes to consequences in a limited liability company. As the author of *The Company: A Short History of a Revolutionary Idea* pointed out during his speech, the modern company insulates the individual manager from legal and financial harm by allowing the company to take on a form that would legally act as an individual entity or person (Cato Institute, 2003). In other words, managers become distant from the immediate consequences of their actions and if they are making poor choices, they are not solely responsible for the financial or legal strain. As a company, that highlights the importance of selecting the right people, those that align with the values of the company.

In the news recently there has been a great demonstration of how an LLC can continue to survive after poor choices made by management. Fairlife, a milk company that touts ethical treatment of their cows and calves, has been under attack due to an investigation that produced graphic videos of animals being mistreated and harmed at the Fair Oaks Farm in Indiana (Gant, 2019). As a response, many grocery stores have made the decision to pull Fairlife milk from the shelves as a form of protest of this behavior. While there is no doubt that the lack of sales from these stores has some impact on the overall bottom line of the company, Fairlife continues to produce their product to be sold at other grocery stores. Legal battles are also anticipated and will be handled most likely by the company, with company funds. Had this happened at a local farm or even if the individual supply point was independently responsible for their actions, the financial burden of the protest and legal action could be enough to force them to close shop, or further, to have a lasting financial effect on the manager of that plant.

# IV. Slavery History and Management Practice

The idea that slavery paved the way for modern organization of companies and layers of management was at first a very shocking claim (Baptist, 2016). How could one of the darkest spots in American History have possibly produced anything positive? While there is no disagreement that the tactics used violated many human rights, slave owners did indeed have a working force that they needed to make sure were held together to produce such desired goals. Looking more in-depth, slave owners further had their own bosses to satisfy - those that had invested in the cotton - making this very similar to how a typical traditional company runs from the top-down today (“Principles of Management,” 2010, p. 24). While many of the tactics used to negatively encourage production, as they should have been, the idea still exists that quotas be met or there will be a consequence, usually in the way of a financial decrease to the individual not meeting quota. A previous employer gave us employees a time limit to complete a task. For every 5 minutes over that task, you lost a percentage of your bonus for that task. After 15 minutes, you had no bonus and would then start sacrificing your overall hourly wage. Similarly to the story told by Baptist about the whipping wheel and the slaves’ reaction as a drive to increase production (2016), the stress was felt when the clock ran out. Even though at that point we knew that it was not a physical beating we would suffer, it was still painful for most of us as we were only earning slightly above minimum wage to begin with, and any decrease drastically affected our families by way of a diminished paycheck.

# V. What Do You Already Know About Management?

My experience with management is like a Clint Eastwood movie: the good, the bad and the ugly. The quality of management seems to be directly related to the size of the company. Oddly enough, the larger the company, the better the management seems to treat subordinates and understand the company values and goals. Conversely, the smaller the company, the less individual management positions and the less management is united. When I speak of large companies I have worked for, they are more than 300 employees, whereas smaller companies have been less than twenty people (not including interns). While there is no doubt in my mind that the individuals in management positions in the smaller companies were attempting to align with the company values and goals, it seemed that the management had less of a direct understanding of what that meant. Larger organizations, in order to be successful and run smoothly, need many stewards of the company values and goals. Larger organizations seem to make better use of the P-L-O-C functions (“Principles of Management,” 2010, p. 34), allowing the management to align cohesively to grow the company and move forward to create success. Furthermore, larger companies are willing to train individual managers in these areas. Larger companies also tend to have many facets in which they must unite goals. Whereas smaller companies, although more personable, may be looking to fulfill fewer goals. At the end of the day, larger companies seem to invest more time and effort into processes and standards that make the working environment more palpable to an individual as myself.

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