

Running Head: Ethics in the Work Place

Ethics in the Work Place

MSG Rodney T. Bottoms

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class 58

SGM Brian Kinsey

January 3, 2008

Abstract

Soldiers are always faced with making right and wrong decisions and ethics have always played a major role in their decision making process in the work place. Some make the wrong decision based on greed and others just out of friendship. Nevertheless, the decisions are wrong and they know right from wrong so why do they make the wrong choice anyway? When the wrong decision is made and you know who made the decision, hold that individual and all those responsible in the decision making process accountable for their actions.

Ethics in the Work Place

As a senior Human Resource Sergeant serving in the United States Army for 19 plus years, I have seen many unethical situations. When these situations arise, I have gained the courage to intervene and let it be known that the Army as well as I will not tolerate those actions. This paper will explore unethical situations that I have witnessed or had the privilege to help solve.

When arriving to Frankfurt, Germany at the replacement center, I witnessed without true experience of what ethics really meant and realizing that my assignment depended on if I played basketball. When asked by a member of 1st Personnel Command (PERSCOM) if I played basketball, I replied yes and was assigned to 1st PERSCOM. My stay was brief as the person who I was replacing was no longer leaving the company. I was further assigned to 7th Medical Command (MEDCOM), Heidelberg, Germany. I worked as an awards clerk and assignment manager during my tenure at 7th MEDCOM. During my time as the awards clerk, I had the opportunity to process awards for two years. During that time, I processed meritorious service medals and higher awards to be reviewed and voted on by the awards board committee members. The board was reviewing awards recommendation for Soldiers during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The board members were aware of misconduct of a sergeant major during these operations and were faced with making the proper decision while voting on his award. Since that sergeant major was friends with several of the board members, his award was voted favorably and he received his award. As a private, I knew that they did not make the right decision who was I to say anything. At that time, no Non-commissioned Officer (NCO) would have taken me serious in my opinion. I have only been working in that section for only several months and no one really knew me. However, I did tell a Soldier in another section and he told

me that no one would believe a private over senior NCOs that were well respected in the company. I never mentioned that situation ever again to anyone. After serving as the awards clerk, I was moved to the assignment section. I really enjoyed working in this section for my last two years in Germany. While serving in this section, I notice several unethical situations involving NCOs and Soldiers. I notice several Soldiers in this section completing actions quickly for favors from NCOs within the command. These Soldiers were processing foreign service tour extensions (FSTE) even if the individual replacement was already placed on assignment. If a Soldiers replacement was identified by the Department of the Army (DA) G1, it was our responsibility to disapprove the FSTE request. Since the assignment section was given the authority by the DA G1 to approve or disapprove FSTE request, these Soldiers abuse their authority and placed themselves in unethical situations. As a new Soldier in this section, I said nothing and kept to myself. After continuing witnessing these Soldiers do the wrong thing, I finally informed my immediate supervisor. He told me just to do my job and at that time, I thought that he also maybe involved in this despicable situation. I now decided to take it up with the section non-commissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) and he called a section meeting. During this meeting, he told everyone that they will follow the standard operating procedure (SOP) set forth by the section; he also stated that if he hears of anyone deviating from the SOP again, he would recommend that they receive punishment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. To my knowledge, there were no cases of approving FSTEs if a replacement has been identified. After my two years of service to this section, I was reassigned to the 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

After completing three weeks of training of airborne training at Fort Benning, Georgia, I signed in at the 82d Replacement Company, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. My stay was brief at the

replacement center as I was further assigned the G1 section. I was placed in the Officer Management Branch as an assignment manager. After a year I was promoted to sergeant and was moved to the Unit Status Reporting (USR) section. As the NCOIC of the USR section, I had four Soldiers and one NCO who worked for the section. While establishing a rapport with the Soldiers within the section, I was informed of an improper relationship within the section. One of the Soldiers told me that the NCO (corporal) was sleeping with another Soldier in the section. I called the Soldier and NCO to my office where I spoke to each other separately. The Soldier informed me that the NCO had promised her quick promotions if she had sex with him occasionally. She continued to inform me they had sex in her barracks room as well as in the office. She stated that their affair went on for eight months and she was promoted once during that time. I explained to her about ethics and the importance of making right and wrong decisions. She went on to explain that she knew she was making the wrong decision but was afraid to say no and would accept any punishment I deemed appropriate. I dismissed her and had the corporal come in and explained to me his relationship with the private. He stated to me that he promised her nothing but did have a relationship with her. I explained to him about ethics in the work place and that he had made a poor choice and his decision was unethical. I further explained that there should be no relationship between supervisors and Soldiers. After our conversation, I told him that I would be recommending UCMJ actions to the first sergeant and the commander. He understood and accepted his punishment from the command.

Nine months later I was promoted to staff sergeant and moved to Personnel Actions Branch. There were approximately 20 NCOs and Soldiers assigned to this section. This section processed congressional, line of duties, separations, awards and badges for the division. We processed 100s of awards and badges during any given month and had SOPs that we followed for processing

these actions. The SOP for badges is that this office has 30 days to complete from the date the action was turned-in. I walked through the awards shop and accidentally kicked a bag that was lying beside one of my Soldiers desk. I picked up the bag to move it closer to the desk and the bag ripped and beer cans fell to the floor. I immediately told the Soldier to come to my office so he could explain why he had alcohol in the office. He told me that an NCO from one of the brigade gave it to him if he would process his jumpmaster badge within a day. I told him that Soldiers make right and wrong decisions everyday but this one was unethical and would not go unpunished. He was recommended for and received UCMJ punishment. It did not stop there, I notified the brigade of the conduct of their NCO. I do not know if he was punished but I did my job. One year later, I went on permanent change of station and was assigned to United States Army Security Assistance Command (SATMO) with duty in Cairo, Egypt.

In my two and a half years in Egypt, I worked as the personnel and finance NCOIC. Cigarettes and alcohol were rationed items in Egypt and everyone assigned to Egypt was issued a rations card. I was approached several times by a senior NCO if I would purchase alcohol on my rations card. I informed him I would not each time. However, I was not the only person he asked to purchase alcohol for him. It came to light that he paid them \$100 dollars for their rations each month. The NCO rented a building and operated a night club and sold beer to the public. A member of the United States Embassy visited the club and notice that beer was being sold. Normally this is not a crime but it is when it was purchased from the Class Six using ration cards and resold to the public. The NCO was seriously punished and the Embassy demanded SATMO conduct an early return of the NCO. Within two weeks, the NCO and his family was returned back to the United States.

These were several instances where ethics played a role in several NCOs and Soldiers way of life. Some of the bad decisions made by these individuals could have been avoided if they would have just obeyed the rules and guidelines set forth by their superiors. However they chose to make unethical decisions and paid the consequences for their actions. Some decisions are hard to make but everyone has an obligation to make the right decision, especially in the interest of the United States Army!