

Introduction to Business Instructor Guide

Module 6: Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility

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Learning Goals

[Detailed Course Learning Outcome Spreadsheet is linked here.](#)

Topic	Student Learning Goals
Business Ethics	• Distinguish between ethical and legal behavior • Explain what business ethics is • Understand what a corporate code of ethics is • Understand a manager's role in setting ethical standards
Ethical Challenges	• Understand what bribery is • Understand what a kickback is • Recognize what a conflict of interest is • Understand what a whistleblower is
Corporate Social Responsibility	• Define corporate social responsibility (CSR) • Understand the impact of CSR on stakeholders • Recognize examples of CSR • Understand controversies surrounding CSR
Ethics in the Global Environment	• Understand ethical challenges for business in a global environment • Summarize the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act • Understand what a sweatshop is
Career Connection: Leadership	• Explore leadership

Summary of Module

For the Readiness Check, students are introduced to social entrepreneurship and why doing good isn't simple with a look at TOMS one-for-one business model. Get Stronger closes the module with a look at how migrant child workers are being exploited in the U.S. Career Connection explores leadership as a career skill.

Student's Choice: Students can choose between three videos to hear about the experiences of AmeriCorps Team Leaders in leading teams around the country to work on a variety of service projects while earning a living stipend.

Among the real world examples in this module are:

- The Volkswagen defeat device scandal which led to VW's stock price plunging, criminal and civil sanctions, and a tarnished brand reputation
- U-Haul implemented a policy not to hire smokers to reduce costs along with thousands of other companies, raising the question of the slippery slope—what other health related issues could be the next basis for discrimination?
- How employers may have policies prohibiting the acceptance of gifts from suppliers and vendors to avoid any conflict of interest
- Kickbacks in the healthcare industry
- Dr. Bronner's as an example of ethical business practices
- AAA's public service ad against driving while texting, an example of social marketing and CSR
- Patagonia founder, Yvon Chouinard, gave away his \$3 billion company prior to retiring to ensure 100% of its profits would be used to combat climate change and protect undeveloped land, demonstrating commitment to corporate social responsibility
- The Rana Plaza sweatshop collapse in Bangladesh
- SEC enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act

Module Resources

Cheat Sheet



[Module 6 Cheat Sheet](#)

Instructional Support



[Slide Deck](#)



[Video List](#)

Activity One: Research Corporate Ethics

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices



Community-Building

Educators encourage students to build relationships with one another by having them work together to research and discuss corporate ethics.



Engagement

Educators engage students in activities that require them to do more than passively listen to a live or recorded lecture by having students conduct research to determine whether companies' actions align with their ethics codes.

Background

Students were introduced to the Ethisphere Institute, an organization focused on gauging ethical business practices. They publish [a list of the "World's Most Ethical Companies"](#) on an annual basis. In this exercise, students will look at the ethics codes of businesses that have appeared on the Ethisphere Institute's list of World's Most Ethical Companies for over 10 years.

- [John Deere's Code of Ethics](#), a U.S. company known for manufacturing agricultural equipment.
- [Kellogg's Global Code of Ethics](#), a multinational food manufacturing company
- [PepsiCo's Global Code of Conduct](#), a leading manufacturer of food and beverages

Topic Alignment

Business Ethics and Corporate Codes of Ethics

Instructions

Time Estimate: 30-45 minutes

1. Conversation starter

What is a business that acts ethically? Give an example of an action that demonstrates ethics.

2. Review

You may wish to review what is meant by business ethics, what a corporate code of ethics is, and how management sets the tone for ethics in an organization.

3. Split class into groups of 2-4 students

Students will need to be able to search the internet.

4. Students will conduct research on these companies and then share their findings.

[John Deere's Code of Ethics](#), a U.S. company known for manufacturing agricultural equipment.

[Kellogg's Global Code of Ethics](#), a multinational food manufacturing company

[PepsiCo's Global Code of Conduct](#), a leading manufacturer of food and beverages

Discussion Prompts

- **What are some similarities and differences that you notice between the companies' codes of ethics/conduct?**

Optional AI Component: Have students use an AI tool such as Chat GPT or Claude to analyze the code of ethics of each company and present similarities and significant differences.

- **When you look for a job and prepare for interviews, it's always important to do as much research as possible. What kind of information would you look for to decide whether these codes of ethics are genuine or just for show?**
Select one company to focus on and do some research to determine if their actions align with their code of ethics.

- **How important is it to work for an employer who has a code of ethics or some other explicit statement regarding ethics within the organization?**

Reflection

Most students are very anxious about being able to earn a good living. Younger students might feel that the corporate culture is less important than having a job in hand. Their opinions about corporate ethics may vary based on whether they are viewing corporate actions with the perspective of consumer, worker, or community member. Non-traditional students who have been in the workforce may be able to offer valuable insights about how corporate culture affects workers.

Large Class Variation

Select one company's code of ethics and add its text to a shared Google doc. Have students research the company's actions and annotate the shared document to present evidence of the company adhering or deviating from their code of ethics.

Use the results to facilitate a discussion using the above prompts about student preferences in their career goals.

Online Variation

You read about the Ethisphere Institute, an organization focused on gauging ethical business practices. They publish [a list of the "World's Most Ethical Companies"](#) on an annual basis. These are 3 companies that have appeared on the Ethisphere Institute's list of World's Most Ethical Companies for over 10 years.

- [John Deere's Code of Ethics](#), a U.S. company known for manufacturing agricultural equipment.
- [Kellogg's Global Code of Ethics](#), a multinational food manufacturing company
- [PepsiCo's Global Code of Conduct](#), a leading manufacturer of food and beverages

Select 2 of the above companies and read their code of ethics/conduct. Then answer the following questions:

1. What are some similarities and differences that you notice between the companies' codes of ethics/conduct?

2. When you look for a job and prepare for interviews, it's always important to do as much research as possible. Select one company to focus on and do some research to determine if their actions align with their code of ethics. Explain what you found and what you think about their actions.
3. How important is it to work for an employer who has a code of ethics or some other explicit statement regarding ethics within the organization?

Activity Two: Petroleum Is Everywhere

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices



Contextualization

Educators help students understand the complexity of sustainability and CSR by demonstrating how many products contain some component derived from petroleum.



Higher Order Thinking

Educators engage students in activities specifically designed to cultivate creative thinking by having students brainstorm actions that consumers and businesses can take to genuinely promote sustainability.

Background

People around the world are concerned about climate change; however, many Indigenous cultures are also threatened by climate change. Students learned in this module that sustainability and the environment are among the issues that CSR embraces. This

exercise seeks to demonstrate that even if everyone drove an electric car, there are still plenty of products that rely upon petroleum derivatives. Looking at businesses that make or sell such products sheds light on whether or not these companies are engaging in greenwashing.

- [Infographic for conversation starter](#)
- [Partial list of products made from petroleum](#)
- Video, [The Indigenous Fight Against Big Oil in the Arctic Circle](#)

Topic Alignment

Corporate Social Responsibility

Instructions

Time Estimate: 25 minutes

1. Conversation starter

Show the [infographic on this webpage](#) and ask students to identify which item is not made from petrochemicals. (#27 cotton towels in the bottom left corner).

2. Video

Show the video, [The Indigenous Fight Against Big Oil in the Arctic Circle](#). This video provides additional context to concerns about environmental degradation.

3. Review

You may wish to review the concepts of corporate social responsibility and greenwashing.

4. Split class into groups of 3-5 students

Students will need to do internet research and will share their results.

Discussion Prompts

- **Select one of the following industries on which to focus the group's research.**
 - Electronics
 - Textiles
 - Sporting goods
 - Health and beauty products
 - Medical supplies

- Household products
- **Select one product within the industry that your group has chosen and identify a few companies that make or sell that product.**
Use the internet to conduct research and determine whether these companies include sustainability as part of their CSR strategies. Examine their websites, news, and their social media outlets.
- **What if anything are these competitors doing to make their products or operations better for the environment? Which companies are greenwashing?**

Debrief

Ask students if they notice any patterns or buzzwords in the information they found. Ask students to consider whether CSR is something they pay attention to as consumers or potential employees.

Online Variation

1. Select one of the following industries on which to focus your research.
 - a. Electronics
 - b. Textiles
 - c. Sporting goods
 - d. Health and beauty products
 - e. Medical supplies
 - f. Household products
2. Select one product within the industry that you have chosen and identify a few companies that make or sell that product. Use the internet to conduct research and determine whether these companies include sustainability as part of their CSR strategies. Examine their websites, news, and their social media outlets.
 - a. What if anything are they doing to make their products or operations better for the environment? Which companies are greenwashing?
 - b. Is this information that influences you as a consumer? How about as a potential employee?

Activity Three: Reproductive Rights

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices



Contextualization

Educators help students understand CSR in action by examining how businesses reacted to the Supreme Court decision, *Dobbs v. Jackson*, which decided that the Constitution does not include a right to abortion.



Higher Order Thinking

Educators engage students in activities specifically designed to cultivate critical thinking by having students examine corporate reaction to a polarizing political issue.

Background

When the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in their June 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision, states were able to pass more restrictive laws limiting abortion access. In response, many corporations acted by expanding employee benefits to include travel reimbursement if an employee needed to go out of state to access reproductive health care. In this discussion, students will examine the ramifications of corporations taking a stand on controversial issues.

To shorten the time for the activity, assign the article in advance of class so that students will already be familiar with the travel reimbursement policies announced by various companies.

- [We're helping employees relocate in response to the Texas abortion ban](#) (Fast Company op-ed where Curtis Sparrer, co-founder of PR agency Bospar, explains his reasoning for being the first company to publicly announce extending benefits to employees, including relocation, related to reproductive health)
- [These companies Will cover Travel Expenses for Employee Abortions](#) (NYT, Aug. 19, 2022)

Topic Alignment

Impact of CSR on direct and indirect stakeholders

Instructions

Time Estimate: 30 minutes

1. Conversation starter

When you think of the benefits that an employer offers as part of employee compensation, what is important to you?

2. Review

You may wish to review the concept of corporate social responsibility

3. Split class into groups of 3-5 students

Students will need to do internet research and will share their results.

Discussion Prompts

- **What kinds of policies have companies created to ensure access to reproductive health care for employees?**
Give students some time to research on the internet or provide them with the article, [These companies Will cover Travel Expenses for Employee Abortions](#) (NYT, Aug. 19, 2022).
- **What are the positive and negative impacts for employees?**
Sample Answer: Students will likely answer that increased benefits are good for employees. However, employees will have privacy concerns if they need to use these benefits. Policies would need to be implemented in a way that ensures confidentiality so that employees can be confident that they will not be penalized for using their benefits.
- **How could implementing these policies help or hurt the business?**
Sample Answer: Students should recognize there is a measure of publicity and whether that is positive or negative depends upon stakeholder perception. Costs are an issue for the business since this is an additional benefit.
- **Do these enhanced employee benefits significantly help with access to reproductive health care considering who are the most affected by legislation restricting access?**

Sample Answer: Students should be aware that the people who are most affected by laws restricting abortion access are likely not working for the large corporations that announced their new policies, many of which may not even have large numbers of employees in states that restrict access. While these policies may not move the needle for vulnerable people such as low income or rural populations, prioritizing worker welfare is a legitimate CSR strategy.

Debrief

Students may have differing opinions about abortion rights. It's useful to set up the discussion emphasizing that they are to analyze the topic from the perspective of various stakeholders: employees, consumers, the general public, management, etc. Waiting until the end of the discussion to ask for students' personal opinions is one strategy for keeping student analysis more objective.

Online Variation

Read the article, [These companies Will cover Travel Expenses for Employee Abortions](#) (NYT, Aug. 19, 2022). Then answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of policies have companies created to ensure access to reproductive health care for employees in response to the Dobbs v. Jackson decision?
2. What are the positive and negative impacts of these additional benefits for employees?
3. How could implementing these policies help or hurt the business?
4. Do these enhanced employee benefits significantly help with access to reproductive health care considering who are the most affected by legislation restricting access?

Assignments and Discussions

These may be used in class or added to your LMS as additional graded work.

- [Assignment: Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [Discussion: Do They Have Ethics?](#)
- [Discussion: Consuming CSR](#)

Salty Pawz Case Study

- [Background Information](#)
- Career Connection Assignment [Emotional Intelligence](#)
- Discussion [It's Not Stealing if You Pay For It, Is It?](#)

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