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Ethics and the Workplace

Organisations are guided by their purpose, corporate values, vision and mission and various sets of guiding principles on how to attain their strategic objectives and how they relate to their stakeholders. In numerous instances organisations place emphasis on values such as teamwork, service excellence, integrity and care which guide the way employees, and Boards and duly authorised agents, conduct themselves and the business in all their dealings.

Ethics in the workplace requires that institutions remain committed to upholding high ethical and moral standards, thereby undertaking to conduct their businesses with integrity. Organisations that practice good corporate governance, commit to the principle of integrity, and would always strive to be honest, fair, transparent, ethical, and trustworthy in everything they do. Good corporate governance and ethics are very much complimentary and hence the King IV reference to corporate governance as the exercise of ethical leadership. It therefore follows that good governance requires high standards of ethical conduct which must be demonstrated through ethical behaviour in terms of acting and demonstrating fairness, compassion to stakeholders, integrity, honour, and responsibility. Integrity and practicing ethical conduct are intrinsic to meeting stakeholder expectations.

It is imperative that organisations prioritise and integrate ethical standards into their strategy and operations. These ethical standards should continue to inform business practice, procedures, policies, and conduct. This requires the development and implementation of organisation-wide ethics management programmes and initiatives. These programmes should be designed in line with a zero-tolerance philosophy on unlawful conduct, or any form of dishonesty, fraud, theft, and corruption. An organisation's leadership can either be a success or a root cause of its own failure in terms of ethical conduct in the workplace.

Organisations should build their ethical foundation as the cornerstone of how to conduct themselves and encourage employees to embrace habits for accomplishing tasks efficiently and interacting effectively in the workplace for the greater good of all stakeholders.

There are various central characteristics of strong employee work ethic to which organisations should adhere to, namely punctuality, which involves showing up to work on time, the completion of tasks within set timeframes, and respecting the value of time in the workplace.

Other central characteristics that define employee ethical compass pertain to accountability, taking responsibility for ongoing projects and blame for errors made. It is critical that employees efficiently accomplish tasks, remaining focused and avoiding distractions of chatter, social media and other distractions. Productive employees do not merely concern themselves with ticking off items on a to-do list but focus on doing what needs to be done for the betterment of the organisation.

Employee productivity hinges upon an employee's ability to overcome distractions, ignore external influences, and conquering obstacles that inhibit them from performing their task. Ethics in the workplace and professionalism are illustrated through employees who show up and take their work seriously, staying respectful of themselves and others. In fact, studies have established that employees would prefer to work for organisations that are considered ethical.

Key phrases remain dedication and consistency and showing up ready to accomplish tasks daily, all while maintaining focus and productivity. The desire to improve is illustrated by employees who embrace feedback and showing that they are willing to work to grow in their careers.

Organisations such as the GIPF are required to remain committed to ethical leadership by setting the tone at the top and undertake to "walk the talk", especially on the part of those in positions of senior leadership. This they do by being exemplary in ensuring that, their actions and the decisions taken are guided by ethical values, particularly that of integrity and supporting and following through their fraud reporting frameworks.

The Fund further ensures that relevant authorities do not to interfere in any investigation where due process dictates that they should not.

Written by:

Edwin Tjiramba, General Manager: Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement of the Government Institutions Pension Fund.

