



This month:
**ETHICAL
BUSINESS**



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Competition is stiff out there. It's a rare company that has a market cornered. How do you sell your company's features and benefits without slugging your competition? What is so wrong with dogging the companies who vie for your clients? Well, it all comes down to professionalism and ethics. Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman to be elected to the U.S. Congress, noted, "When morality comes up against profit, it is seldom that profit loses." Recent scandals by companies such as Enron prove this theory. Most people who worked there knew they weren't acting morally, however profits are hard to ignore, even when faced with ethics. But, in the long run, people like to deal with people they know, like and trust. No trust means profits are short lived. There are ethical and professional ways to ensure that your clients and potential clients know the value you add, without bad-mouthing others. Is your staff familiar with these ways? Have you observed their client interactions lately? Have you heard their sales pitches? Are they representing your company to the high standards you're setting? If so, you're ahead of the game. If not, the rules of the game may need to change. This month we're focusing on ethics in business. As Mark Twain said, "Always do right - this will gratify some and astonish the rest."

"If it is not right do not do it; if it is not true do not say it."

- *Marcus Aurelius*



SEINFELD'S GEORGE COSTANZA GIVES US UNETHICAL TIPS FOR WORKING HARD

Never walk down the hall without a document in your hands. People with documents in their hands look like hardworking employees heading for important meetings. People with nothing in their hands look like they're heading for the cafeteria. People with a newspaper in their hand look like they're heading for the toilet. Above all, make sure you carry loads of stuff home with you at night, thus generating the false impression that you work longer hours than you do.



I think we can all be forgiven for becoming rather cynical lately towards the sports world. It's everywhere, isn't it? Doping in the Tour de France, professional baseball and in track and field. And it's not just the athletes. Game fixing in Italian soccer has resulted in several teams being relegated to lower divisions and disgrace for everyone involved. It's so bad it's starting to give professional wrestling a good name in comparison. We don't need to find the sports page anymore. It's now on the front page.

I'm not sure if it's a case of life imitating sport, but the business world is also full of examples of bad behaviour. We've got the Enron debacle that smeared not only Enron but also several banks at the same time. Several years ago, many of you will remember the Bre-X gold mine scandal. 'What gold?' you might ask. More recently, we had Westjet admitting to stealing Air Canada's traffic load data to try and gain competitive advantage. Sad really.



Just when you think it will keep getting worse, a ray of hope appears. In sports, there were a couple of examples that gave me faith again. A few years ago, in the dying seconds of an English Premier League soccer game, Paolo diCanio of West Ham United was standing in front of the goal, waiting for someone to pass him the ball. A cross was sent over. Just as Paolo was about to shoot into the net, he caught the ball. He had spotted a defending player who was injured. Instead of scoring the winning goal, he stopped the game to help an opposing player. The game ended in a tie.

In the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino, Sarah Renner of Canada broke one of her ski poles on the third lap of the women's team sprint event. A Norwegian coach saw this and handed Sarah a pole as she passed by so she could finish. Sarah earned a silver medal in the race.

With my faith somewhat restored in sport, where could I turn to in business for similar inspiration? Not too far, as it turned out. You'd never think of Coca Cola and Pepsi as the best of pals, would you? Well they're not. But a recent incident showed that Pepsi has a lot of class and great values even in its battle with Coke. As it turned out, three Coke employees tried to sell Pepsi secret information, including a sample of a new Coke drink, all for \$1.5 million. For that money, Pepsi could have gained considerable market advantage over Coke. But they didn't. Like Paolo diCanio, they caught the ball and stopped the game. Pepsi contacted Coke at once and, with the help of the FBI, the three people were arrested. After all, as a Pepsi spokesperson said, "Competition can sometimes be fierce, but also must be fair and legal."



But if you are not a professional soccer player or a corporate executive, what can you do to bring strong values and ethics to your day-to-day work life? Here are just a few questions you may want to consider:

- When speaking to a potential customer, do you knock the competition?
- Do you ever misrepresent your products or services to a customer?
- Do you withhold information from co-workers to gain an advantage?
- Do you ever take credit for something that someone else did?
- Do you ever make excuses for your shortcomings?

Your answer to these and other questions will help sculpt the values and ethics of both you and your company.

Now, what channel did you say the wrestling was on?