



SONOMA COUNTY WORK-READY CERTIFICATION
WORKPLACE ETHICS SCENARIO #3:
“GRAND THEFT ARTICLE”

Lesson Plan Title: “Grand Theft Article”

Concept/Topic to Teach: Take responsibility for completing one’s own work accurately (WRC Skill #10)

General Goal(s): Students discuss and are made aware of issues surrounding the completion of one’s own work;
Students learn appropriate ways to deal with sensitive issues (i.e. plagiarism and intellectual property) in the workplace

Required Materials:

1. Copies of “Grand Theft Article” workplace ethics scenario
2. Copies of Discussion Questions for the “Grand Theft Article” scenario

Step-by-Step Procedures:

1. Write the words “plagiarism” and “intellectual property” on the front board and ask students to respond (verbally or in writing) about what they believe these words mean
2. Explain the actual meaning of these words before passing out the workplace scenario.
3. Pass out the “Grand Theft Article” scenario and ask a volunteer to read it aloud while the other students follow along.
4. Hold a brief discussion about what the students believe to be the relevant facts in the scenario and what the employee should do.
5. Pass out the Discussion Questions for the “Grand Theft Article” scenario (you can have students complete these individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a homework assignment).

Closure:

Debrief with all students about the importance of completing one’s own work and what they learned from the situation presented in the scenario.

NOTE: Students can include their written responses to the Discussion Questions in their WRC Portfolio to demonstrate Skill #10.

Grand Theft Article

Grand Theft Article*

Scenario

Key Characters:

You—Recently hired staff member of local newspaper

Luke—New intern of local newspaper

Scenario:

You have been a high school intern at the local newspaper for almost a year. You were recently hired by the newspaper, which means that some of the high school interns now report to you, including Luke, a newly hired intern.

For one of his assignment, Luke writes an exposé on the unfair working conditions of a local factory. As of late, newspaper subscriptions have declined. Consequently, your boss has been encouraging you to write articles that will be more exciting for readers. You've been experiencing writer's block and are still adjusting to the new pressures of your promotion so your recent articles haven't been your best work. After reading Luke's article, you realize it's exactly the type of writing your boss has been asking of you.

You, eager to successfully complete the job your boss assigned, are thinking of presenting Luke's article and passing it off as your own. Luke's first evaluation is coming up soon, so if he objects, you can threaten to give him lower scores, or possibly even talk to your boss about firing him. If he agrees to go along with the scheme, you have the authority to encourage management to consider hiring him.

What should you do?

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- Scenario and discussion material based on the following ethics case: Coll, J.H. "Might Makes Right." 1992. Available online at <http://web.tepper.cmu.edu/ethics/AA/arthurandersen.htm> (February 7, 2007).

Grand Theft Article

Discussion Questions

What are the relevant facts?

1. You are Luke's boss.
2. Your boss has asked you to write articles that will help increase readership, but the pressures of your job have prevented this.
3. Luke writes a great article which he shares with you, hoping it will get him hired by the newspaper.
4. You are thinking of taking credit for Luke's article. If Luke objects, you will fire him; if he agrees, you will encourage management to hire him.

From an employee perspective:

1. Is Luke being treated justly? Are his rights being protected?
2. Are you stealing?
3. When, if ever, is it ethical for a supervisor to take credit for the work of a subordinate?
4. Can you think of a "win/win" solution?

From an employer perspective:

1. If the employer catches you taking credit for Luke's work, what should your consequence be?
2. Is it wrong for a supervisor to take credit for the work of a subordinate? Why or why not?
3. Which is the bigger issue, the supervisor taking credit for Luke's work, or the supervisor manipulating his subordinate to keep quiet?
4. Is there a possible "win/win" solution?