National Business Ethics Survey (NBES) Volume I: How Employees Perceive Ethics at Work

A survey conducted by the Ethics Resource Center, 2000

Background:

- A nationally representative telephone survey of 1,500 U.S. employees.
- The survey asks U.S. employees about ethics in the organizations for which they work.
- The survey has two main purposes. The first is to gather reliable data on key ethics and compliance indicators for use in benchmarking by interested organizations. The second is to identify and to better understand ethics issues that are important to employees.

Results:

Ethics outcomes in the 2000 NBES are favorable in comparison to the 1994 Ethics in American Business survey:

- More organizations have formal ethics programs;
- Pressure on employees to commit misconduct has decreased;
- Employee reporting of observed misconduct has increased;
- Employee satisfaction with the response to reported misconduct has increased;
- Employees find ethics training more useful.

Pressure to Commit Misconduct by Employee Level (Managers and others)

- 8% of senior and middle managers say they felt pressure, compared to 15% among all other employees.

Sources of Pressure (internal only)

- 28% of pressured employees say they feel pressure from co-workers
- 39% from supervisors and 36% from top management
**Values Applied in Workplace**

- 79% of employees say that the value of 'honesty' is applied frequently in the organizations they work for.
- 71% of employees say that the value of 'respect' is applied frequently in the organizations they work for.
- 70% of employees say that the value of 'trust' is applied frequently in the organizations they work for.

**Leadership**

- 83% of employees either strongly agree (23%) or agree (60%) that top managers in their organizations model ethical behavior.
- 86% of employees either strongly agree (25%) or agree (61%) that their supervisors model ethical behavior.
- 89% of employees either strongly agree (18%) or agree (71%) that top managers in their organizations model ethical behavior.

**Fair Treatment of Employees**

- Eighty-six percent of employees either "strongly agree" (24%) or "agree" (62%) that "in general, supervisors treat employees fairly."

**Observed Misconduct by Values Applied in the Workplace**

- 25% of employees who see honesty applied frequently in their organizations say they have observed misconduct within the last year.
- Observed misconduct was higher among those who feel honesty is applied only occasionally (52%) or rarely/never (71%).

**Pressure by Values Applied in the Workplace**

- 9% of employees who see honesty applied frequently in their organizations say that they feel pressure to commit misconduct.
- Perceived pressure was higher among employees who feel honesty is applied occasionally (25%) or rarely/never (44%).
Reporting Misconduct by Values Applied in the Workplace

- 63% of employees who see respect applied frequently in their organizations say that they reported misconduct they observed in the last year.
- Reporting was lower among employees who see respect applied occasionally (52%) or rarely/never (51%).

Employee Satisfaction by Values Applied in the Workplace

- 92% of employees who see honesty applied frequently in their organizations say they are satisfied with their organizations.
- Satisfaction drops among employees who see respect applied only occasionally (66%) or rarely/never (38%).

Feeling Valued by Values Applied in the Workplace

- 92% of employees who see honesty applied frequently in their organizations say they felt valued by their organizations.
- Satisfaction drops among employees who see respect applied occasionally (76%) or rarely/never (45%).

More information about The Ethics Resource Center can be found at:

www.ethics.org