

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Down With Ethics!

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

Yes, you read that correctly. I say ethics are overrated—despite their position as the corporate poster child in a post-Enron, post-WorldCom world.

I propose a different standard. Mine is concerned less with not doing bad and more with actually doing good. Less with what a company is required to do and more with what it does voluntarily, above

and beyond its duty. Call it what you want—it's not *corporate responsibility* but perhaps *corporate respectability*.

Here are examples of what some people and companies are doing.

Corporate angels. More than 500 companies, including more than half of the *Fortune* 100, participate in the Corporate Angel Network. A not-for-profit organization based

in New York, CAN links companies that have empty seats on corporate jets to cancer patients who need to get to treatment. The companies receive no tax breaks or publicity for donating the seats—just the knowledge that they're helping someone. With the program, patients with limited funds are able to reach hospitals far from home,

They're overrated, I say.



avoiding crowded airport terminals and minimizing exposure to germs.

Sustainable manufacturing. Environmental designer William McDonough helps his clients marry environmentalism with capitalism. McDonough is remaking the entire manufacturing process to ensure that goods and production methods are nontoxic and regenerative. His methods also happen to save money.

Clients include Nike, which is developing a sneaker that can completely biodegrade into soil; Steelcase, which is making a fabric so toxin-free that you can actually eat it; and BASF, which is producing a carpet that customers can bring back and have made into a new one.

Million-dollar grant. Nan McKay and Associates, a training supplier focusing on housing management, is giving away US\$1 million in online training to families in subsidized housing. The grants, \$800 for each person, will enable recipients to make the leap to better jobs after taking courses in computer skills, customer service, basic math and grammar, money management, and more. McKay wants to help bridge the skills gap created by shrinking government funding.

Community fellowship. Cisco's Community Fellowship Program matched 80 downsized employees with non-profit organizations that

are benefiting from the workers' expertise. As part of the year-long program, participants are working in-house at the organizations, retaining their benefits and a third of their Cisco salary.

There's no cost to the not-for-profits for the placement. At the end of the year, the workers will be considered internal candidates for positions at Cisco.

Graduation pledges. They're not in corporations yet, but when they are they'll make a difference. More than 10,000 students at 100 U.S. colleges and universities have signed the Graduation Pledge, promising to "take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job" they may apply for. In addition, they pledge to "try to improve those aspects of any organization" they work for. The movement was started by students at Manchester College in Indiana, where about half of the student body takes the pledge.

Although companies must ensure that their business practices are really on the up-and-up (as opposed to just appearing so), many of us think the standard is being set too low. In our days of innocence, we took for granted that companies and CEOs were ethical. Let's not lose that expectation as we lose our naïveté. Let's put the focus on doing more than what's required. Business

practices that go above and beyond a simple standard of ethics should be the rule rather than the exception.

<|> Sources/*BusinessWeek*, *Fast Company*

Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is

If your company is more concerned about doing well than doing good, don't worry. There's still plenty you can do on your own, using your wallet to make your voice heard.

Socially responsible investing is a trend that's taking off. Not only that, but it's paying off. Researchers at De Paul University found that companies on *Business Ethics* magazine's

<|> www.business-ethics.com Best Corporate Citizens list have significantly outperformed other firms in the S&P 500.

<|> More on socially responsible companies and investing www.socialfunds.com, www.socialinvest.org

More Info

<|> www.corpangelnetwork.org

<|> Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things (McDonough and Braungart, 2002)

<|> www.nanmckay.com

<|> www.cisco.com/warp/public/750/philanthropy/spotlight.html

<|> www.manchester.edu/academic/programs/departments/peace_studies/files/gpa.htm

Policy News

A snapshot of U.S. federal legislation and policy affecting workforce development and the HRD profession.

WIA Reauthorized

Congress will reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 2003. WIA was passed in 1998 to consolidate a fragmented public-sector employment and training system and to better serve workers and employers. In spring 2002, the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (ETA) held a series of public forums to solicit input from stakeholders and customers on issues related to the reauthorization of WIA.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Elaine Chao identified four steps to help Congress improve the employment and training system when it reauthorizes WIA:

- Ensure that the one-stop career system works closely with employers.
- Simplify the system so it can be used as an economic development tool.
- Improve how the system measures program performance.
- Encourage collaborative programs with local community colleges.

For more Policy News,  www.astd.org/virtual_community/public_policy

Coming Soon

Evaluating and rewarding performance just got easier—says PeopleSoft. The Internet architecture company is introducing a new suite of products, termed Enterprise Incentive Management, which aim to standardize the process of motivating a workforce.

The EIM products include tools to define complex incentive plans, gather data, deliver real-time performance feedback to employees and their managers, and report back on workers' performance and incentive effectiveness. A single streamlined system, PeopleSoft says, increases efficiency and saves money.

 More info/ www.peoplesoft.com/corp/en/products/line/hrms/eim_suite.asp

Pen Is Mightier...

If you want to know what kind of employee someone is, look no further than the top of his or her desk. So says a study by Pilot, one of the largest pen manufacturers in the world.

Want a good employee? Pilot suggests you find a candidate who uses a purple pen. According to the company's research, 85 percent of people who write with purple pens say their bosses are completely satisfied with their work. Compare that to 73 percent of the overall workforce. (We have to wonder, though, whether purple-pen users are just more likely to exaggerate their bosses' opinions of them.)

Do you need to increase retention? Take a hint from the Pilot study: Only 12 percent of people who had six or more pens at their desks said they were looking for another job, compared to 21 percent of the overall workforce.

Whether those numbers are simple correlations or credible data is up to you. More findings:

Most likely to think the boss is nice:

Women and men using red pens, both about 85 percent.
National average, 71 percent.

Most likely to accidentally take pens home:

Men who use purple pens, 77 percent, or red pens, 62 percent.
National average, 22 percent.

Most likely to be criticized by the boss:

Women who use expensive pens, 12 percent, and men who use purple pens or pencils, 11 percent.

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