

Employee Rights Case Study

Eddie Jackson

Kaplan University

HU245-04: Ethics

Loyalty, what does it mean to the always faithful employee? How about business ethics? Is there even such a thing? Should companies have *laissez-faire* (meaning let them do what they want)? This is a case study that reviews ExtremeNet, which is a global e-commerce and web development company, and questions surrounding and employee rights versus company rights. Our employee, Allen Lopez, is part of middle management where he has successfully performed his role for seven years. During one particular economic slump, Allen noticed that lower-level employees were being mistreated through layoffs and policy changes. After going to his superiors with these concerns, and being ignored, he decided to build a website, and tell a fictional, funny story of employee abuse; this employee abuse did resemble the company where he worked. ExtremeNet eventually finds out about the satirical website, and scrambles to do something about it.

The company does have a certain amount of rights and responsibility to protect the business. After all, there are hundreds if not thousands of other employees that could potentially be affected by bad press. Too much bad publicity could theoretically hurt the company's competitive edge, which in turn could reduce profits, stock prices, and cause layoffs. However, in this case, I do not believe *laissez-faire* should apply. Allen's website did not outright name the company, so slander would not be the case here. Allen went through all the proper channels and still did not get his employee rights message across; perhaps his website would be successful in the delivery of a very important message. The message is that businesses also have a responsibility to provide civil rights, truth telling, and honesty to their own employees.

When it comes to employee rights, the company has to factor in other principles like dignity, reciprocity, equity, accuracy, diversity, as well as the cornerstone ideology, affirmative action. There is also the matter of ethics. Is it ethical for a company to terminate an employee for a fictional website? I think not. Allen's actions are protected under the First Amendment, freedom of speech act. Furthermore, it is ExtremeNet's responsibility to uphold the civil liberties and rights granted to Mr. Allen Lopez by the United States Constitution. Loyalty should go both ways inside a business. Allen has been devoted to the company for seven years, his professional opinion should matter; upper management should have acted upon his employee rights concerns; Allen gets to keep his website. In the great words of Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty, or give me death!"

References:

Thiroux, J, & Krasemann, K. (2009). Ethics: Theory and Practice. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.