

ASPECTS OF ETHICS IN BUSINESS, IN ROMANIAN COMPANIES

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Abstract: Business ethics is represented by a set of rules, principles, value systems, moral norms regarding business conduct. Although they do not have legal force, the rules of business ethics still play an important role in the actions undertaken of organizations, sometimes even more than the legal ones. There is a direct connection between the profitability of a company, its sustainable development, its moral values and the ethical rules of behavior that it applies in its current activity. Business ethics is a way to support the long-term financial interests of organizations. Ethical behavior will in the future lead to greater prosperity for organizations as well as society as a whole. The paper defines business ethics and presents aspects regarding business ethics in Romanian companies.

Keywords: business ethics, code of conduct, principles, value systems, ethics management

1. Introduction

Ethics is the science that studies values and human condition from the perspective of moral principles. This represents all the norms of moral conduct regarding the relations between people, their attitude towards society, family, homeland, state [12].

Business ethics is at the border between moral philosophy and management. This includes a set of decision-making tools needed in the elaboration of the strategy of the organization, in solving of the conflicts that appear within the organization or between the different organizations. General principles of conduct, ethical codes, ethics are applied in human resources management, crisis management, marketing communication, etc. The implementation of ethical management contributes to the medium- and long-term profitability of the organization that applies it.

Ethics does not only mean respecting the law, but also good management of relationships with others. Business ethics means finding a balance between business partners, shareholders and those involved in the organization, up to the consumer but also the society as a whole.

An organization that applies business ethics removes individualistic, personal approaches that have negative effects on a general well-being. Applying ethics in business, social life, economic life etc. it should be our concern of all.

Business ethics is manifested on five levels, which are interdependent [5]:

- individual ethics;
- organizational ethics;
- national ethical level;
- cultural ethics;
- international ethical level.

The meta-ethics was studied, which included the study of the nature of moral terms, normative ethics, which includes ethical theories and objectives, and applied ethics, which focuses on aspects defining the different areas of ethics. An example of a normative principle of ethics is the rule of doing to others just what we want others to do to us. Thus, we can

determine if an action is wrong or correct and establish criteria for evaluating the moral conduct of a person [10].

It is necessary to form and develop good character traits, but also the possibility for moral rules to be learned and applied in human relations. It is necessary to explain virtues such as: moral strength, wisdom, courage, compassion, spirit of justice, sincerity, generosity, self-esteem, but also negative character traits such as cowardice, ignorance. The applied ethics depends of the main aspects that characterize the different fields in which they are applied. We will continue to present environmental ethics and professional ethics [10].

Professional ethics includes the practices and codes of ethical conduct that regulate the activity of those who practice a certain profession: magistrate, teacher, accountant, mediator, etc. Although the codes of ethics differ from one professional association to another, they still have many elements in common: professional competence, objectivity, professionalism, independence, self-interest, elimination of incompetence, conflict of interests, confidentiality, professional integrity.

The ethics of the environment studies the moral significance of the relations between man and the environment, but also how influence the ethics, areas such as: law, economy, geography and the interdependence between these fields and the natural environment. The topics addressed by the ethics of the environment are: the irrational exploitation of natural resources, pollution, global warming, human relations with other beings.

The ethics of the efficient leader implies the principle-based management, which is a moral guide to conducting business as well as personal life [1].

An important aspect in ethics is respect for others.

Business ethics includes a set of rules that must be promoted but also the sanction of a set of anti-values, which will be presented below.

2. Aspects regarding business ethics in Romanian companies

Recent researches indicate that in Romania there are steps to institutionalize ethics, to internalize moral responsibility [2].

Ethics, in general, includes a set of positive values such as: honesty, truth, justice, respect for others, for their work, impartiality, but also a set of negative aspects such as: theft, lying, the desire for revenge, deception, breaking promises. In business, we distinguish: workplace ethics, business management ethics, commercial ethics, banking ethics. [10].

Business management ethics is based on positive values such as: clear rules for promotion, information, employee participation and motivation, competence-based hierarchy, fair and incentive remuneration of employees and removing negative aspects such as: discrimination of any kind, abuse of power, conflict of interests, authoritarian management.

Workplace ethics has as positive values: normal hierarchical relationships, respect for colleagues and internal rules, cooperation, team spirit, transparency, the negative aspects being: violation of other people's freedoms, non-respect of information confidentiality, violation of rules.

Ethics in the commercial field is based on positive values such as: cooperation between suppliers and customers in order to obtain mutual benefits, respect for the given word, punctuality. Negative aspects to be removed: blackmail.

The code is simply a list of rights and obligations [9].

The presence of the codes of ethics in the Romanian business environment is due, to a large extent, to companies with foreign capital that have entered the market [12].

The Romanian business environment needs a system of values and standards to make the best decisions and to develop long-term strategies [4]. The Romanian companies, in order to reach the objectives and the assumed mission, it is necessary for each person within the

company to respect a series of principles and norms of conduct. In this way, an adequate climate will be ensured for the professional activity, the company reputation, respect and trust between business partners will increase.

It is necessary to adopt and integrate ethical business models, to create a business environment based on ethics management [7].

The principles necessary to be applied in the Romanian companies are:

- the legal conduct, which implies the respect of all legal stipulations, of the norms of application in the field of activity specific to each organization;
- priority is the interest of the company, which means that the staff has the obligation to carry out their duties in good faith in the interest of the company and to defend the prestige of the organization;
- the behavior must be honest;
- professionalism in carrying out the activities of the organization, by each employee;
- equal opportunities for each employee, non-discrimination;
- the social responsibility of the organization.

The rules of ethical conduct in the workplace are:

- objectivity in evaluation;
- freedom of expression, communication;
- the honest and efficient use of the patrimony and the resources of the organization;
- responsibility in the use of information technology systems;

The organization has the responsibility to respect the principles and norms of environmental protection, the personnel having to carry out their activity using the material and human resources efficiently.

Organizations need to adopt policies and procedures that ensure safe working environments from the point of view of staff health and safety.

A work environment must be provided free from any form of violence or harassment (verbal, physical, etc.).

The rights of the shareholders need to be respected and protected.

Ensuring unrestricted access to information of public interest and ensuring a transparent decision-making process, and collaborative relationships must be based on fairness, transparency, without compromising the organization's objectives.

Business partners must be selected on the basis of transparent and non-discriminatory criteria, and external communication with the media, financial communities, etc., must be correct, complete and intelligible.

The conduct in international relations must be in accordance with the rules of protocol and respect the laws and customs of the host country.

Organizations must have zero tolerance for corruption in seeking to obtain a personal benefit or other advantage by any undue means, from a customer, supplier or other third party.

Any person who violates the norms of conduct of the organization, stipulated in the Code of ethics will be responsible for his actions.

Conclusions

Ethics include a system of moral principles and methods of applying them, also providing the tools needed to develop moral judgment. Ethical principles refer to: conduct, habits, people's attitudes regarding general concepts: good and bad, freedom and constraint, truth and lie, etc.

A business or economic activity can be considered ethical, moral or immoral, depending on the activity it carries on but also on the environment in which it operates.

Continuous educational effort is needed to implement ethics in society, in general and in particular business ethics and to explain the negative consequences of unethical, unethical behavior. In the long term, we cannot become a prosperous, democratic society if we cannot impose strict ethical standards that we must impose on all, starting from us as individuals, the business environment, etc. The progress of the Romanian economy is dependent on the way of cooperation between the Romanian companies, but also between them and the international companies, which have high standards regarding business ethics.

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