

Thursday, October 15, 2009

Ethics and Social Responsibility

Despite the widely diverse perspectives and backgrounds of the panelists on "Ethics and Social Responsibility" the three presenters found some solid common ground – all agree conscience must lead the way within the business place.

Ken Janke (MBA '85) senior vice president, Investor Relations, Aflac Inc., helped Aflac implement the "say on pay" program, the first corporate program to give its board members a vote on raises to top executives. "You need to have transparent disclosure," he said, adding, "Our CEO sets an ethical example and people know where he stands, so it becomes difficult for other managers to act differently or present a different set of values."

As a corporate lawyer, Betsy Bayha, (SBA '72) senior vice president, general counsel and secretary, Blue Coat, finds many challenges in this area because "inherently people consider business ethics a gray area. It's important for companies to establish a tone at the top and provide an open door policy," she said. On an individual level she suggested employees should "raise your hand, and question something if it doesn't feel right."

Michael Houghton, manager, global planning, Stamping Strategic Planning and Allocations, believes business ethics needs to be rooted in some form of knowledge. He personally found the structure of business ethics within catholic teachings. "You should carry your personal ethics into the workplace," Houghton said.

Conference participant Tom Quinn, business consultant, Derderian, Kann, Seyferth & Salucci, thought the panel provided an interesting discussion. "It's important to teach about ethics but really business ethics is just common sense. You know when you're doing something right or wrong. You should follow those instincts."

SUMMARY

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