

Taking responsibility

Ethical businesses not only have to deal with making choices between right and wrong conduct; often they also must make choices between two opportunities, both of which are arguably correct. Making the right or correct choice requires experience, perception, thought and endurance. In the end, an ethical company will make the right choice because it is the way it ought to behave.

Consider this in light of recent news reports about quality problems that Toyota has apparently had for a long time, which have been allowed to fester, have probably not been attended to in a timely fashion, and have resulted in chaos for Toyota, its dealers and its customers. Long after substantial damage has been done, Toyota's CEO has publicly apologized for the mistakes his company have made, but many believe that was too little and too late.

Of course, mistakes are made in every company. If they are hidden, chaos can result. In an ethical company, mistakes are not hidden, and they are attended to promptly and with candor.

Steve Whittaker, Vice-President of Quality Management and Sustainability at Monroe Litho, Inc., has squarely addressed this issue. At Monroe Litho, if any of the sixty employees detects an error with respect to product intended for shipment to a customer, he knows that he must immediately disclose the problem to the members of his team and to the President of the company. The customer must also be advised not only that the error has occurred, but also how and when it will be fixed, and those promises are kept.

Further, if it turns out that an employee has hidden the fact that an error has occurred, he will be expected to explain what happened, and is subject to dismissal.

Some may question this common sense approach as being simply a matter of good business practice, having little or nothing to do with business ethics. Answering that the two go hand-in-glove is legitimate, but beside the point.

Monroe Litho adopted this practice because it is the way an ethical company ought to carry out its business. Sometimes, taking responsibility can be unpleasant, but in Monroe Litho's case, it has become the hallmark of its business - in good times and bad, and regardless of what its competition does.

And everyone from the President on down understands what the Company's policies are. They are discussed and reviewed. And so the objective of taking responsibility is part of the ethical and business fabric of Monroe Litho.