

## DEBATE ISSUE TAKE A STAND

### Conflicts over Privacy in the Workplace

There is tension between companies and their employees over privacy in the workplace. Some companies track employees via company-issued GPS-enabled smartphones and monitor employees' behavior through social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Currently, there are no laws preventing companies from monitoring and tracking employees. Companies believe not monitoring these platforms leaves them vulnerable to misconduct. For instance, the Internet increased the number of distractions in the workplace, and some employees may spend up to 30 percent of their time at work using social media sites for nonwork purposes.

On the other hand, employees argue they have a right to their privacy. They see tracking as a clear sign that their employers do not trust them. Another major argument is that employers with access to employee social media sites or smartphones might be able to monitor employee activity outside the workplace. Where is the line drawn on ensuring employees are working appropriately versus their rights to privacy?

1. Companies should have the right to track employees through company smartphones and monitor their personal Facebook and Twitter accounts.
2. Employees should be able to maintain their personal privacy and not be tracked through their company smartphones or their Facebook and Twitter accounts.

of what they learned not only from their own background but also from others in the organization. The outcome of the learning process depends on the strength of personal values, the opportunities to behave unethically, and the exposure to others who behave ethically or unethically. An alignment between a person's own values and the values of the organization help create positive work attitudes and organizational outcomes. Research has further demonstrated that congruence in personal and organizational values is related to commitment, satisfaction, motivation, ethics, work stress, and anxiety.<sup>27</sup> Although people outside the organization such as family members and friends also influence decision making, the organization develops a personality that helps determine what is and is not ethical. Just as a family guides an individual, specific industries give behavioral cues to firms. Within the family develops what is called a culture, and so too in an organization.

**Corporate culture** can be defined as a set of values, norms, and artifacts, including ways of solving problems that members (employees) of an organization share. As time passes, stakeholders come to view the company as an organization as a living organism with a mind and will of its own. The Walt Disney Co., for example, requires all new employees to take a course in the traditions and history of Disneyland and Walt Disney, including the ethical dimensions of the company. The corporate culture at American Express stresses that employees help customers out of difficult situations whenever possible. This attitude is reinforced through numerous company legends of employees who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to help customers. This strong tradition of customer loyalty might encourage employees to take unorthodox steps to help a customer who encounters a problem. Employees learn they can take some risks in helping customers. Such strong traditions and values have become a driving force in many companies, including Starbucks, IBM, Procter & Gamble, and Hershey Foods.

One way organizations can determine the ethicalness of their corporate cultures is having the company go back to their mission statement and goals and objectives. These goals and objectives are often developed by various stakeholders, such as investors, employees, customers, and suppliers. Comparing the firm's activities with its mission statement, goals, and objectives helps the organization understand whether it is staying true to its values. Additionally, most industries have trade associations that disperse guidelines developed over time from others in the industry. These rules help guide the decision making process as well. The interaction between the company's internal rules and regulations and industry guidelines form the basis of whether a business is making ethical or unethical decisions. It also gives an organization an idea of how an ethical or unethical culture may look.

An important component of corporate or organizational culture is the company's conduct and whether they define it as ethical or unethical. Corporate culture involves values and norms that prescribe a wide range of behavior for organizational members, which