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# Real-life example:Responses to ethical dilemmas in working life can have life-threatening consequences

See the attached PowerPoint presentation to see the complete example.

Date: 2019-05-23

## About this document

This document is a real-life example illustrating importance of the values of academic integrity in professional life. It was created as a part of *Toolkit for cross-sector cooperation in terms of academic integrity* within Erasmus+ project.

It is a ready-to-use case study accompanied with didactic notes and discussion questions and/or other tasks for the audience. Find more case studies in [ENAI database of educational materials](http://www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/all-materials/?key-words%5b%5d=real-life-example).

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# Basic information

* **Target audience**: *Higher education students, any level*
* **Summary**: *What can happen if you ignore corruption and unethical behaviour*
* **Objective**: *To highlight how difficult it can be in real life to take positive action against obvious wrong-doing*
* **Length**: allow *90-120 minutes*

# Abstract

*Difficult situations occur in working life.Decisions taken in confronting, highlighting or resolving ethical issues can lead to very serious consequences. When John witnesses corrupt activities in business transactions involving the son of his boss, he faces a dilemma about how to respond.His choice of action has very serious consequences.*

# Workshop outline

* Introduction (4 minutes)
* Reading part 1 of the story (3 minutes)
* Discussing the options after the part 1 – in groups (10 minutes) + all groups together (10 minutes)
* Reading part 2 of the story (3 minutes)
* Discussing the options after the part 2 – in groups (12 minutes) + all groups together (10 minutes)
* Discussion after the part 3 – in groups (10 minutes) + all groups together (8 minutes)
* Discussion after the part 4 (10 minutes)
* Final discussion (10 minutes)

# Learning outcome/Message of the story

Honesty and integrity apply throughout life, not just in education.

# Material

* The attached presentation to be projected to the audience
* Last pages of this document – the text of the story, as handouts for the audience

# Teaching methods

* *Workshop and interactive lesson*

# Didactic/teachers notes

* *The case study is broken into 4 parts.Each part of the story is presented in turn on the slides by the teacher*
* *Students working in small groups (or pairs if preferred) are asked to respond to the set of questions for that part, then the teacher will ask each group to present their answers to the class, followed by general discussion*
* *After all four parts have been presented and discussed, the students are asked what lessons they take from the workshop.*

# The story

John is a graduate in business management who has just started work in a small manufacturing company Bodgit Building Supplies (BBS).The company specialises in making components to be used in the construction industry, including bridges, buildings and other architectural structures.As part of his training for the new job he is shadowing the purchasing manager Robert who is the son of the company owner, George.

He notices that Robert is very friendly with the material suppliers he speaks to in person or over the telephone.An agent from one supplier, Quality Concrete hands over an expensive bottle of single malt whisky during the negotiations on the price of a large consignment of concrete.The deal is agreed and both parties express their satisfaction.

John overhears a telephone conversation with the rep from a different supplier Precision Castings.Robert is negotiating use of a holiday villa in Cyprus in return for a substantial order for 5000 stainless steel components, which is part of an order for a customer tasked with fitting out a prestigious opera house.

John asks Robert whether accepting such gifts is OK, but Robert very firmly tells him to “mind his own business”.

What should John do?

1. Tell George the CEO about his suspicions
2. Demand money from George to keep it quiet
3. Keep quiet and hope it all works out OK

What are the potential problems with these options?Are there any alternatives?

A few weeks later John is told by the company manager George to oversee the delivery of materials arriving at the factory, including the first batch of concrete from Quality Concrete and the components ordered from Precision Castings.On inspection of the goods, John has strong suspicions that the components are poor quality, despite the price paid being at or above market price.He also suspects that the concrete is not to the required structural strength and durability for its intended use in components for a railway bridge.

Discuss, what are the ethical issues in this scenario?

What should John do?

1. Tell George the CEO about his suspicions
2. Tell Robert about his suspicions
3. Contact the companies to verify the quality of the goods
4. Demand money or favours from the companies himself
5. Keep quiet and hope it all works out OK

What problems can you see with these 5 options?Are there any alternatives?

John decides on option (e)

John does not remain working for this company for very long and continues to develop his career at a different company.

Several years later John visits the opera house and finds evidence that the “stainless steel” fittings supplied by BBS have not stood the test of time.He sees clear evidence of corrosion in the fittings.

What should John do?

Many years later John hears about the collapse of a railway bridge with the loss of several lives.He sees reports that BBS is under investigation for supplying defective materials.

What should John do?

1. Contact the criminal investigators with the information he has
2. Contact BBS and ask for money to keep quiet
3. Keep quiet and hope he is not implicated in the crime

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*Part 1*

John is a graduate in business management who has just started work in a small manufacturing company Bodgit Building Supplies (BBS).The company specialises in making components to be used in the construction industry, including bridges, buildings and other architectural structures.As part of his training for the new job he is shadowing the purchasing manager Robert who is the son of the company owner, George.

He notices that Robert is very friendly with the material suppliers he speaks to in person or over the telephone.An agent from one supplier, Quality Concrete hands over an expensive bottle of single malt whisky during the negotiations on the price of a large consignment of concrete.The deal is agreed and both parties express their satisfaction.

John overhears a telephone conversation with the rep from a different supplier Precision Castings.Robert is negotiating use of a holiday villa in Cyprus in return for a substantial order for 5000 stainless steel components, which is part of an order for a customer tasked with fitting out a prestigious opera house.

John asks Robert whether accepting such gifts is OK, but Robert very firmly tells him to “mind his own business”.

What should John do?

1. Tell George the CEO about his suspicions
2. Demand money from George to keep it quiet
3. Keep quiet and hope it all works out OK

What are the potential problems with these options?Are there any alternatives?

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*Part 2*

A few weeks later John is told by the company manager George to oversee the delivery of materials arriving at the factory, including the first batch of concrete from Quality Concrete and the components ordered from Precision Castings.On inspection of the goods, John has strong suspicions that the components are poor quality, despite the price paid being at or above market price.He also suspects that the concrete is not to the required structural strength and durability for its intended use in components for a railway bridge.

Discuss, what are the ethical issues in this scenario?

What should John do?

1. Tell George the CEO about his suspicions
2. Tell Robert about his suspicions
3. Contact the companies to verify the quality of the goods
4. Demand money or favours from the companies himself
5. Keep quiet and hope it all works out OK

What problems can you see with these 5 options?Are there any alternatives?

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*Part 3*

John decides on option (e)

John does not remain working for this company for very long and continues to develop his career at a different company.

Several years later John visits the opera house and finds evidence that the “stainless steel” fittings supplied by BBS have not stood the test of time.He sees clear evidence of corrosion in the fittings.

What should John do?

*Part 4*

Many years later John hears about the collapse of a railway bridge with the loss of several lives.He sees reports that BBS is under investigation for supplying defective materials.

What should John do?

1. Contact the criminal investigators with the information he has
2. Contact BBS and ask for money to keep quiet
3. Keep quiet and hope he is not implicated in the crime

Could the outcomes have been different if John had taken a different course of action earlier in his career?

What lessons do you take from this story?