

Ethics Vignettes

1. An examiner informed me that she knew I had gone on a site visit to XYZ International. She asked me how the site visit went. I figured that since she knew I was a member of the team and was an examiner herself, there was no harm in sharing the information.

Was I right? If not, what should I have done?

2. While reviewing Category 2 of an application you see that the applicant uses a strategic planning model that you think would be very useful in your own company. You know that it is a violation of the Rules of Conduct to use the applicant's information in your company unless the information is publicly released by the applicant. However, you also know that the applicant's model is very similar to other models you have seen before. So, you figure that the applicant has simply borrowed the strategic planning model from somewhere else, so why not use it? You also think, "to stay in line with the Rules of Conduct, I can take this generic model and tweak it to our company's situation, and that should be okay."

If the examiner uses the applicant's strategic model in this fashion, will there be a violation of the Rules of Conduct?

3. Last year I evaluated a large manufacturing organization that is outside my area of expertise. The application contained a number of terms I was not familiar with, such as Kaizen, Pareto charts, PDCA, and Failure Modes and Effect Analysis (FMEA). How can I do a proper evaluation if I do not know what these terms mean?

Can I do any kind of research to familiarize myself with these concepts?

4. A first-year examiner, Sue, receives a list of her team. A colleague in her organization, Sam, is an experienced examiner. She decides to talk with Sam to learn some tips for success. As Sue talks with Sam, she mentions, "I just got the list of my team members. I thought you might know some of these folks. My team leader is Laurie Smith. Have you met her?"

What is the ethical issue in play? What actions should the examiners take at this point?

5. You are working on your Independent Review of applicant ABC, a private manufacturing company. Your retirement account broker, who knows you are a TNCPE examiner, calls you and advises you to switch some of your funds from government bonds to an aggressive growth fund containing large-cap stocks. You wonder if this fund contains stock in applicant ABC. You ask your broker which stocks are included in this fund. Your applicant is listed as one of the stocks in the fund.

Can you accept your broker's recommendation and buy into this fund? Why or why not?

6. (An examiner stated the following ...) "The strategic planning process of the application I am reviewing is difficult to understand. I understand that examiners may use other sources to familiarize themselves with common or generic terminology, so I have done some research on the Internet and I've even contacted my old business school professor. Unfortunately, I'm still struggling, but the clock is ticking. My own company has an excellent strategic planning division, so maybe I can research their office for insight. I also have a close friend who consults with global Fortune 500 companies on strategic planning, so I should contact him as well. He has worked with some of the best organizations, and perhaps he can help me understand if this is really an effective process. If he says that this just isn't realistic, then I may call the applicant's official contact to get clarity and, perhaps, let them know where they can turn for advice.

Good idea, no?"

7. Part 1: While waiting for the rest of the team to join the teleconference for consensus, a team member shares information with you about the applicant your team is evaluating. She tells you she heard this information during a luncheon at the local chapter meeting of the Organizational Development Network. Apparently, the applicant has begun negotiations with a supplier to require adherence to the organization's new "green" standards. The supplier is not in agreement but feels pressure to conform.

Is this information the two examiners should be discussing?

Part 2: When the consensus call begins, the team leader opens the meeting by informing the team that the applicant has just made a public announcement that it will be requiring new environmental standards for its suppliers. Their process for deploying these standards can be found on its website.

Should this information be considered in the evaluation process?

8. I attended last year's Excellence in Tennessee Conference, where I ran into an employee of a company for which I was the team leader on its site visit. She asked me to explain why the feedback report made no mention of her company's efforts to reduce turnover and increase employee satisfaction scores. I told her she would have to ask the TNCPE staff.

What information can the TNCPE staff provide that an examiner cannot provide?