You’re ready to graduate and ready and prepared to begin your career in hospitality management. You may, however, find yourself in some sticky situations—ethical situations—during the recruitment process and in your first few months at your new entry-level management position. It may be useful to give some advance thought to these ethical dilemmas and to have a way of dealing with them.

As you start the recruiting process you may feel scared that you won’t be offered a job, and then later find yourself tormented by “which job offer should I accept?” You could find yourself in the following situation:

You interview early in the semester with a company, and the company makes you an offer. You, however, haven’t yet interviewed with the company you are really interested in. What should you do? Should you turn down the offer and take the chance that the other company will extend an offer later or take the early offer because a bird in hand is worth two in the bush? Will you hurt the first company’s feelings if you say you want to interview with a few other companies before deciding, because you want to make sure you are making the best possible match. They too are interested in good matches, and mistakes cost them a lot of money. Today companies really need managers, so perhaps they will be willing to wait for an answer or to at least extend the deadline. The worst that can happen is they will take away the offer.

You could choose not to be honest and just string them along for as long as possible hoping they don’t get fed up and rescind the offer anyway. So what is best? To be honest or not could both at worst end up with the offer being rescinded. Even if you are not honest, the recruiter is most likely aware that you are putting the company off because you are interviewing with other companies.

By following the rule to be honest you will appear more straightforward, honest, and less devious. There seems to be nothing to gain.
Concern and Respect for Others

This rule seems to apply also. If you were the recruiter and interviewing prospective managers how would you like to be treated? Would you prefer being strung along for as long as possible, or would you prefer being told the truth as above? Of course, they could still take away the offer while appreciating your honesty. Or again, they could rescind the offer because they were put off by your lack of respect as shown by your failure to honestly tell them what is going on.

Either way, the consequences could be negative, however, showing concern and respect for the recruiter and the company would look and feel better for both you and the company. Having concern and respect for others works quite well, and you can save time and effort by just accepting this principle and incorporating it into your life.

Reputation and Morale

Stringing along recruiters could harm the reputation of your school and lower the recruiters' opinion of your graduates, which could harm the reputation of your degree. Recruiters talk to each other. Your name could be mentioned. Your behavior would determine whether the mention was positive or negative which is, of course, another great reason for following the ethical principles.

None of the consequences for following the rules at this stage of the

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Honesty: Hospitality managers are honest and truthful. They do not mislead or deceive others by misrepresentations.

Integrity: Hospitality managers demonstrate the courage of their convictions by doing what they know is right even when there is pressure to do otherwise.

Trustworthiness: Hospitality managers are trustworthy and candid in supplying information and in correcting misapprehensions of fact. They do not create justifications for escaping their promises and commitments.

Loyalty: Hospitality managers demonstrate loyalty to their companies in devotion to duty and loyalty to colleagues by friendship in adversity. They avoid conflicts of interest; do not use or disclose confidential information; and should they accept other employment, they respect the proprietary information of their former employer.

Fairness: Hospitality managers are fair and equitable in all dealings; they do not abuse power arbitrarily nor take undue advantage of another’s mistakes or difficulties. They treat all individuals with equality, with tolerance for and acceptance of diversity and with an open mind.

Concern and Respect for Others: Hospitality managers are concerned, respectful, compassionate and kind. They are sensitive to the personal concerns of their colleagues and live the “Golden Rule” they respect the rights and interests of all those who have a stake in their decisions.

Commitment to Excellence: Hospitality managers pursue excellence in performing their duties and are willing to put more into their job than they can get out of it.

Leadership: Hospitality managers are conscious of the responsibility and opportunities of their position of leadership. They realize that the best way to instill ethical principles and ethical awareness in their organizations is by example. They walk their talk!

Reputation and Morale: Hospitality managers seek to protect and build the company’s reputation and the morale of its employees by engaging in conduct that builds respect and by taking whatever actions are necessary to correct or prevent inappropriate conduct of others.

Accountability: Hospitality managers are personally accountable for the ethical quality of their decisions as well as those of their subordinates.

game are too serious. You’re young and the job market is such that you’re in demand and can find another position. Here’s another situation:

What if you went ahead and took the first company’s offer and then, after a few months on the job, well…hated it? Or what if you turned down the first company, took the second company’s offer and, after several months on the job, found you hated it? Can you go back to the first company? How long do you have to stay at the job you hate? What about your performance on the job you hate? What about your future career?

The stakes are a little higher here. They have money invested in you – recruitment costs, maybe relocation costs, training costs, and of course, the costs to go through the process again if you leave. You suffer costs too – you lose seniority and any benefits you are finally eligible for, you have to somehow find another position and have to answer the question why you want to leave your current position – what about a reference? There may be a cost to get to the interview and perhaps a relocation cost if you take the job. All worthwhile costs if you get a job you like better. We do make mistakes and at this stage of the game mistakes can be remedied without huge losses.

You can run through the list of ethical principles again and see which apply in this second situation.

**Honesty**

You could try being honest and truthful, not misleading your new company, and see if you could somehow work out a work situation that would be more acceptable. You could look at yourself honestly and determine if there was something you were doing that could be changed to make the work situation more acceptable. Poor communication in a marriage often results in a divorce. Poor communication in a job situation often results in unnecessary torment and possibly “divorce.”

**Commitment to Excellence**

Whether or not you like the job or intend to stay, it is essential to always do your very best work. The work you do reflects on you personally and also on your school. It is in your best interest to guard the reputation of your school as this gives value to your degree. The work you do today could become a future issue if you are attempting to get a different job later and someone happens to remember you from a former job where your work was mediocre.

**Fairness**

What is fair in this situation? Your company has invested considerable money in bringing you on board and training you. What do you owe the company in terms of time?

You would certainly need to be Trustworthy and Loyal to the company, and exhibit Integrity, Concern and Respect for Others, and Leadership for the duration of your employ. You are Accountable for the quality of your decision in this matter.

You could be Honest and talk with management about your dissatisfaction and if nothing could be worked out you could discuss leaving and get their input on what they feel is fair to them. At worst they could fire you on the spot, and you would be without any position and no reference. (This is a consequence that would be much more serious if you were older and had a mortgage and kids in college, etc.)

You could just go ahead and look for another job and then give two weeks notice when you find another job. However, this could be perceived negatively by the company and could harm the Reputation of the school. It also could look somewhat negative to the next employer – would you do the same thing to them?

There is a chain of command in every company. You need to know what the chain of command is and follow it. Just as you would not like your staff going over your head, your supervisor would not appreciate it either. It’s this communication thing again. Problems can’t be solved if they are not identified and then addressed with the appropriate person.

What’s the answer here? Following the rules is no more painful than not following the rules and usually much better for you, your company, and your school. What you can learn from this sort of problem, though, is to make very careful choices to begin with, so you can avoid situations like this.
Ok, now you're at your new job. Your boss tells you to do something but she doesn’t check if you’ve done it. You have been very busy and have not yet gotten to it. She asks you how it went. What do you tell her?

Chances are she’ll never know the difference, and you are still going to do it. She could think less of you if you tell her you haven’t done it yet. The consequences for being Honest with your boss could be negative. Think, however, how negative it would be if somehow she did find out you hadn’t done what she asked and lied to her. Getting caught lying would be the worst possible consequence in this situation. You would have been much better off explaining that you had not yet completed the task. It would have made sense to let her know in advance that you were not going to be able to make her deadline and ask for an extension.

Perhaps if you had done the ethical thing to begin with, like having been Trustworthy and done what you committed to do, you could have avoided this situation and avoided having to be Accountable for your failure now.

Here’s another situation you could find yourself in. You are a manager in training and working a regular shift at the front desk with a regular hourly employee. (You are not the other employee’s supervisor.) There is a company policy to never say the room number out loud, yet this employee does it all the time. You tell the employee that he should not say the room number out loud and he just ignores you. What should you do? The policy is in place to protect guests. You told him, but are you responsible for the policy and do you have to take it further? Do you have an obligation to tell your immediate supervisor? What about your relationship with the other worker – will he get into trouble? Will he know you told on him?

Look at the “rules” and see how your actions or lack of actions could affect all the various stakeholders: the customers, you, the company, the other workers.

“The work you do reflects on you personally and also on your school.”

Loyalty
Where should your loyalty lie – with a fellow worker or the company? As part of management you are required and expected to support the company line and follow the company policies. Your loyalty is with the company; you are management.

Concern and Respect for Others
Where should your concern lie – with a fellow worker’s feelings or the safety of the guest? If there was no one else involved here and you were the other employee’s boss it would be fairly simple to be equally concerned for both the employee’s feelings and the guest’s safety. You could privately, kindly, and firmly explain the reason for the policy and stress the necessity of all employees following the policy.

However, there is another person involved – your supervisor. If you tell on the other employee, your supervisor might not handle the other employee’s lapse ethically, that is with Concern and Respect for Others (for both you and the other employee), by perhaps not exhibiting Leadership, or concern for the Morale of the staff. He might say “Bob (or Sue – you) here tells me you aren’t following the rules and here’s a written warning.”

If you fail to do anything about the employee’s lapse, it is possible a guest could be harmed. Perhaps you could tell your supervisor about the employee’s lapse prefacing it with your concern that “telling on a fellow employee” made you very uncomfortable and that you hope the supervisor will handle the problem with discretion. He or she may or may not. You, however, are management and are responsible for the guest’s safety. There are ethical rules and there are company rules. You are to follow them. Sometimes doing the right thing is not a popularity making decision.

Now, what if the rule the employee wasn’t following was really stupid? What then? It is your responsibility as manager to be ethical and to do things in an
ethical way. You can see that if your supervisor was ethical, the problem would have been solved without harm to you or the other employee. If the rule was stupid, you and your supervisor would have both been put in an ethical dilemma by having to enforce something ridiculous and perhaps deciding not to—not to tell and/or not to do anything about it. This stupid rule may force ethical managers to side with employees rather than the company.

You will be in the positions of authority in 20 years. It is you who will make the rules for your company. Be sure to make good rules, ethical rules, rules that don’t put your managers in ethical dilemmas. In order for you to make good rules later—rules and policies that are ethical, you must have integrity and you must be ethical. That is grown and determined by the decisions you make now and everyday here forward. You won't be able to make ethical decisions later if you have grown comfortable with fudging the rules each step of the way and eventually forgetting them altogether.

You can accept the Ten Core Ethical Principles for Hospitality Managers as hard and fast rules that you must follow for the good of yourself and everyone else. It’s difficult, however, when other people are involved, when the stakes get higher (like you’re older and debt-ridden), when you don’t have a lot of control over the rules. So make good choices to begin with. Try to work for companies whose values are in line with your own which should be in line with the Ethical Principles, and you will have a much better chance of success in hospitality management—success you can be proud of.