

Beyond Borders

Unit #3: Tim Hortons Ethics Case



KEY LEARNING GOALS:

A note from Mr. Parsons...

Sometimes the actions of one employee can have a major impact on the organization. At the end of this activity I hope you can identify the unethical issues presented in this case.

You should also be able to identify positive course of actions for situations such as the ones presented in this case.

Curriculum Expectation

Evaluate the impact of issues related to ethics and social responsibility on the management of organizations.

Explain the relationship between a person's attitude (e.g., commitment to job, personal biases) and her or his behaviour in the workplace (e.g., quality of performance, absenteeism; engaging in practices that reflect racist, sexist, or homophobic attitudes).

October 24th, 2011

BLenheim, Ont. — Dozens of people are planning to protest outside a Tim Hortons in Blenheim on Thursday after a same-sex couple says they were told to leave the coffee shop because they were lesbians.

A spokeswoman for Tim Hortons says the couple was asked to leave after they "went beyond public displays of affection" while visiting the outlet three weeks ago.

While the chain is apologizing to Riley Duckworth, 25, of London, and her partner Patricia Pattenden, 23, for what it calls a misunderstanding, Duckworth says she is not satisfied.

Duckworth says she and her partner Patricia Pattenden, 23, were outside drinking coffee with a group of family and friends and saw a man watching them from inside the restaurant. She says soon after, the man went up to the counter, and a few minutes later the assistant manager came out and asked the couple to stop doing what they were doing and leave. Head office, said it was not the store's intention to "offend or target anyone based on their sexual orientation."

"Tim Hortons and its restaurant owners have always welcomed all families and communities to their restaurants and will continue to do so," she said. "The guests' behaviour went beyond public displays of affection and was making other guests feel uncomfortable," she said.

The management has apologized to the women and invited them back to their restaurant, added Cygal.

Duckworth says her partner had her hand around her waist, and had kissed her on the cheek once or twice but she denies they were groping each other.

"The manager said that our behaviour was inappropriate and that it was a family friendly establishment and it wasn't acceptable there," Duckworth said.

"We would need to leave within five minutes or the cops would be called," she said they were told.

They were shocked but left to avoid creating a scene, she said. They have been to the same outlet previously and had received stares from customers, but nothing had ever been said, she added.

As the couple left, the pastor at a local church allegedly held a prayer circle with more than a dozen people in the parking lot to "pray for the couple's souls," Duckworth said.

Alexandra Cygal, manager of public affairs at Tim Hortons. By late Monday morning, several hundred people had joined the Facebook group.

Duckworth says she'll never return to Tim Hortons again. "We want to make sure this won't happen again to anybody else because it's wrong and it should have never happened in the first place."

Case Study Questions:

1. Identify the Ethical Dilemma in this case. (Write a statement - should offer a choice in the course of action - one paragraph)
2. Who are the Stakeholders in this case?
2. How did the Tim Hortons management team deal with the situation when it occurred? Should action have been taken in this situation? Why was this situation considered unethical?
3. What would your recommendations be for Tim Hortons Managers when dealing with this situation?
4. How should management handle situations (such as these) after unethical decisions are made? Should they have done more/less? Outline possible ethics training options.

Source:

<http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/Canada/20111024/tim-hortons-lesbians-kicked-out-apology-protest-111024/>

Read more: <http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/Canada/20111024/tim-hortons-lesbians-kicked-out-apology-protest-111024/#ixzz1nKJlxGTd>

Key Terms:

Ethical Dilemma: Is a situation that, although offering potential benefit or gain, may be considered unethical.

Stakeholder: Are directly affected by the behaviour or the organization and hold a stake in its performance.

Ethics Training: Seeks to help people understand the ethical aspects of decision making and to incorporate high ethical standards into their daily behaviour.