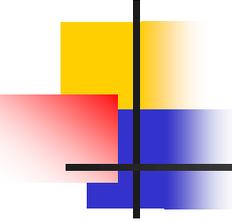


The employer-employee relationship (1)

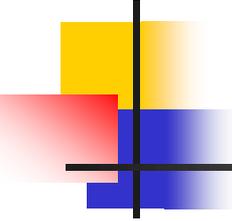
Much has changed in the employer-employee relationship over the last fifty years (and especially over the last twenty). Changes in business strategies and the effects of globalization—to name but two causes—have affected how employers relate to employees (and vice versa).



The employer-employee relationship (2)

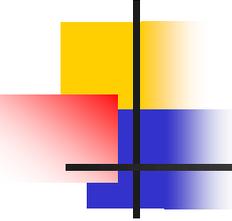
There are three interesting issues with regard to employment:

1. What employment-related policies and practices lead to optimal outcomes for *employers*?
2. What employment-related policies and practices lead to optimal outcomes for *employees*?
3. What ethical rules should underpin the employment relationship?



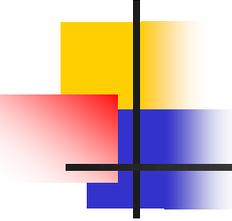
Old versus new employment contracts (1)

One way of understanding how the employment relationship has changed over time in the United States is by contrasting old versus new employment contracts (Cavanaugh and Noe, 1999; Van Buren, 2003). Something fundamental about how employers and employees relate to each other has changed.



Old versus new employment contracts (2)

These are not formal contracts in a legal sense, but rather represent shared norms and understandings between employers and employees.



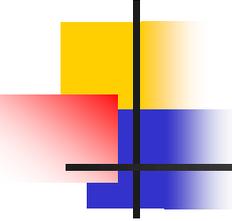
The old employment contract

Stability in employment: Assumed

Use of downsizing: Avoided when possible and used as a last resort

Wages: Rise in tandem with job tenure

Commitment of employees: To their employers



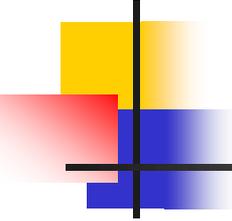
The new employment contract

Stability in employment: Not assumed

Use of downsizing: Used frequently and often combined with contingent, temporary, or offshore workers

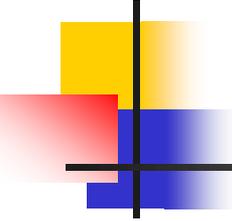
Wages: Determined largely by market forces

Commitment of employees: To the work that they do



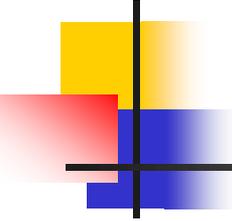
Old versus new employment contracts (3)

In addition to thinking about whether the new employment contract is good for employers (here the evidence is mixed at best), it is also important to think about whether it violates fundamental ethical duties that employers and employees owe each other.



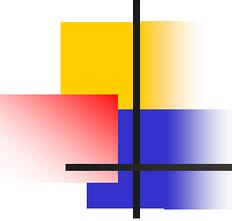
Employment-at-will

Although most employment relationships (in the absence of an employment contract) are “at-will,” there are a number of common-law and public-policy restrictions on employers’ rights to fire employees at will (discrimination, union organizing, whistle-blowing, etc.).



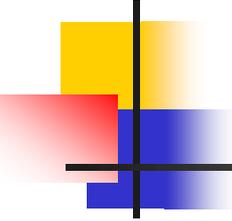
Ethical issues in employment (1)

There are lots of ethical issues in employment, which include not only issues like fair treatment of employees in this country, but fair treatment of employees around the world (sweatshops, contract-supplier relationships).



Ethical issues in employment (2)

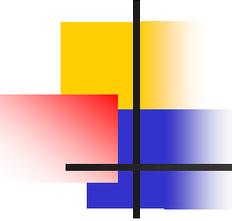
One of the main ethical issues in employment generally is that of just employment relationships — both in terms of procedural and distributive justice.



Ethical issues in employment (3)

However, *employees* also have ethical obligations to their employers.

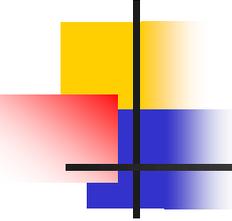
One unfortunate by-product of the new employment contract is that employees and employers feel fewer ethical obligations to each other. In some sense this has been driven by employers' desires for flexibility.



Employer rights/Employee duties

- No drug or alcohol abuse
- No actions that would endanger others
- To treat others with respect and without harassment of any kind
- Honesty; appropriate disclosure
- Loyalty and commitment
- Respect for employer's property and intellectual capital

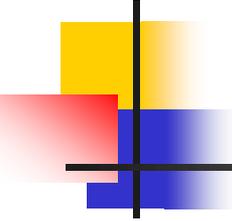
(Source: P, L, and W text)



Employee rights/ Employer duties

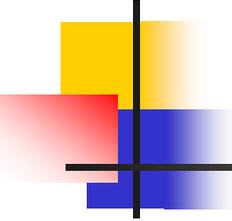
- Right to organize and to bargain
- Safe and healthy workplace
- Privacy
- Discipline fairly and justly applied
- To blow the whistle (when warranted)
- Equal employment opportunity
- To be treated with respect for fundamental human rights

(Source: P, L, and W text)



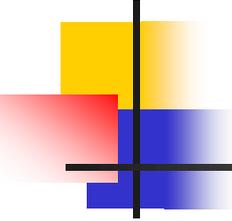
Employee privacy (1)

- There is not an absolute right to privacy in the workplace. Examples include
- drug testing,
 - monitoring of computer use for excessive personal use or harassing materials,
 - romance,
 - honesty, and
 - health.



Employee privacy (2)

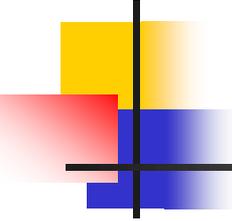
Employers do have affirmative ethical obligations to (1) only gather information that is really needed and (2) safeguard that information to minimize the threat of it being disclosed to others.



Whistle-blowing (1)

There are several conditions for whistle-blowing to be an ethical act:

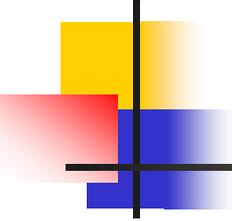
- The unreported act would do serious and considerable harm to the public.
- Once such an act has been identified, the employee has reported the act to his or her immediate supervisor and has made his or her moral concern known.
- If the immediate supervisor does nothing, the employee has tried other internal pathways for reporting the problem.



Whistle-blowing (2)

Internal ethical codes, ethics training and hotlines, and ethics offices are ways that organizations can handle incidences of unethical behavior and avoid employee whistle-blowing.

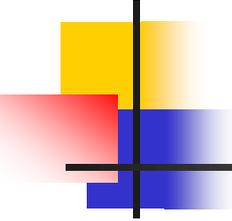
(Recall that Sherron Watkins reported her concerns about Enron to Ken Lay long before the company imploded!)



Managing a diverse workforce (1)

Workforce diversity (diversity here represents variation in characteristics that distinguish people from one another) represents both a challenge and an opportunity for business.

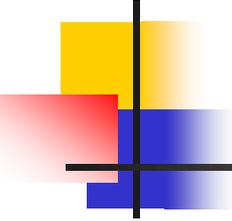
The essential challenge posed by equal opportunity is to ensure that all people (potential and current employees) have an equal opportunity to succeed—requiring fair treatment.



Managing a diverse workforce (2)

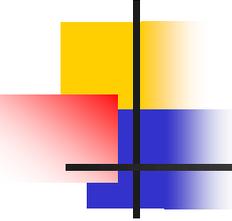
But diversity also provides an opportunity—to attract/retain good employees and then to use their talents in ways that create competitive advantage.

Barriers to such opportunities include glass ceilings and glass walls, in addition to insular management styles and cultural problems.



Managing a diverse workforce (3)

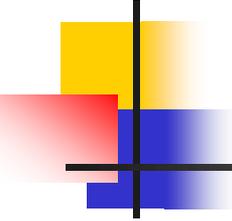
- What can organizations do to promote workplace diversity?
- Articulate a clear diversity mission, set objectives, and hold managers accountable.
 - Spread a wide net in recruitment, to find the most diverse possible pool of qualified candidates.



Managing a diverse workforce (4)

- Identify promising women and persons of color, and provide them with mentors and other kinds of support.
- Set up diversity councils to monitor the company's goals and progress toward them.

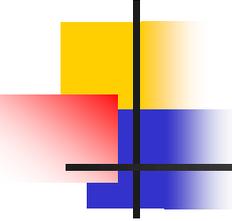
In short, bringing about diversity requires organizational attention!



Managing a diverse workforce (5)

Government (especially federal and state governments) play a significant role in ensuring equal employment opportunity.

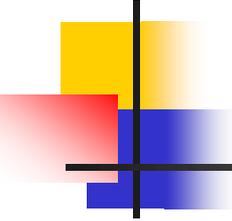
Some means of government action (forbidding racial discrimination and sexual harassment) are uncontroversial, others (affirmative action) quite controversial.



Managing a diverse workforce (6)

Another element in ensuring a diverse workforce is work-life balance programs (on-site childcare, family leave, flex- and part-time schedules).

Hochschild (2000) found a startling result: many organizations offered family-friendly policies, but few working parents questioned their long hours or took advantage of such policies.



Managing a diverse workforce (7)

The reason—in many cases—was that work was seen by employees as offering stimulation, guidance, and a sense of belonging, while home had become the place in which there was too much to do in too little time.

It is the case that there is a need for programs that promote work-life balance, but both employers and employees have a responsibility to make them work.