Introduction to Law

Ethics Writing Assignment (Fall 2018)

1. Introduction

To write the essay you will need to view Joseph L. Badaracco’s Defining Moments: A Framework for Moral Decisions. The directions for accessing this video are below. You can also read a transcript of the video, which I have added to the Ethical Decisionmaking module.

2. Background to Case:

Read the article "Nike Returns to Familiar Strategy With Kaepernick Ad Campaign," available here: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/04/sports/nike-colin-kaepernick.html and also in PDF format on ICON.

3. Prompt:

The article states in part, "In an era rife with divisive political discourse, most major public companies try to avoid taking stances that could make customers angry, particularly when rabid social media campaigns can cast any decision into a larger social statement. Yet Nike has signed Mr. Kaepernick, perhaps the most divisive American athlete of his generation, to a lucrative new contract and will produce branded apparel with his name and image."

In this essay, you will write from the perspective of the Chief Marketing Officer of the (fictitious) Zap Sports Drink company, based in San Francisco, CA. Zap is a healthy sports drink being marketed to high school and college athletes, as well as the general public. As CMO of Zap, you are responsible for all celebrity endorsements, as well as general brand positioning of the product.

You have had the CMO job for a little over a year. You are finding it very difficult to get celebrity endorsements at a reasonable price, because the sports drink market is flooded with products and is highly competitive. However, an opportunity has presented itself: while working out at a local gym, you happened to meet Colin Kaepernick. You had several bottles of Zap with you (as always), and you gave Mr. Kaepernick samples of the various flavors. He liked the drink a lot, and the two of you struck up a friendship. You believe you could gain Mr. Kaepernick's endorsement of Zap at a reasonable price. He is a world-class athlete who took the hometown San Francisco 49ers within one game of the Super Bowl a couple years ago. However, you are concerned about the controversy surrounding his protests during NFL games. You have read about the publicity, both negative and positive, surrounding Nike's recent decision to feature Mr. Kaepernick in an ad campaign. Zap could really use some
publicity—sales have been very low. But, how would hiring a controversial figure affect Zap’s various stakeholders?

You have a decision to make.

Your assignment is to write a persuasive essay to the CEO of Zap stating 1) whether you recommend or do not recommend hiring Mr. Kaepernick to endorse Zap Sports Drink, 2) your reasoning for doing so, and 3) explaining the ethical issues the company should consider in making this decision.

Here are some ideas for ethical issues you might consider:

- Who are the stakeholders that will be affected by your decision, and how will they be affected?
- Should companies take a position on social issues, or should they refrain from doing so?
- Companies may be criticized for taking a position on social issues, and they may also be criticized for not taking a position on social issues. How should a company respond to these criticisms?

Please note: This assignment does not ask you to decide any issues relating to Mr. Kaepernick's protests themselves, or the meaning behind them. You might agree with or disagree with the protests, or have no opinion. We are asking you to put personal feelings aside and make the best possible business decision for your company.

4. Structure and Format:

Use the following steps to assist you in structuring your answer (although you should not write the essay as just answers to the series of questions below). Your essay should have a clearly articulated thesis and effective claim statements for paragraph topic sentences in which you develop your position.

- What is the ethical issue or problem?
- What are the critical facts related to your decision?
- What are possible solutions/actions/responses?
- Who will be affected by your decision? (Who are the stakeholders?)
- What is the effect of the likely solutions/actions/responses on the stakeholders?
- What is your decision? How do you propose to justify your decision based on Badaracco’s four Frameworks for a Decision (i.e., best net/net, individual rights, messages sent about character, and what will work in the world as it is) and your own primary ethical values?
- What makes your decision “ethical”?

Your essay should be written in paragraph form, with indented paragraphs and no headings or bulleted points. Essays should be between 3 – 4 double-spaced pages (one-inch margins, page numbers and 12-point font). Essays longer than 4.5 pages will not be eligible for the competition.

You may write in first-person or third-person prose. There is no one required citation style, but your style should be professional and consistent. MLA or APA styles are recommended. Please cite all outside sources used, including a "works cited" page if necessary. You do not need to cite Badaracco’s speech or course slides (unless you quote verbatim, in which case you must cite appropriately).
All Tippie undergraduates are eligible for the contest. Essays should be submitted to the appropriate dropbox folder on ICON. Your essay will be evaluated for originality/plagiarism through turnitin.com. You must cite all sources that you use, particularly where you quote text directly.

Thanks to the generosity of Mary and Dempsey Prappas, monetary awards will be given to the students whose essays are considered by the essay contest external review judges to be top-ranked. First, second, and third-place winners will receive $3,000, $2,000, and $1,000, respectively, to be credited toward their U-bills assuming they are continuing students at the UI. Finalists for the 2017-2018 contest will be determined in mid-May 2019 and will have to agree to revise their essay over the summer to be eligible for the final round of judging in September 2019. Winners will be announced in October 2019.

Previous winning essays can be viewed here: https://tippie.uiowa.edu/about-tippie/centers-institutes/frank-business-communication-center

5. How to Access the Badaracco Video

The Defining Moments video is available on-line through the Business Source Complete (BSC) database on the University of Iowa website http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/biz/


Alternately, you can follow the directions below.

Type Business Source Complete into the SmartSearch field.

The database will be your first hit. Click Details, then Link to Resource.
Once in the Business Source Complete database, click on the link to the Business Videos library.

Then do a search for “Defining Moments.”
Your search should take you to Badarraco’s *Defining Moments: A Framework for Moral Decisions* video. Click on the video link.

**Search Results: 1 - 1 of 1**

**Harvard FSS: Defining Moments: A Framework for Moral Decisions**


[PDF Full Text] [Video]

Then watch the video.
Points 100
Submitting a file upload

Due | For | Available from | Until
---|---|---|---
Sep 27 | Everyone | - | -

**Ethics Essay Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Ratings</th>
<th>Pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spots the ethical issues present</td>
<td>20.0 pts Exemplary Response</td>
<td>18.0 pts Meets criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicates why solution is appropriate in the given context</td>
<td>20.0 pts Exemplary Response</td>
<td>18.0 pts Meets criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes potential downsides of solution</td>
<td>20.0 pts Exemplary Response</td>
<td>18.0 pts Meets criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a coherent integrated solution</td>
<td>20.0 pts Exemplary Response</td>
<td>18.0 pts Meets criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar, spelling and format are professional</td>
<td>20.0 pts Exemplary Response</td>
<td>18.0 pts Meets criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Points: 100.0