

TO BE ETHICAL OR NOT TO BE ETHICAL, THAT IS THE QUESTION!

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A member of the Magazine Committee asked me to consider writing this article for this February issue, which is themed around ethics. My first inclination was to say no because I think I see my “stuff” too often in the magazine. The Committee has themes, but is always looking for articles from YOU. Do you need to be asked? I am asking!!!!!!!!!! Many of you have a lot to share with our members and it would be wonderful to hear from you.

Even though I had two ethics classes approved by the Commission for the Common Interest Community and Condo Hotels, I still have to ask the question of *who* sets the bar for ethics. In Nevada, it seems like our legislators keep trying to set that bar because of the continual abuses in our industry. Wouldn't it be wonderful if in just one legislative session our industry wasn't in the headlines for serious abuses?

Donna Zanneti, PCAM and I taught an ethics class several years back for CAI National at a National Convention. At this class it was very interesting to hear from the attendees from other states across the United States. It was very disappointing, however, to hear from a manager from the Washington D.C. area who felt that kickbacks are just doing business as normal. After Donna and I got up off from the floor, we tried to get to the bottom of his assumption that this was right and expected. We obviously failed since he felt this was part of his “culture” and was his due in working as a manager.

All of us come from different familial situations as well. Our parents and family friends helped us all to frame who we are today. What we saw them do in this area as we grew up was what we assumed was “acceptable” and right. My father had what most people would consider “unreasonably high” standards in this area. The bar was set very high in my family, but when my father passed away, every person who spoke at his funeral talked about what an ethical individual my father was. There was no way to rationalize our ethics to what is considered a gray area. Our decisions were to be very black and white as in very right and very wrong. There was no in between.

All of us should have someone that we know who we can trust unconditionally to do the right thing, help us do the right thing and that won't lead us astray when reaching ethical decisions. When my hubby was asked who was the most ethical person he knew, he stated that I was. WHEW! What a huge responsibility to not let him down.

Each of us needs to look inside of ourselves to see if we do what we can “get away with” or what is the right thing. I can not imagine what it must be like for those 75 people (the current estimated figure) waiting to see if they will be among the group tied up in the FBI investigation who will be arrested in the near future. Many of the individuals wrapped up in this mess may have been lead to believe that this was common place and acceptable. NOT to ethical people.

What does the law require? Besides disclosing if there are any actual or perceived conflicts, members of the board and managers have restrictions as to what “gifts” they can receive. NRS 116.31185 details the prohibitions against certain personnel (and members of the Board) from soliciting or accepting compensation, gratuity or remunerations and NAC 116.480 and NAC 116.482 further define what can be received and the reporting requirements if anything is actually received along with exact limitations.

My advice? Don't accept anything. Is that extreme? Yes! An individual's integrity and reputation are the most important things that an individual can have. Do you want yours to be put into question? I certainly wouldn't and they would be fighting words if someone questioned my integrity and challenged my reputation as they are both very important to me.

Take a minute and think about your ethics. Are you ethical all of the time, most of the time, some of the time or not at all? Only you can answer those questions, but wouldn't it be disappointing if those around you answered the questions for you and didn't feel that you were an ethical person? Let's all try to keep Nevada out of the press by doing the right thing even when no one is looking.