Armtech Vendor

This scenario was prepared by the Center for Ethics, Responsibilities, and Values, College of Saint Catherine, St. Paul, Minn.

Position One: Tell Her

You are Aaron Smith, manager of technical operations for High Plains Communications. Beyond your normal responsibilities, you have been asked to take major responsibility for a large purchase of unusual equipment for your group. The initial order is for $250,000 and much more is likely to be ordered.

Normally a bidding process involving a central directory of approved vendors would be used, but because of the unusual nature of this material, a direct approach was made to Armtech, a fast-growing young company with a solid reputation in its field.

The sales representative for Armtech, Henry Buben, begins meeting with you, always taking you out to lunch as his guest and then returning to your office. Before long, he shares some ski tickets for a couple of nice mountain resorts nearby.

One day, as negotiations near a conclusion, you and Henry are casually chatting about your families and Henry takes an interest in your oldest daughter's plans. She is about to graduate from college and is job hunting. Henry says, "Send her over. I've got an opening that might be a good fit for her."

Would you tell your daughter to give Henry a call?

Yes. The responsibility for negotiating with Armtech is mine, but the final decision will be with several people. As a result, there is no chance of our being persuaded by Armtech's employment of my daughter and thus there is no conflict of interest.

Everybody gets their start by meeting someone who can help them. There is nothing wrong with my daughter meeting someone connected to my business. If she is not qualified they will not hire her.

Position Two: Don't Tell Her

You are Aaron Smith, manager of technical operations for High Plains Communications. Beyond your normal responsibilities, you have been asked to take major responsibility for a large purchase of unusual equipment for your group. The initial order is for $250,000 and much more is likely to be ordered.

Normally a bidding process involving a central directory of approved vendors would be used, but because of the unusual nature of this material, a direct approach was made to Armtech, a fast-growing young company with a solid reputation in its field.

The sales representative for Armtech, Henry Buben, begins meeting with you, always taking you out to lunch as his guest and then returning to your office. Before long, he shares some ski tickets for a couple of nice mountain resorts nearby.

One day, as negotiations near a conclusion, you and Henry are casually chatting about your families and Henry takes an interest in your oldest daughter's plans. She is about to graduate from college and is job hunting. Henry says, "Send her over. I've got an opening that might be a good fit for her."

Would you tell your daughter to give Henry a call?

No. Henry's attempt to win my favor by employing my daughter is part of a continuing attempt to persuade me by buying me things like meals and ski tickets. If he is willing to break the rules in the process of negotiation he may not be the contractor we want. Using my professional connections for personal gain is immoral and wrong.

If my daughter did get a job there and we chose to give the contract to someone else, it could be damaging to her career, since they might lose interest in employing her.

Can Food and Water Be Denied?

This scenario was adapted from *The Nurse's Dilemma* by B. L. Tate. (Geneva, Switzerland: International Council of Nurses, 1977)

Position One: Feed Her

You are an employee of a rehabilitation hospital. One of the patients in your care is a 24-year-old woman, Ann, who was the victim of an automobile accident two years ago. Ann did not regain consciousness after the accident and for the past two years your hospital has been providing food and water to her through a tube.

Ann's family has visited every week since her admission to your hospital. During the last visit they again asked if there was any possibility of Ann regaining consciousness. It is your opinion and the opinion of the rest of the medical staff that recovery is extremely unlikely. As a result of that report, Ann's family has requested that food and water be discontinued, which will, of course, result in death.

What do you do?

Medical practitioners are responsible for making decisions about medical treatment issues. Giving food and water is not medical treatment. Access to food and water is a primary right of human beings, whether or not they are helpless. Therefore, food and water should continue to be provided for Ann.

Removing food and water is not just allowing someone to die. The goal of removing food and water would be to make sure Ann died, just like killing her. It would be no different from administering a lethal injection.

Even if giving food and water were a medical treatment there is no reason to withhold them. It cannot be argued that it is a useless treatment or that it is a burden, since Ann needs them to live.

It also cannot be argued that because she is unconscious Ann is just a body and not a person. The fact that we cannot cure her does not mean we cannot care for her. If she were just a body, the logical conclusion would be to get rid of her; few people would accept this argument. Removing food and water is equivalent to getting rid of a body.

Position Two: Withhold Treatment

You are an employee of a rehabilitation hospital. One of the patients in your care is a 24-year-old woman, Ann, who was the victim of an automobile accident two years ago. Ann did not regain consciousness after the accident and for the past two years your hospital has been providing food and water to her through a tube.

Ann's family has visited every week since her admission to your hospital. During the last visit they again asked if there was any possibility of Ann regaining consciousness. It is your opinion and the opinion of the rest of the medical staff that recovery is extremely unlikely. As a result of that report, Ann's family has requested that food and water be discontinued, which will, of course, result in death.

What do you do?

Administering food and water is a medical treatment rather than ordinary care in the case of unconscious patients because a feeding tube must be inserted either through the esophagus or the abdominal wall. This procedure often necessitates restraining the patient, and it involves risks. Therefore, just like any other medical treatment, it should be discontinued in some cases.

While circumstances that justify withholding food and water are rare, in some cases it is legitimate to do so. Food and water should be withheld when "the improvement in nutritional and fluid balance, though achievable, could be of no benefit to the patient" or when "the burdens of receiving the treatment may outweigh the benefit." In some cases nutrition is of no benefit and the risks associated with giving nutrition make it a burden.

Just a hundred years ago it was not feasible to administer food and water in this way. Undoubtedly many people died of a lack of food and water in what was then considered a natural process. In some cases, such as Ann's, it should still be considered a natural process.

Censorship

Position One: Let Him Review the Editorials

As the editor of your school newspaper, you recently wrote an editorial for the paper that criticized the school administration because of the way they enforced the disciplinary policy. The assistant principal of the school decided that your editorial undermined his authority and has asked you to submit all subsequent editorials for review before the paper is printed.

Should you agree to submit your editorials to the assistant principal?

The assistant principal has every right to approve the editorials published in the paper. The right to a free press guaranteed by the Bill of Rights doesn't necessarily apply to a high school newspaper, since our paper is a training experience and we are dependent on adults to make it possible. Without them we wouldn't survive. Besides, all our funding comes from the school budget.

The purpose of a high school education is to learn from the adults around us who are our teachers. We have a responsibility to live up to their expectations. To ignore what they say doesn't make any sense.

Position Two: Publish or Perish

As the editor of your school newspaper, you recently wrote an editorial for the paper that criticized the school administration because of the way they enforced the disciplinary policy. The assistant principal of the school decided that your editorial undermined his authority and has asked you to submit all subsequent editorials for review before the paper is printed.

Should you agree to submit your editorials to the assistant principal?

The first amendment gives us the right to publish without interference or censorship. It does not make any difference that we are a school newspaper. We work on this paper to learn how to write and create a quality product just like a city paper. Having the freedom to publish what we think is right is the main purpose of a newspaper. Taking away that freedom makes us a propaganda mouthpiece for the school administration.

The purpose of a high school education is to learn how to think for ourselves. Censoring our paper is the wrong way to do that.

Competition

Position One: Competitive Sports Are Healthy

In 1953, two American universities were playing a football game that was critical to the national ranking of each team. In the closing seconds of the first half, Team B was inside the five-yard line of Team A. The clock was running and there was only enough time for one more play, if the clock could be stopped. Team B, behind by one touchdown and one extra point, had used all its time-outs. A player from Team B fell to the ground as if injured, and the officials quickly called a time-out so that the 'injured' player could receive attention. While the clock was stopped, the quarterback of Team B was able to call a play, a substitution was made for the injured player, and the members of Team B lined up to run a play. They ran the play, scored a touchdown, successfully kicked the extra point, and went to the locker room at the half with the score now tied. Oddly enough, a nearly identical situation occurred at the end of the second half, with Team B again behind by one touchdown and one extra point. Again, a Team B player feigned an injury and his team was able to score a touchdown and an extra point to end the game in a tie.[1]

Does participating in competitive sports encourage immoral behavior and deceptive actions like this one?

Participating in competitive sports is undeniably a positive experience. Douglas MacArthur said, "Participation in competitive sport is a vital character builder which molds the youth of our country for their roles as custodians of the republic."[2] Competition helps develop desirable personality traits and encourages discipline, persistence, teamwork, and performance under pressure. Competition is a vital part of our society and sports help prepare for it. Delattre says,

> The claim of competitive athletics to importance rests squarely on their providing us opportunities for self discovery, for concentration and intensity of involvement, for being carried away by the demand of the contest . . . with a frequency seldom matched anywhere. . . . This is why it is a far greater success in competitive athletics to have played well under pressure of a truly worthwhile opponent and lost than to have defeated less worthy or unworthy ones where no demands were made.

Team competition is the highest form of cooperation, since without the cooperation of teammates and the other team, there would be no competition. Competitors cooperate with each other by following the rules in order to challenge each other's skill level and to improve their own skills. Competition is a means to self-improvement.

---

[1] Fraleigh, W. P. (1984). Right Actions in Sport. Champaign, Ill: Human Kinetics Publishers, p. 3.

[2] Ibid, p. 17–18.

Position Two: Competitive Sports Are Unhealthy

In 1953, two American universities were playing a football game that was critical to the national ranking of each team. In the closing seconds of the first half, Team B was inside the five-yard line of Team A. The clock was running and there was only enough time for one more play, if the clock could be stopped. Team B, behind by one touchdown and one extra point, had used all its time-outs. A player from Team B fell to the ground as if injured, and the officials quickly called a time-out so that the 'injured' player could receive attention. While the clock was stopped, the quarterback of Team B was able to call a play, a substitution was made for the injured player, and the members of Team B lined up to run a play. They ran the play, scored a touchdown, successfully kicked the extra point, and went to the locker room at the half with the score now tied. Oddly enough, a nearly identical situation occurred at the end of the second half, with Team B again behind by one touchdown and one extra point. Again, a Team B player feigned an injury and his team was able to score a touchdown and an extra point to end the game in a tie.[1]

Does participating in competitive sports encourage immoral behavior and deceptive actions like this one?

The consequences of competition are undoubtedly negative. Competition encourages selfish and egotistical behavior. For someone to be successful somebody else must be defeated and denied what both sides want.

Competitive sports may develop desirable personality traits in winners but it discourages the healthy development of those who lose, since they don't see any good outcome of their efforts. Competition motivates people to win at all costs, without regard to the damage to others. They encourage people to equate morality with "not getting caught." The opponent is viewed as "bad," is "hated," or given undesirable stereotypes. Ogilview and Tutko say,

> We found no empirical support for the tradition that sport builds character. . . . It seems that the personality of the ideal athlete is not the result of any molding process, but comes out of the ruthless selection process that occurs at all levels of sport. . . .[2]

Those athletes who do have positive character traits probably would have them even if they never played a sport. In fact, they may have those characteristics in spite of playing sports.

The value of competition in our society is highly overrated. The ability to cooperate with others and work together are more desirable and a better preparation for life.

---

[1] Fraleigh, W. P. (1984). *Right Actions in Sport.* Champaign, Ill: Human Kinetics Publishers, p. 3.

[2] Simon, Robert. (1985). *Sports and Social Values.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, p. 15--16.