

Scenario: John is an employee at a local food chain. If employees work a 6-hour shift, they are entitled to one free meal according to the company's policy. John did not eat lunch before he started his shift at 2pm. He decided to eat a meal when he arrived to work. His manager, Trish, checked him out and allowed his meal to be comped before she left for the day. Four hours into John's shift, he was hungry again. Lionel, the assistant manager for the night shift and arrived to work after John, allowed John to eat another meal at break and did not ask for payment. What should John Do?

Ethical Reasoning Journal

1. The important facts for this ethical problem consists of the company policy. The company policy clearly outlines that six-hour shift employees are entitled to one free meal while they work. Also important to the problem is that John already had his meal as well as the fact that the manager who gave him his first meal has already left for the day.
2. The ethical issue here as defined: Should John accept an additional free meal from the shift manager?
3. The stakeholders for this problem are: John, his co-workers, his managers, the customers, and finally the company.
4. The consequences for not speaking up and mentioning that he has already had his one free meal could end up being enormous if every employee made this same decision. First, he could lose the free meal privilege for everyone. If he does not tell the assistant manager, the assistant manager could be in trouble, which would get John in trouble. John could lose his job, since this is considered stealing from the company. If many employees made the decision to eat food that isn't guaranteed to them and they didn't pay for, the company would lose money. When company's lose money, they have to cut employees hours or they have to increase food prices. Neither of those decisions are good for the company's growth and over the long term, this could cause the company to lose value and potentially go out of business.
5. As for the obligations, John should feel obligated to let the assistant manager know that he has already had his meal and also be ready to pay for the additional meal. This is what would be

“right” in the sense of justice and the Golden Rule, but also what is legal. Any other option would be stealing, which is against the law.

6. John should protect his integrity with this company. Even though John is probably not going to work for this food chain for the rest of his life, he should always protect his professional integrity because he won't know how that will affect his future. One thing is certain, not looking out for your professional integrity is bound to catch up to him at some point. John should want his present and future employers to believe that he is honest, hardworking, and wants to do a good job.
7. Potential Options here can go beyond whether he tells or he doesn't tell. His employer might be interested in potential options if this is a problem that happens often. John could suggest a discounted second meal for employees. He could suggest a ticket system. Employees for that week could get a ticket for their shifts. They write their name on their ticket and this is what they pay for. That way, managers won't have to keep up with if the employee has used their meal that shift or not. Employers appreciate employees who come up with potential solutions to problems. Plus, that makes John look good!
8. I would hope that John's gut tells him that he should do the right thing. I know that in my experience with finding money on the ground, turning in wallets, etc. my gut always tells me to do the right thing, even though I may not see the big deal. I want to do what I would want someone to do for me or my company.
9. John should tell. Any opposing arguments will come from people who don't believe that this matters. They may say, “who cares?”, or “you won't get caught,” or “it's the manager's fault he didn't catch it.” These are not excuses to do the wrong thing. John has to answer to himself, ultimately, and this means- he needs to rest at night knowing he did the right thing.