



Stewardship of Company Assets

Part 2 - Connecting Character

Respect for Personal Property

It's all about respect. We need to have a basic level of respect for personal property no matter who the owner is or how we feel about him or her. The ability to put aside your feelings and show respect is a sign of a healthy, strong character.

Personal Property Rights

“Property rights” is a relevant workplace concept. The principle of property rights extends far beyond the rights of a farmer to till his land or a builder to construct a building. Your property rights extend to everything you own. You have rights as the owner of your stuff. Since you bought it, another person does not have the right to break it, steal it, or use it without your permission. The exact same principle applies to the property that you come into contact with each day.

Whose property rights are involved? In the workplace, you must consider all kinds of property rights:

- Your company's property rights – company owned property
- Your coworker's property rights – company controlled by your coworkers (i.e. their tools, vehicles, etc) and their personal property
- Your business partners (suppliers, contractors, and vendors) – either their real property or intellectual property
- Your customers – their private information
- Others with whom you come into regular contact

Problems and Myths of Property Rights

Oftentimes, we approach respect for private property with a skewed point of view. We tend to get caught up in perceptions, ideologies, biases, and issues that have little to do with the facts of ownership and the principles of respecting that ownership.



Property Rights Principles

Principle #1: Nothing in life is free.

Principle #2: Someone owns everything.

Principle #3: Someone pays for everything.

The problem comes when we forget these principles we dehumanize the whole concept of private property. Here are some examples:

What we might say: "The government paid for it, so it doesn't matter."

Reality: Your hard-earned tax dollars paid for it. It does matter.

What we might say: "It's such a small expense. The company can afford it."

Reality: The Company bought it; it belongs to them and not you.

What we might say: "He or she doesn't deserve it."

Reality: Respect for private property is not based on whether or not someone deserves that respect.

Myths of Property Rights

Myth #1 - Possession is 9/10 of the law.

Myth #2 - Someone else who can afford it will pay for it.

Myth #3 - We all use it so it's public property.

Myth #4 - I contributed something so I can do what I want.

Myth #5 - Nobody else cares so the owner doesn't either.

Character Connection

How we respect someone else's property shows how well we respect them. Would you carelessly break something that a friend loaned you? No, because you respect that person. Although the relationship between you and your company is different, the principle is the same. If you break or steal something that belongs to your company, it shows a profound lack of respect.

Here is how your character is reflected in your treatment of company property.

1. You show a fundamental respect for your company, which means that you respect its customers, partners, and all the people in your company.
2. You understand the Golden Rule as it relates to private property. You treat the property of others the same way you want your property to be treated.



3. You demonstrate your honesty and integrity. You don't steal, abuse, or use someone else's property for your personal gain. It's not about how you "feel," it's about who you are!
4. You are not simply doing what you want to do or what you feel like doing, – but you are operating with mind and character engaged which is making you a stronger person.

Understand that the character benefits will transfer into your personal life as well.

- People will trust you.
- You will have more consistency in your ethical and social behavior.
- Your character and perspective will deepen.
- You will become more principled and balanced.