

Broaching the Subject of Professional Behavior

As I was walking down the row of cubicles late Friday afternoon, thinking about the glorious weekend ahead, I saw that another student actuary at Excellent & Reliable Insurance Co. had lingered at his desk after quitting time.

“Hey, Joey, you need to pack up and go instead of staring at a blank computer monitor,” I said.

“Oh, I’m just thinking about something,” he said.

“Well, let’s think about it at a table outside the Golden Ale microbrewery, while sipping a couple of cold ones.”

We headed down to the corner, sat down, and got our drinks—lemonade for Joey; I had forgotten he was not a drinker.

“So, what’s on your mind on this beautiful day? You really look gloomy,” I said.

“No, I’m not gloomy, I just am not sure how to handle a situation. It’s about Martha.”

Joey explained that he had accidentally seen a copy of Martha’s résumé that she had left in a copy machine, and it stated that she had managed a group of four other actuaries doing the pricing and product development for the new triple-tiered bonus-fixed indexed annuity product.

“She wasn’t the project manager; Mark was. She just did one piece of the model for the new product.

Although she’s been here for nine years, she’s just an

associate. Mark is a fellow with 12 years experience.”

“Whoa, buddy,” I said. “That is not good. Have you talked to her about it?”

“Oh, I don’t want to do that. It’s not really my business. But if she applies at Up & Coming Life and Annuity, my old friend Robert will call and ask me about her. It will sound weird if I suddenly don’t have anything to say.”

“Yeah, he’ll surely notice that,” I agreed. “Maybe you shouldn’t talk to him about the other people, even if you just have good things to say about them.”

Joey looked down. “On the other hand, I don’t want to tell him she’s got a misstatement on her résumé, when I just found out by accident.”

He went on. “I’ve been reading the Code of Professional Conduct, since I’m hoping to get my associateship in the SOA next year. I can’t decide if giving out your résumé is a professional service that is subject to our code or not. In a way, a prospective employer could be a principal, and you are writing your résumé as an actuary. On the other hand, you’re not getting paid to write your résumé.”

“In any event,” he said, “the code clearly expects us to be professional and truthful in all situations.”

Joey turned to me. “Since I’m not a member of any actuarial society, I’m not required to report a violation of the code to the ABCD. I know that the ABCD considers complaints from non-members, but I really don’t think Martha should have to go through an investigation, a hearing, and so on for just a puffed-up résumé.”

I shook my head. “Joey, you are thinking too hard. It’s simpler than you think. It doesn’t matter if a résumé is a professional service or not, since Precept 1 of the code requires an actuary to act honestly and to always uphold the reputation of the actuarial profession. If Martha’s exaggeration of her experience gets out, that could affect the reputation of actuaries.”

“And get this,” I went on. “My friend Susan is taking exams given by the Casualty Actuarial Society, and she says that this year the CAS is requiring agreement to comply with a ‘Code of Professional Ethics for Candidates’

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and has a procedure for investigating non-compliance and even imposing discipline. Its candidate code doesn't just apply to exam dishonesty; it applies to the candidate's work as well."

Joey nodded his head slowly.

I continued. "Also, if you wait until you're a member to worry about it, you're going to look pretty silly reporting something that's several months or a year old. You don't have to be a member of any actuarial organization to make a complaint to the ABCD."

I took a sip of my beer. "You know what, Joey? You should talk to Martha first. You may be helping her in the long run. I mean, if Martha gets a job with that misstatement, she'll be in bigger trouble after she has the job. Although participants in ABCD complaints and investigations are asked to hold them in

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confidence, surely the violation would be a material one if she actually got a job with the résumé. She might have to tell her new employer about the misstatement to resolve the violation."

"Instead of agonizing over whether you're required to make a complaint about Martha, why don't you just tell her about what you found?" I continued. "I'll bet that if she knows that you know about the misstatement on her résumé, she'll correct it. Claiming that she has that experience that

she doesn't truly have could put her in a job that she won't be able to do.

I put my mug down. "If she really refuses to correct the résumé, call the folks at the ABCD and ask their advice. All the contact information is on their website at www.abcdboard.org."

Joey took a long sip of his lemonade.

I added, "You are really being a worrier about the possible burden on Martha, too. I've looked at the ABCD website, and they don't go through the same process for every complaint. Why investigate if everyone agrees that the facts are clear? The ABCD can dismiss a complaint or provide guidance to an actuary without a formal investigation or hearing."

"Come on, Joey," I said. "Let's forget about work until Monday. You can talk to Martha then."

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