

# Miniwaukan News

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*You may lie to your spouse,  
your friends, your children,  
your boss but you should  
never lie to yourself.*

Are you calling me a liar?  
Well, yes.

At the beginning and throughout my course I continually stress to the participants the virtue of self-honesty. “You may lie to your spouse, your friends, your children, your boss but you should never lie to yourself” I tell them. Individuals who lie to themselves are usually self-serving individuals and are far less likely to respond to any “ethics” training.

At the beginning of my Introduction To Ethical Issues on Indian Reservation course I had the participants fill out a survey. The survey is a pre and post survey. As with most pre and post surveys it is designed to determine if the information presented had any measurable impact on the participants.

Because our survey asked questions about the participant's work habit it required a certain degree of self-honesty. We were expecting a certain degree of dishonesty by the participants due to the nature of our questions. After all who wants to admit that they are basically a dishonest and unethical worker? What we were anticipating that after taking our course the participants' answers would change to reflect more self-honesty.

For example the question "Do you get to work more than ten minutes late?"

We expected many of the participants to answer, "Never" at the beginning of the course, which correlated to a score of zero. We were right; many of the participants did check "Never" while taking the pre test. However, what we had hoped to discover was that after taking our course the participants would practice a little more self-honesty and change their answers to one of the other answers (1 – 2 times/ week, 2-3 times/week, all the time). Sad to say we were mistaken. After we finished analyzing the first set of data from the Tribal Leaders Institute courses all we can conclude logically is that a bunch of people lied through their teeth on their answers.

**Now, why would anyone lie on an anonymous questionnaire ?**

- For example, we had a 24-item questionnaire, [example questions included at the end of this article], that asked people how often they did things like come to work ten minutes late or more, talk on the phone on personal business for more than five minutes during the work day and so on.
- The most common score, on both the pre and post tests, from more than a fourth of those who took the courses, was ZERO
- That might make some people say none of these folks needed to take the course because before they even took it they were perfect.
- You can reasonably expect people to lie on the pre-test but after taking a course on ethics, one that strongly stresses honesty, you would think they would change their post test answer to reflect twinges of conscience.
- I am sure there is some individual who will read this and say, it is possible that those people did not lie. To which we say, yeah right!

We say they lied on the questionnaire. Now why would anyone lie on an anonymous questionnaire? To answer our question we will paraphrase a poster presented at the 14th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Society:

*Self-serving individuals have no self-honesty when assessing their character. Instead, they perceive their own abilities, behaviors, and attributes through their own self-serving bias. They often compare themselves with others who they*

*imagine may have poor ethics and avoid comparison with those who have better ethics. They also distort the character of individuals who have better ethics in an effort to invalidate a comparison between them and highly ethical individuals.*

Simply put, if people lie long enough they will do it even when they do not have to. How do we know people lied?

Logic. First of all, how many people NEVER come to work late, NEVER talk to anyone on the phone, NEVER take a sick day unless sick, NEVER use the printer at work to print off something for home or school?

Annmaria took the questionnaire and did not score a zero on the survey and she is a pretty ethical person. She said she very often arrives at work ten minutes late or more. If she has a meeting when someone might be kept waiting she says she does make every effort to arrive on time. However, punctuality is not one of her strong points. When she records her hours, she records the hours she actually showed up. She is not a morning person but very often works until 7 p.m. Ann would not have taken a job that required her to be there at 8 a.m. because she just wouldn't make it.

Ann goes on to say she generally doesn't answer cell phone calls during business hours, and the only people outside of those she would talk to on business who have her office number are her husband, her daughters and her youngest daughter's school. If any of those people call, she will answer it. So, while she doesn't spend lots of time on the phone, she admits she can't say she never talks on the phone. Ann can say she is an ethical employee because she works the hours for which she is paid.

I did not take the survey however, because I wrote it and I know I would never score a zero on any of the questions. Although I had my good points, I was a typical Joe The Tribal Worker, especially when I worked for a tribal organization. Therefore, unlike Ann, I cannot say I was an ethical worker.

What I do have going for me is a degree of self-honesty that prevented me from going completely to the dark side of tribal workplace ethics. I was late for work many times, but I rarely missed a day of work and worked evening and weekends when I had to without complaining. When it came to work I was a procrastinator but I rarely missed a deadline. Unfortunately, I have to confess I spent many minutes/hours on the phone that were not related to work.

So back to those people who scored zero on most of the questions. If the quality of life on our reservations is going to improve we need more SELF-HONESTY. Without more self-honesty we will continue to have 40 – 80% unemployment, we will always have a housing shortage, our children taking their cue from us will continue to miss upward of 20 days of school per year and will more than likely drop out. Hundreds of thousands of dollars will continue to pour into the reservations but have little positive impact due to the lack of self-honesty. We will continue to elect leaders not because of their qualifications and leadership ability but for “what they can do for me”.

So if you are one of those people who answered “Never” and received a score of zero on our questionnaire and wonder why I am calling you a liar --- Well... it is because you are one

## You, Employee – Ethics Questionnaire Sample Questions

How often do you .....

**Get to work more than ten minutes late?**

- (0) Never
- (1) 1-2 times/week
- (2) 2-3 times/week
- (3) All the time

**Claim hours worked on a timesheet for hours not worked?**

- (0) Never
- (1) 1-2 times/week
- (2) 2-3 times/week
- (3) All the time

**Do not attend a community activity that your employer lets off work early for you to attend?**

- (0) Never
- (1) 1-2 times/week
- (2) 2-3 times/week
- (3) All the time

**Use sick leave when you are not sick?**

- (0) Never
- (1) 1-2 times/week
- (2) 2-3 times/week
- (3) All the time

**Take more than an hour lunch break?**

- (0) Never
- (1) 1-2 times/week
- (2) 2-3 times/week
- (3) All the time

**Lie about the reason you are tardy?**

- (0) Never
- (1) 1-2 times/week
- (2) 2-3 times/week
- (3) All the time

**Miss work?**

- (0) Never
- (1) 1-2 times/week
- (2) 2-3 times/week
- (3) All the time

**Lie about the reason(s) you missed work?**

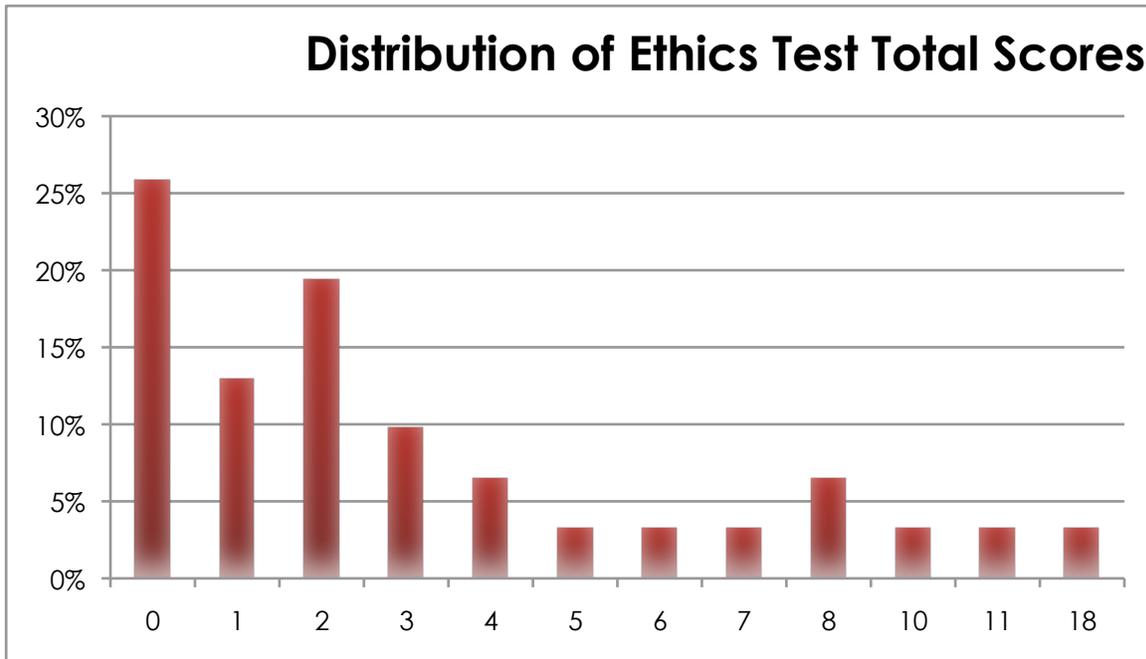
- (0) Never
- (1) 1-2 times/week
- (2) 2-3 times/week
- (3) All the time

**Don't punch out to leave work for personal business?**

- (0) Never
- (1) 1-2 times/week
- (2) 2-3 times/week
- (3) All the time

**Don't hand in leave slips, hoping employer forgets (salaried workers)?**

- (0) Never
- (1) 1-2 times/week
- (2) 2-3 times/week
- (3) All the time



The figure above shows the distribution of total scores on the Employee Ethics test. As you can see, over one-fourth of the respondents scored zero, meaning they claimed to have never done any of the twenty-four unethical acts mentioned above, including none of those mentioned on the previous page. Over 25% scored a 1 or 2, meaning that they only did one or two of those items once or twice a week.

***If you would like to register for the latest on-line course, *Courageous and Ethical Managers*, email Dr. Erich Longie [ericstev@spiritleakeconsulting.com](mailto:ericstev@spiritleakeconsulting.com) to get a username and password, good for the next month***

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