

To: T. Powell

From: T. Reardon **TR**

Subject: Definition and Description—Ethics of Teaching Creationism Alone

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The purpose of this memo is to give an in-depth definition and description of work ethics using examples based around Technical Writing and Editing.

## **Introduction**

What am I going to do and how will I organize it?

I am going begin by defining ethics in a denotative way, combining the definitions from several sources and a simple example of work ethics in Technical Writing to create what I understand to be the definition of work ethics. I will then give a more complex example of an ethical issue in Technical Writing that I can draw several solutions from. With these solutions, I will describe each, beginning with the least effective, and explain why it would or would not work, eventually leading to the best solution. Using these results, I will also provide an illustration of a tree, metaphorically showing where each option stood in hierarchy. The examples and clarifying illustration will then give me an idea of what I, personally, would have recommended and how the situation could have been avoided.

## **Definition**

According to *Technical Communication* by Mike Markel, ethical obligations to the employer include: competence and diligence, generosity, honesty and candor, confidentiality, and loyalty

(Markel 21). According to a University of Georgia professor, “the work ethic is a cultural norm that advocates being personally accountable and responsible for the work that one does and is based on a belief that work has intrinsic value” (Hill). Gathering from each of these definitions, work ethics are workplace guidelines that allow you to do your work efficiently without breaking the ethical values of the culture in general.

### Example

If your professor assigned you a serious history textbook that said God was the genetic father of all human kind, this would be an ethical issue of honesty, and competence. The technical writer of said textbook, Roxanne Roxy, not only got the theory of God creating the universe and humankind wrong, but she also lied by omission by not also giving the possibility of the Big Bang Theory and evolution.

In a book review of *Shades of Gray*, a book on ethics in Technical Communication, the authors gave a simple definition of work ethics out of the book, “doing what is right to achieve what is good” (Kynell). The dishonesty and non-competence of the above case breaks this rule because the students have the right to know all possible explanations of the beginning of the earth until one is proven, and Roxy should not have been writing about the subject if she did not know enough about it to be accurate.

### Description

Now Roxy has gone to church and learns that she was wrong in saying that God is the biological father to all human beings. Roxy changes her book and comes out with a new edition,

but instead of changing all of the problems with it, she only changes the aspect she has learned about in church. The new edition now says that God created the earth and that he created the first man and woman; however, it still mentions nothing about the possibility of evolution or the Big Bang Theory. Because the book now has an accurate telling of creationist theory yet still has issues with the lie of omission, the ethical problem gets more complicated.

### Solutions

When Roxy begins receiving complaints in the mail from angry parents asking why their children are not being taught about evolution as well as creationism and happy letters from parents who love her method of teaching, she is left with a dilemma of how to fix the problem without angering more parents. She can:

- A. Leave the book the way it is, only teaching creationism. The problem with this is that she will probably lose customers (the angry parents) because if people don't get what they want out of a service they pay for, they look for it somewhere else.
- B. Add in information on evolution while still basing the book around creationism so as not to change the entire basis of the book. The problem with this is that though the students would get a glimpse into evolution, it is likely the parents would want an unbiased view on both ideas.
- C. She can change her book to be an unbiased textbook with views from both sides, possibly even co-writing the next edition with someone with knowledge on evolution. Though it would take some of the credit from her, she would likely get support from all ends because the teachings would show both sides of the story, rather than biasing toward one

or the other, giving students the opportunity to learn both evolution and creationism and the choice of which they would like to believe in. See Figure 1.1:

Figure 1.1: The Fruit of the Tree

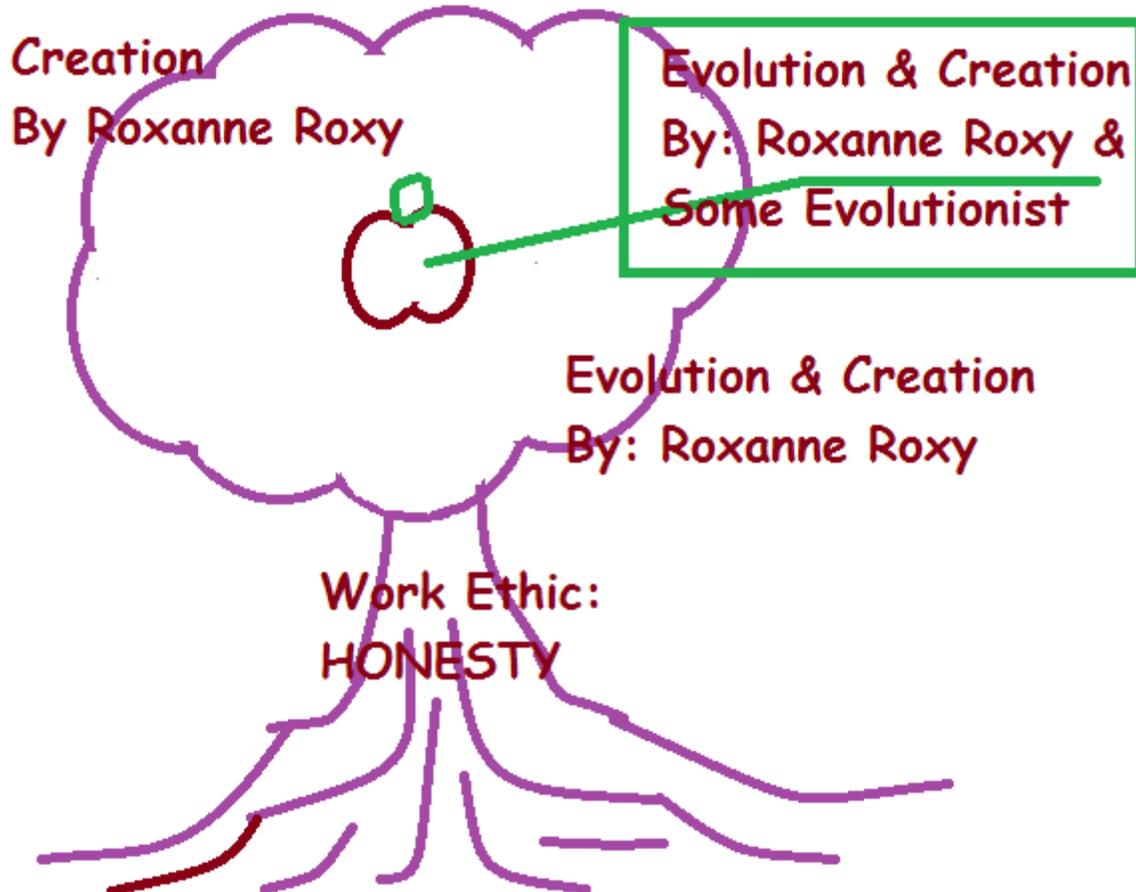


Figure 1.1 caption: The fruit is what people want from a tree, and the best solution is what people want from an ethical dilemma.

## Conclusion

Ethics are the guidelines in a work situation that explain how to do the right thing based on moral standards. I recommend that Roxy find a co-writer and change her book to include unbiased knowledge of both evolution and creationism. This solves her ethical issue of honesty and competence because not only did she begin by going to church to learn the correct theory of

creation, but she also in the end incorporates someone with competence in evolutionary theory so that both sides could be unbiased and knowledgeable.

#### Works Cited

Hill, Roger B. *On-Line Lessons: Lesson 2- What is Work Ethic?*. University of Georgia, 1999.

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Kynell, Teresa and Brenda R. Sims. "Ethics in Technical Communication: Shades of Gray (Book

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Markel, Mike. *Technical Communication*. 10th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. Print.