

Excellence through Ethics™

Session 7

Moving Out—When Businesses Move to Another Country



Middle School



Junior Achievement®



Excellence through Ethics
Middle Grades
Session 7

Moving Out—When Businesses Move to Another Country

Content: Ethics, Labor Costs, and International Business

Methods: Group Work

JA Foundational Pillars: Ethics and Work Readiness, Financial Literacy

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Acknowledgements

Sponsorship

JA Worldwide® (Junior Achievement) gratefully acknowledges Deloitte & Touche USA LLP for its commitment to the development and implementation of the supplementary program *Excellence through Ethics*. JA Worldwide appreciates its relationship with Deloitte & Touche USA LLP to develop and implement vital and innovative programs designed to foster ethical decision-making skills.

Moving Out—When Businesses Move to Another Country

Overview

Students learn that many companies reduce their labor costs by moving production operations to other countries. They examine the economic pros and cons of such choices, and then analyze those decisions in light of ethical considerations.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Read about *maquiladoras*, foreign-owned manufacturing facilities in Mexico.
- Discover the economic value of *maquiladoras* to Mexican and American businesses.
- Analyze the ethical and business implications of using *maquiladoras*.

Preparation

Review the activity. Prepare the necessary copies and session materials.

Group work is incorporated into this session. You may consult with the teacher to determine how best to form the groups.

Post Key Terms and definitions in a visible place:

- **Ethics:** The standards that help determine what is good, right, and proper.
- **Maquiladoras:** Special businesses located in Mexico along the U.S. border that exist solely to add value to products from other countries.

Recommended Time

This session typically takes 45 minutes to complete. Ask the teacher to help you keep track of time.

Materials

- Advantages Fact Sheet (1 per student)
- Disadvantages Fact Sheet (1 per student)
- Pens or pencils (1 per student)

Presentation

Introduction (10 minutes)

Greet the students.

Define added value in the production of a good or service and give some examples. Use examples from your own business, if applicable. Ask what advantages there may be for a U.S. company to add value to its products in other countries. **Answers include:** lower business startup or operating costs, better availability of labor or materials, low shipping costs, many potential customers, and subsidies.

Tell students that they are now going to learn about **special businesses located in Mexico along the U.S. border that exist solely to add value to products from other countries.**

Explain to students that these businesses are called **maquiladoras** (mah-kee'lah-doe'rahs). Offer the following background facts on maquiladoras:

- Maquiladoras are assembly plants in Mexico that are owned by corporations from other countries.
- The countries that have the highest number of plants in Mexico are the United States, Japan, Spain, Korea, and China.
- Most plants are located within ten miles of the U.S. border between California and Texas.
- Parts are created by highly skilled workers in countries outside Mexico, and then brought for assembly into finished products—such as clothing, cars, electronics, or toys—by cheaper, less-skilled Mexican labor.
- However, inexpensive human resources are not all Mexico offers businesses. Maquiladoras enjoy duty-free import of the parts to be assembled, exclusion from import and export fees, and being taxed only on the value added to the products within Mexico.
- Since 1965, approximately 4,000 of these factories have been built along the border; they produce approximately 45 percent of Mexican exports, with total production well over \$35 billion per year.

Activity

Balancing Advantage and Disadvantages (30 minutes)

Distribute the Advantages Fact Sheet to students. Explain that they are going to read about the advantages of the maquiladora system. Tell students to pay particular attention to the economic incentives, or reasons, why so many U.S. corporations find these maquiladoras attractive.

Ask students to underline any examples of economic incentives they find while reading the fact sheet. Tell students they will have 5 minutes to complete the reading.

Next, ask for volunteers to tell you the economic incentives for U.S. businesses to build maquiladoras in Mexico. List these on the left side of the board. **Answers include:** lower construction costs, lower labor costs, low shipping costs, and no import or export fees.

Then, ask students how they think maquiladoras benefit Mexico and the Mexican people. List these on the right side of the board. **Answers include:** provide jobs, earn foreign exchange, and attract foreign investment.

Ask students if they see any disadvantages to the system for either U.S. companies, or the government and people of Mexico. Would they recommend that American companies use the maquiladora system?

Separate the class into four groups. Distribute the Disadvantages Fact Sheet. Tell students there are actually many critics of the maquiladora system and that the Disadvantages Fact Sheet will describe them. Tell students that they will have 5 minutes to read about the disadvantages of the maquiladora system.

When students have finished reading, assign each group one of the following roles:

Group 1: Members of this group will speak for the Mexican workers. While some are peasant workers who have improved their lives by working at the factories, others are union representatives who would like to increase Mexican wages and the standard of living to that of the United States.

Group 2: Members of this group will speak for the Mexican government. They want to improve life in Mexico by creating jobs, transferring technology, and attracting foreign investment. They also want to reduce tensions with the United States over illegal immigration. Some in this group are from the agencies charged with environmental protection and workplace safety. Both the government and the agencies are displeased with the violations of Mexican law that are taking place at the factories.

Group 3: Members of this group will speak for the Americans who favor the maquiladora system. Some members of this group are shareholders of various corporations that build maquiladoras. Others are workers who have found new jobs that support the business flowing to and from the border. And, there are government officials from border states who have seen increased trade and reductions in illegal immigration.

Group 4: Members of this group will speak for the Americans who oppose the maquiladora system. This is a diverse group made up of environmentalists, human rights groups, owners of companies being put out of business by free trade with Mexico, workers who have lost their jobs because of free trade with Mexico, and government officials from interior states who have seen increased unemployment and company bankruptcies.

Have the groups take 3-5 minutes to discuss their roles and the information available. Remind students that companies that are good corporate citizens have a responsibility to the communities in which they work, whether they work in the United States or in another country.

Then, tell students to work together in their groups to develop a win-win situation that satisfies the pros and cons of the maquiladora system. Ask groups to decide on a solution by which businesses can create quality, inexpensive products; invest in the surrounding communities; support foreign investment; and reduce the concerns of special-interest groups, like environmentalists or the newly unemployed. Ask students to keep these questions in mind, What are the ethical implications of the problems and solutions being raised? What are the unethical implications?

Have each group select a spokesperson to report their conclusions. Start with a student from Group 4.

Summary and Review (5 minutes)

Briefly review the vocabulary introduced in the session.

Review with students that in the activity, they read how American investment in Mexico produced an economic gain; however, other economic facts showed an economic loss.

Ask students at which point would it no longer make economic sense for the United States to permit free trade with Mexico? **Answer:** when an irreversible trend for net economic loss occurs.

Debrief the discussion by reminding students that ethical values are considered valid arguments, but cultural values and situations vary from one country to the next. What seems right in one country could be viewed entirely differently in another.

Ask students if it would be it right for American companies to base their standards of operation in Mexico on American cultural values? Is it ethical for companies to ignore environmental and safety concerns, and basic human rights just because it is legal in a country to do so? Allow a few minutes for the students to respond. Mention the importance of good corporate citizenship. Companies have a responsibility to the communities in which they work. Good ethics is good business.

Close by discussing the idea that there are universal values, and that developed nations have a responsibility to apply the lessons that are learned in undeveloped nations, while respecting the culture and customs of those countries.

Session Outline

Introduction

- Greet the students.
- Tell them that during today's session, they will learn about the concept of added value.
- Have students identify the advantages of U.S. companies, adding value to their products in other countries.

Activity

- Distribute Advantages Fact Sheet for silent reading.
- List the economic incentives for U.S. businesses to build maquiladoras.
- List the benefits of maquiladoras to the government and people of Mexico.
- Ask students if they see any disadvantages.
- Separate the class into four groups. Distribute Disadvantages Fact Sheet for silent reading.
- Assign each group one of the following roles: Mexican workers, Mexican government, Americans who favor the maquiladora system, and Americans who oppose it.
- Have groups create a win-win situation that satisfies the pros and cons of the maquiladora system.

Summary and Review

- Review the Key Terms for the session.
- Explain that economic decisions are based on net outcomes.
- Tell students that ethics are valid arguments, but cultural values and situations are different from one country to the next. What seems right in one country may seem wrong in another.
- Close by discussing the idea of universal values and the responsibility of developed nations to apply lessons learned in undeveloped nations.
- Thank the students for their participation.

Advantages Fact Sheet

Advantages of the Maquiladora (mah-kee'lah-doe'rah) System

Workers

The maquiladoras employ more than one million Mexican workers directly, and at least an equal amount indirectly. The majority of these workers is composed of young women who moved to the border from economically depressed rural areas in search of better lives. Without the maquiladoras, many would never have found credible employment and may have faced starvation. While work hours are long and often grueling, conditions are considered far better than other options.

Often times, a worker's family has illegally immigrated to the United States without them in search of employment. To join their families, they would have to pay smugglers large sums of money—with no guarantees of safety—to simply cross the border. It is believed that the availability of jobs near the border helps to prevent many Mexicans from illegally and dangerously crossing into the United States in search of employment.

Equal Rights

The maquiladoras have done much to forward the issue of equal rights in Mexico. By enabling women to earn their own wages, maquiladoras are providing them with independence. As a result, women workers at the plants are no longer dependent on their fathers or husbands for survival. The growing social class of working women is reshaping Mexican politics.

Compensation

Workers of the maquiladoras enjoy comparatively large salaries. In 1998, the typical Mexican earned around 26 pesos per day. Maquiladora workers earned nearly three times that: 70 pesos per day.

In addition, Mexican labor laws are often more generous than those of the United States. Women receive three-months, paid pregnancy leave. In the event of layoffs, Mexican workers are guaranteed at least 90 days' pay, plus 20 days' pay for each year on the job. Unlike their unskilled American counterparts, Mexican workers and their families are covered by medical insurance from the very first day of employment. They are even entitled to a fixed percentage of company profits as annual bonuses.

Economics

American companies have found that the maquiladoras provide a much-needed source of affordable human labor, complaining that it is difficult to hire employees in the United States who are willing to perform the same, menial tasks for minimum wage. And, due to favorable exchange rates, U.S. corporations are able to pay their Mexican workers less than one-tenth that of their American counterparts. Additionally, environmental and safety standards are less restrictive than those found in the United States, which further reduce production costs. The result helps companies keep the cost of their products low, making them more affordable for consumers. By combining U.S. business know-how with affordable Mexican labor, American firms are able to compete globally, earn higher profits, and invest in expansion.

For Mexico, the program has brought billions of dollars in foreign investment. It has created the greatest number of mid- and upper-management jobs in the country's history. By far, Mexican workers prefer to be employed in a foreign-owned maquiladora rather than one of their own national companies because of better pay, better treatment, and better benefits.

Disadvantages Fact Sheet

Disadvantages of the Maquiladora (mah-kee'lah-doe'rah) System

Workers

Most maquiladora employees work 10 hours per day, six days per week. They rarely see their families. While law prohibits hiring workers under age 16, children between the ages of 12 and 15 easily obtain false documents and are hired. The majority of workers in the maquiladora system are women from economically distraught areas because management often believes that they are less likely to go on strike and more likely to pay attention to detail.

Compensation

Wages have been reported as being between \$3.40 and \$8.50 per day. It is believed that Mexican labor laws are often ignored, so workers do not receive benefits. Even though the cost of living in Mexico is much lower than in the United States, paying weekly expenses such as rent, utilities, and food leaves only a couple of dollars a week for clothes, entertainment, or medical expenses. And, the cost of living near the border is about 30 percent higher than elsewhere in Mexico.

Environment

Environmental protection laws exist in Mexico, but are not well enforced. Slums have sprung up around the factories, as hundreds of thousands of workers invade the border in search of jobs at the maquiladoras. Because foreign firms are exempt from paying local taxes, local municipalities find it impossible to provide basic infrastructure, such as paved roads, sewers, running water, or even electricity. As a result, air and water pollution are serious problems along the border. Hazardous waste resulting from production is also a major cause of environmental damage. Waste is supposed to be shipped back to the United States, but it is frequently dumped illegally in Mexico.

Working Conditions

Maquiladora work environments can be dangerous because there are few Mexican laws regarding workplace safety and health. Those laws that do exist are often ignored. Rarely is protective gear required or worn. Warnings on chemical containers and other hazardous objects are often written in English, impossible for the Spanish-speaking workers to read.

Economics

It is estimated that only 1 percent of the component parts used in maquiladora assembly are produced in Mexico. Only unskilled labor is sought, and training workers to improve skills is not considered important.

Sources for Advantages Fact Sheet, and Disadvantages Fact Sheet:

<http://www.globalexchange.org>

<http://www.corpwatch.org>

http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/archive_mn/feb_1998-06mn.html

<http://heiwwww.unige.ch/humanrts/education/4thRSpring1998/WagesEarningPower.htm>

<http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/environment/3755>

Appendix

Welcome to Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics*

As a Junior Achievement (JA) volunteer or teacher, you are joining other teachers and volunteers from across the United States in providing students with a unique educational experience. Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics* offers students learning opportunities to share knowledge and information regarding ethics in business. JA strives to show students how business works, and to better evaluate organizations that conduct their operations in the right way.

Excellence through Ethics is designed to equip volunteers and teachers with supplemental, ethics-based activities for use with JA in-class programs for grades four through twelve. All these activities provide students with current and essential information about business ethics.

These activities are designed to reinforce students' knowledge and skills, teach them how to make ethical decisions, assist them in learning to think critically, and help them to be better problem-solvers. All the activities are hands-on, interactive, and group-focused to present the material to students with the best instructional methods.

Within these supplements, you will find sections to help you effectively implement the activities in your volunteer experience. Materials include: (a) an introductory discussion of business ethics, marketplace integrity, and the growing capacity of students for ethical decision-making; (b) activities and student materials that connect to and expand current classroom-based Junior Achievement programs; and (c) a functional glossary of terms relating to a wide spectrum of ethics, quality, service, and social responsibility considerations in business.

JA greatly appreciates your support of these important and exciting activities. If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org.aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the “*Excellence through Ethics* Survey” link located in the middle of the page.

Appendix

Introduction and Overview

- *How do I do the right thing in this situation?*
- *Should I be completely honest, even if it puts others in jeopardy?*
- *What kind of community do we want to be?*
- *How do we do what's best for the long term?*
- *Who should cover the cost of "doing the right thing"?*

These are all questions having to do with business ethics. They are valid and necessary questions, and good business people have asked them for generations. They form the backdrop of vital discussions as business, community, and political leaders grapple with significant issues. Many students would ask these questions, even if Junior Achievement hadn't developed this ethics curriculum.

Business Ethics Discussions Are Here To Stay

Business ethics has been in the spotlight for much of the past decade, especially as examples of wrongdoing come to light in the media. New technologies and international competitive pressures cause a steady focus on the question, "Is it possible to be competitively successful in business today and still operate in an honest and ethical manner?" The past decade has seen individuals search for deeper personal meaning in the workplace, which has contributed to lively ethics discussions in the business realm. For these reasons, the discussion of business ethics is not a passing fad; it's here to stay.

Many graduate schools of business have either required ethics coursework or integrated ethics principles throughout all areas of study. That is commendable. We believe this vital area of exposure and instruction also should happen at earlier ages and continue throughout the students' educational journey. Many of today's students haven't had access to a well-rounded education in economics and free enterprise or have come to see these in a very negative light. They have limited awareness of the extent to which good business leaders engage in the challenging exercises of ethical decision-making amid heavy competitive pressures. As students learn the general principles of economics and business, it's critical that these be underpinned with a strong foundation in ethics. This will accentuate the best in American business traditions, while laying the groundwork for students' continued evolution into future generations of leaders.

Integrity in the Marketplace?

Many adults and young people choose to believe that the marketplace is driven only by greed. They view it as bringing out only the worst in human behavior, demoralizing the human spirit, and driving out any sense of idealism. While elements of greed and extreme self-interest among some individuals cannot be denied, solid research has shown time and again that companies with a long-term focus on ethics and a broad consideration of stakeholders' interests are much more profitable than those lacking such a focus.

James A. Autry, in his book *Love and Profit: The Art of Caring Leadership*, said it well: "I do not doubt the presence of greed in the marketplace because I do not doubt the presence of greed in people. But, I also do not doubt the ennobling aspects of work, of the workplace, of the community, of endeavor, of

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the marketplace. So I choose to believe that most of the marketplace is driven by people who want to do good work for others and for themselves.”

Excellence through Ethics accepts the challenge of educating youth in the basics of economics and business while establishing a positive balance on the side of well-informed, ethical business practice. This may appear to place a heavy burden on Junior Achievement volunteers, who are not trained ethics experts. The following informational pages will not turn you into an ethics expert. That’s not what we’re striving for here. What students need most is meaningful interaction with people who are willing to engage in a discussion of these vital issues.

Lively Practitioners Rather Than Dry Theorists

This program is more about day-to-day ethics practice than the nuances of ethics theory. Some believe that working in business requires a disconnect from one’s personal ethics. We do not believe this is the case. Students need to know that what they learn about fairness and honesty in general also applies to business. While business ethics may address some specific areas of business practice, it’s not a separate and distinct specialty to be set apart from the general ethical principles that apply in other areas of life. Young people need to encounter the wisdom of age and experience that volunteers bring to the classroom.

Students’ Growing Capacity for Ethical Decision-Making

Excellence through Ethics is designed to foster discussions at the appropriate level for each age group. The curriculum developers have designed the ethics activities with sensitivity to student’s mental maturity. At the late elementary and middle-grades levels, students’ capacities for ethical reasoning tend toward good personal behavior as determined by adult rules and authority. In relationships, personal trust, loyalty, and respect are of paramount importance. For these students, corporate ethical behavior is viewed in much the same light as their own personal behavior: it’s governed by rules.

As students advance into high school, their ethical decision-making moves into the larger arena of social contracts and systems that guide and govern societal and group behavior. Here the rationality and utility of laws are scrutinized, as students become more capable of higher-ordered, principled thinking. Students are increasingly aware of the diversity of values among different cultures and communities. At this level, students’ capacities for processing the complex, ethical dilemmas that may be encountered in business are greatly enhanced.

You will gain confidence as you come to realize that conducting a robust, provocative discussion with students is more important than “having the right answer.” The activities have been designed to leave room for lively discussion and multiple points of view. Having the courage to share your own experiences is very valuable to students.

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You don't have to apologize for the excesses students may see in business. Don't assume responsibility for actions that are not your own, and do not try to defend the indefensible. While accentuating the fact that most businesses operate ethically, it's okay to scrutinize the unethical players in the marketplace who give business in general a bad name.

Continuing Education

Teaching this material to students will no doubt strengthen and enhance your own ethics awareness and continuing education. Some students will challenge your best reasoning capacities. Having your own support network of professional colleagues with whom you can share and discuss some of these issues is very valuable. It's also helpful to seek out colleagues with philosophical views that differ from your own. This serves as a valuable "cross-pollination" function because you will be able to understand and discuss a variety of views with students, as well as share students' perspectives with your colleagues. In this way, everyone learns.

Finally, please be assured that your contributions here have tremendous value to students and will serve to upgrade business ethics in the future. We're dealing with the future generation of leaders in their formative years. We can take pride in the fact that we've had a hand in shaping the very people who will be responsible for business ethics and social responsibility in the future.

Appendix

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Many educators, economists, businesspeople, and consultants have contributed to the development of *Excellence through Ethics*. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups for their efforts, creative talents, and support in creating these materials:

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Appendix

Excellence through Ethics Evaluation

Junior Achievement has discontinued all paper versions of program surveys. However, we greatly appreciate your comments and feedback about *Excellence through Ethics*. Please help us improve the quality of *Excellence through Ethics* by sharing your comments through our new online survey process. The online survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org/aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the *Excellence through Ethics* Survey link located in the middle of the page.

Thank you for participating in JA!



Excellence through Ethics Volunteer Survey

1. Including this session, how many individual sessions of Excellence through Ethics have you presented? _____

2. Do you feel that the students were engaged through this session?
 - A. Not at all
 - B. Somewhat engaged
 - C. Engaged
 - D. Very Engaged
 - E. Unsure

3. Do you feel the session was relevant to students?
 - A. Not relevant
 - B. Somewhat relevant
 - C. Relevant
 - D. Very relevant
 - E. Unsure

4. Do you feel students are more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?
 - A. Significantly more prepared
 - B. Somewhat more prepared
 - C. Somewhat less prepared
 - D. Significantly less prepared
 - E. Unsure

5. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being excellent), how would you rate the overall quality of the Excellence through Ethics session? _____

6. After this JA experience, how likely are you to volunteer for JA again?
 - A. More likely to volunteer
 - B. Less likely to volunteer
 - C. No more or less likely to volunteer
 - D. Unsure

7. What comments or suggestions do you have regarding the overall session (including format, content, etc.)?

Optional: City _____

State _____ Country _____

Email _____

Excellence through Ethics Student Survey

1. What grade are you in? _____

2. Please fill in the circle that best describes how you feel about the following statements.

There is no right or wrong answer.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree or disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This topic is very important. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am able to apply what I learned in this session to the real world. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The activities were interesting. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I learned something about ethics from this session. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

3. Do you feel more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?

- A. Significantly more prepared
- B. Somewhat more prepared
- C. Somewhat less prepared
- D. Significantly less prepared
- E. Unsure

4. I saw someone at my job taking money from the cash register, I would:

- A. Ask someone I trust what I should
- B. Tell a supervisor
- C. Talk to the person taking the money
- D. Do nothing
- E. Not sure

5. To help us better understand who you are, please answer the following questions: How do you describe your ethnicity (family background)? (Fill in all that apply)

- A. African American
- B. Asian American
- C. Latino (a) or Chicano (a)
- D. European American (white)
- E. Native American
- F. Other – how do you identify yourself? _____

6. Do you have any additional comments regarding this session?

Optional: City _____ State _____ Country _____