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Building trust through ethical culture – a guide for SME firms

Appraisals and recruitment



Demonstrating ethical behaviours: the questions firms should be asking

The insurance sector is seeing a much greater emphasis being put on the responsibilities and accountability of individual people.

This emphasis extends across both existing employees and new employees.

Firms are now expected to be able to demonstrate, both to their boards and to regulators, that they take account of the extent to which people have been demonstrating ethical behaviours. So how might this be done? What topics need to be covered and what questions need to be asked? And perhaps most importantly, what sort of answers should you expect to hear?

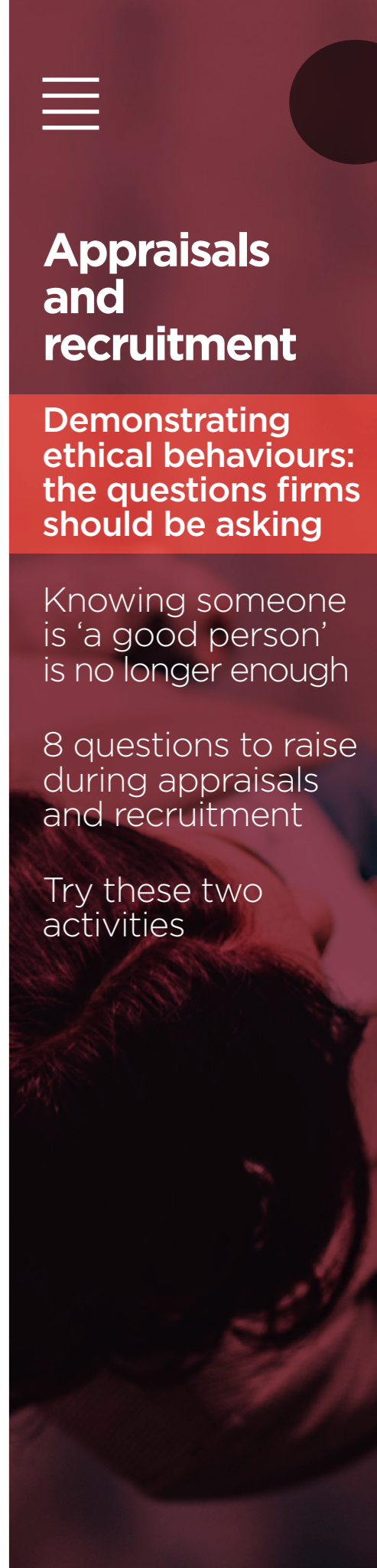
This guidance looks at four topics around which firms can ask questions and weigh up the strength of the response. It is written in relation to the assessment of a new recruit to your firm, but can easily be converted for use in the appraisal process for existing employees.



Knowing someone
is 'a good person'
is no longer enough

8 questions to raise
during appraisals
and recruitment

Try these two
activities



Knowing someone is ‘a good person’ is no longer enough

Knowing that someone is ‘a good person’ is nice, but not enough.

The question now is more about whether they have the right values for the business and whether they are applying them to the decisions they are making at work. And if they cannot demonstrate this, this then points to questions such as ‘why not’ and what support is needed to help them make those steps.



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Here are eight questions (across four topics) you can use to open up a discussion on ethics during an appraisal or recruitment interview:

About the Person

Ask about whether they're a person for whom ethics is important:

- what you're looking for is less whether they say yes or no (although if they said no, that would be informative!) and more about their ability to put that importance into words.
- their answer will probably focus on personal reasons, but it is also important that they make the connection over to their work, for ethics is just as much about what happens at work.

Ask about what influences their views on ethics:

- what is important is to hear where they get their ethical cues from. Are these clear? Are they consistent with the work they'll be doing for you?
- they are likely to talk in terms of values (personal values in particular). Ask them about the corporate values of the firm they're coming from - can they recall them?

About their Professionalism

Ask about the part that professionalism has played in their career development:

- do they mention keywords such as standards, ethics or integrity?
- you're looking for evidence that they recognise the link between professionalism and ethics.

Ask about support from their professional body on ethics related issues:

- do they mention having used the support that a professional body can give on ethics? You're looking for any mention of training material, guidance papers or journal articles.
- what you're looking for is evidence that they've in some way tapped into that support. The reasons for doing so are less important than the fact they've recognised its availability.



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8 questions to raise during appraisals and recruitment - continued

About their Knowledge of Ethics

Ask about any ethical learning they've undertaken in the last 12 months:

- what topics were covered and did they find it useful?
- how were they able to use what they learnt in their day-to-day work?
- this is designed to find out what ethical topics interests them, and the connection between 'learning' and 'doing'.

About the Ethical Challenges in their Role

Ask about the ethical issues associated with their line of work:

- does their answer show that they recognise that they will face ethical issues in the work they're going to be doing for you?
- how good are they at expressing the nature of those ethical issues and connecting them with key tasks that the role entails?

Ask about how they keep up-to-date on the ethical issues associated with their line of work:

- does their response show a connection with what was mentioned earlier, on professionalism and on ethical learning?
- does their response show any degree of active enquiry about those ethical issues? This would indicate the level of engagement with those issues, which in turn points to how they manage them on a day-to-day basis.

Ask about how they manage those ethical issues as part of their regular responsibilities:

- get them to talk in very practical terms. It's all well and good 'knowing' about them, but 'doing' something about them is what really counts.



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Start by sharing a copy of your firm's values and then together discuss which of those values are business values (like teamwork, innovation, etc) and which are ethical values (like trust, integrity, etc).

Talk through any differences of opinion as to whether a value is business or ethical.

Then ask the person to think of a scenario in which one of those business values and one of those ethical values are working in support of each other, and then of a scenario in which they are in opposition to each other. You're not looking for a right or a wrong answer here: the purpose is to initiate a discussion and recognise alignment between the individual's and the firm's values.



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