CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Confidentiality is a manner of behaving and communicating, so that information related to the workplace is used ethically.

Confidentiality is important on the job. In most jobs employees may be told things or they may be working with information or people that will require them to work in confidence. If is not appropriate to share confidential information with your teacher, your friends, your family or to others in the company or organization who would not normally have access to that information. It is also not appropriate to discuss confidential information with co-workers who have access to the same information when that discussion is not part of the normal responsibilities of your job. Part of being loyal to a company is to keep company secrets.

Some companies may conduct a security check on all employees including coop students before they become employed. In some jobs it is so important to keep information confidential that you may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement form regarding all or certain aspects of your work.

Below are a variety of situations in which employees may find themselves involved. Read each of the situation and place a check mark in the box to indicate if you feel you would discuss the situation in the workplace and/or in your personal life.

Situation	Discuss at work	Discuss in personal life
You are working in a senior citizen's home where an elderly grandfather frequently enters the corridors without being completely dressed. Sometimes it is humourous other times it is embarrassing depending on what clothing he forgets.	❑	❑
You are working in a police station where the father of an acquaintance is brought in for assaulting his wife.	❑	❑
You are working in a drug store where the neighbour's son was caught stealing and the manager of the store has called the police.	❑	❑

List 3 jobs where you think confidentiality would be important. For each job listed, give an example that would illustrate why confidentiality would be important.

1. _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

2. _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

3. _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

Confidentiality
Case Study

Banking

Andre, a student working in a cooperative education banking placement is filing monthly bank statements and comes across a statement which belongs to his neighbours, the Andretti family. He notices a large number of overdrafts and although he is well aware that such information is to be kept confidential, he cannot wait to divulge this information to his parents. His parents tell a couple of neighbours and this becomes a topic of conversation around the neighbourhood. When Mr. Andretti hears of this gossip, he is furious and questions the source. He speculates that it is probably Andre, and he storms into the bank manager's office demanding that Andre be fired. The bank manager confronts Andre and upon his admission of guilt, promptly fires Andre.

Questions

1. Why was Andre fired?

2. Was the firing of Andre too severe a step for the bank manager to have taken?

3. If you were the bank manager, how would you have handled this situation?

4. How could Andre's parents have dealt with this situation differently when Andre divulged the information?