
Ethics at RightStar Systems



Dick Stark, CEO/President, RightStar Systems, 2011 NCBEA Recipient

***“Apply for an Ethics Award?
Are you serious? We don’t even
have an HR Department!”***

That was my response when Jeff Hamblen asked me to apply for the National Capital Business Ethics Award (NCBEA). As program chairman, Jeff explained that the National Capital Chapter of the Society of Financial Service Professionals presented this award annually and thought I should consider applying. The winners are companies that demonstrate strong ethic programs and practice, along with community and civic involvement.

On my way to an informational session about the program, my thinking about a formal ethics program came down to setting a good example at the top, and then good things would happen. This meant that ethics at RightStar consisted of “trickling down” my strong Christian upbringing and honest nature throughout the company. The problem with this kind of approach is that it doesn’t scale as the company grows and there is very little written down to go by.

At the time of this first meeting more than two years ago, RightStar, an IT Consultancy and BMC Solution Provider, was five years old with about 40 employees. I embraced the idea of applying for the award by putting together a formal ethics policy and distributed it to RightStar staff. I followed up the distribution with several descriptions of real-life ethical situations we encountered about Value Added Resellers. These became one page “codes of conduct” and thanks to the power of habit, I’ve ensured that we redistribute our Code of Conduct regularly.

When it came to employees, partners, and customers, RightStar already had a firm ethical foundation, so formalizing an ethics program was really the fun part. We surveyed employees and customers, added a Volunteer Time Off policy to our list of benefits, created an annual company wide-volunteer day—all big-company activities. We completed everything well before the ethics award application due date, and finished the for-

mal application interview process some months later.

We didn’t win that first year, but were one of the four finalists. With some encouragement from Jeff Hamblen, we set off to try again since it seemed like the right thing to do.

My first step the second time around was to meet with Kathy Albarado, CEO of Helios HR, a previous ethics award recipient. Kathy gave me some good ideas about employee recognition programs and corporate responsibility such as an annual coat drive, food drives, and walks for the homeless. Kathy’s enthusiasm was contagious.

Armed with more information and better ideas, along with another year of experience under our belt, we submitted an application for the second time. Carefully reporting how RightStar responded to ethical challenges related to new business opportunities helped bolster our application.

It paid off as we received the 2011 award in the small company category. Ethics, honesty, integrity, and doing what is right have become the foundation of RightStar and our success. Customers want to do business with other ethical companies and several times in the last year, we submitted our ethics policy along with a proposal for a new business opportunity. Having a strong ethics program already in place made this a cinch. Additionally, employees want to work for ethical companies that they can trust to do the right thing. We now see ethics as a business driver that adds value to our customers, employees, partners, and to our bottom line.