

Business Ethics

Teaching materials for Advanced Learners of English
Dr Sophie Bennett, December 2017

Modal verbs of obligation

Should the following be legal or illegal? Are they right or wrong? Give reasons.

Use must/mustn't, should/shouldn't *etc* in your answers.

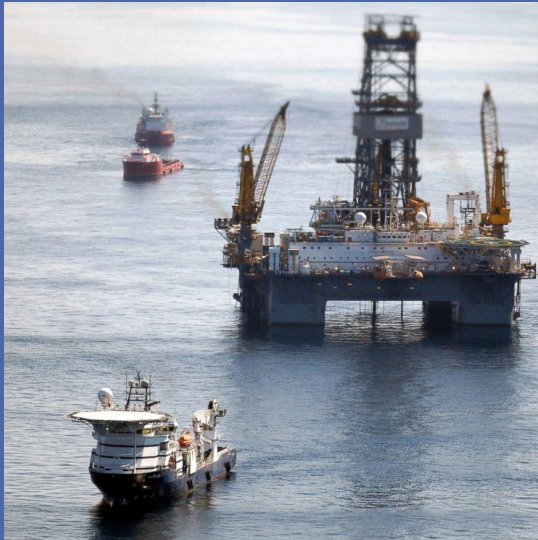
- Offshore bank accounts
- Carrying guns
- Human cloning
- Cigarette smoking



What's the Difference Between Morality and Ethics?

- **Generally, the terms *ethics* and *morality* are used interchangeably by ethicists (philosophers who study ethics), although a few different communities (academic, legal, or religious, for example) will occasionally make a distinction.**
- Morality and ethics have to do with distinguishing the difference between “good and bad” or “right and wrong.”
- **Many people think of morality as something that's to do with personal standards of behaviour, whereas ethics is the standards of “good and bad” distinguished by a certain community or social setting, e.g. you may not give to charity as you think there should be enough public money to give to important causes, but your company may give money to charities and encourage employees to volunteer. Your personal *morality* would contradict the *ethics* of your *employer*.**

Real life business ethics – look at the pictures below. What do they show?

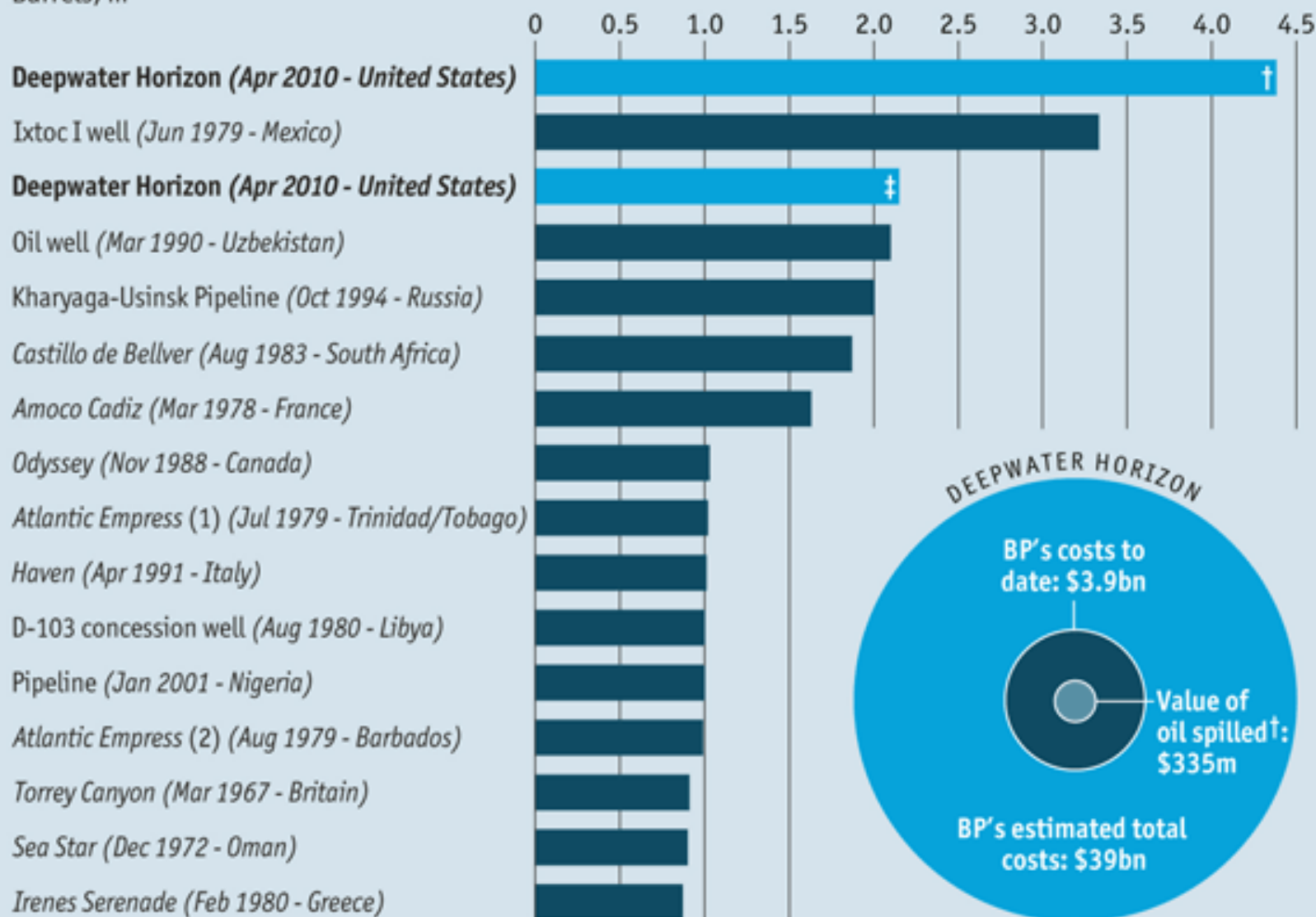


Oil spill – “Deepwater Horizon” platform

- **April 20th 2010, Gulf of Mexico**
- **Explosion and massive oil spill at “Deepwater Horizon” – oil well owned by BP, rig owned by Transocean, subcontracted to Halliburton & Cameron**
- **Largest accidental oil spill in history**
- **11 workers killed**
- **The oil flowed for over 85 days**
- **572 miles of shoreline covered with oil slick which spread across 43,000 miles of land and ocean**
- **Cost the lives of thousands of birds and marine species**
- **Tourism and livelihoods of fishermen devastated**
- **BP estimated costs >\$53 billion**
- **Made into a Hollywood disaster film in 2016**

Largest oil spills*

Barrels, m



Sources: Environmental Research Consulting;
US Department of the Interior; Citigroup; BP; *The Economist*

*Excluding military attacks

†Upper estimate

‡Lower estimate



Real life business ethics – look at the pictures. What do they show?

Cheap labour in 'sweatshops'

- Cheap clothes and other goods for fashion-conscious western markets
- Low wages and working conditions are hard – health, safety and hygiene often poor
- An investigation into Primark in 2008 revealed that Indian children as young as 11 were working in squalid conditions, sewing tiny beads and sequins onto cheap t-shirts by candle-light
- Following a BBC investigation, Primark stopped working with a number of factories
- Primark has been investigated repeatedly, including for unethical practices in the UK
- 2013 - Rana Plaza disaster, Bangladesh - an eight-storey complex of garment workshops collapsed, killing more than 1,000 people - Primark, Benetton, Mango, Matalan and others were all using their services
- The Modern Slavery Act (2015) requires UK businesses with a turnover >£36m to prove they have taken steps to ensure there is no slavery or human trafficking in their supply chain



| You are the
judge!



Case: Politically correct
name change?

A woman went to court in London in the 1970's. She demanded to change her name as she felt her current name wasn't in keeping with women's rights and social equality. Miss Mansfield, as she was called at the time, wanted to change her name to Miss Womansfield. This, she argued, was more in keeping with her femininity. **Should she be allowed to change her name?**

You are the judge

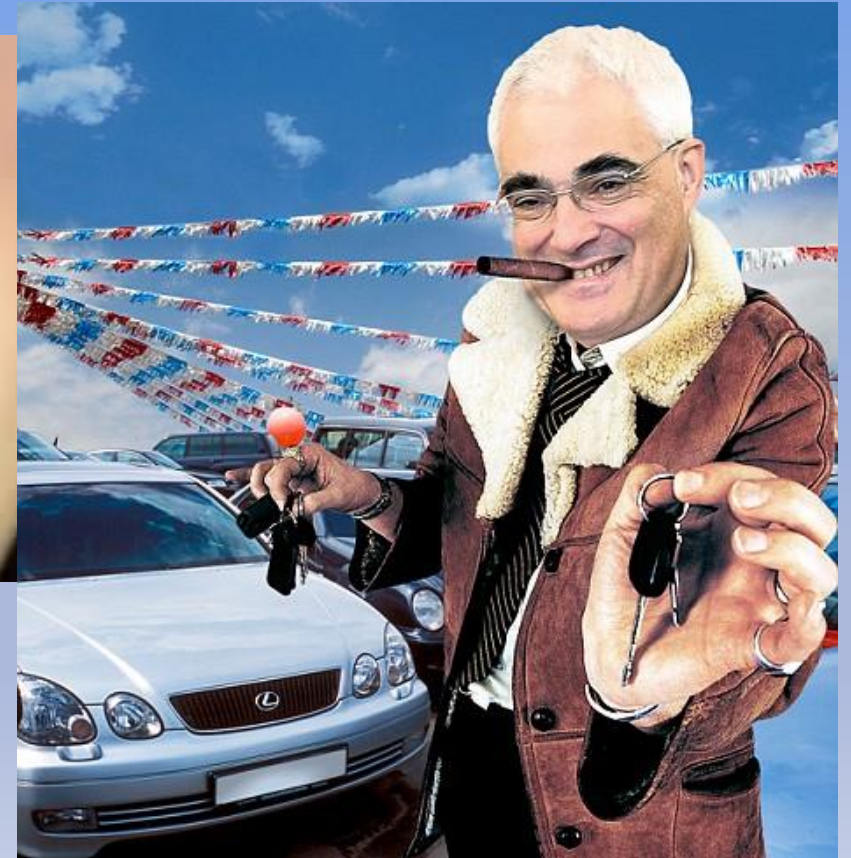
**Case 1. Cosmetic Surgeon
versus Helen Hill**



**Case 2. Club Vila versus
Stephanie Johnson**



**Case 3. The dodgy car
dealer**





You decide!



Situation: “Is it okay to hurt others on my way to a big promotion?”

Confucius, Mill and major religions: “do as you would be done by”.

Kant: if it is wrong to hurt someone, it is always wrong.

Machiavelli: consider the results and what’s best for everybody in the end.

Nietzsche: ignore your conscience in order to achieve your potential.

How ethical are you?

- Is there anything good about a sweatshop?
- Should nature have the right to sue in court?
- Have you faced any ethical difficulties in the workplace?



How ethical are you?

- A manager has repeatedly used the company credit card for personal expenses. What do you do?
- You are a candidate for a job in a great company, but you plan to move countries in a year. Do you reveal this during the interview?
- An employee reveals he has cheated on his wife. You are a manager in a different department. The employee is being evaluated by his line manager. Do you tell the line manager what you know?
- You work in HR and have a position available in marketing. The position does not ideally suit the needs of the candidate. Do you give all the information or just the information that would attract the candidate?

