Movie (Selection: *Morning Glory*, 2010)
Summary: *Morning Glory*, 2010

*Morning Glory* is a film about a television producer named Becky Fuller, who is fired from a position at a morning show and desperately tries to find another job, despite not having a degree that many companies that are hiring are looking for. She ends up getting an interview with a morning show called Daybreak and convinces the man interviewing her, Jerry, to give her a chance as producer of the morning show. Becky is faced with many challenges as producer of the show. She overcomes these challenges by increasing ratings and by bringing life to the morning show, which gives her recognition throughout the morning show community and ends up getting her an interview with the Today Show.

**Question 1: How was “the business world” portrayed?**

The business world is portrayed as a place in which it is difficult to succeed, especially as a woman. This is demonstrated by the strong male characters chosen to challenge Becky and by the amount of time that Becky puts into her position in order to get “Daybreak” to succeed. The characters chosen to challenge Becky throughout her journey are all male, and they all seem to have very stereotypical personalities for males in the business community. For example, Jerry, the man who hired Becky, very clearly underestimates Becky’s ability to turn the show around. While some of this underestimation may come from the lack of the show’s ability to keep a producer, the way that Jerry treats Becky leads me to believe that her age and her gender have something to do with his blatant underestimation as well. The second man that plays a significant role in the film is Mike Pomeroy, the legendary and very egotistical television anchor that Becky
hires to co-anchor the morning show. Mike also very bluntly underestimates Becky. He undermines her in front of her team, does not listen to her, and does not respect her. He is Becky’s biggest challenge to “win over” throughout her time at Daybreak. The last male character that demonstrates this point is the anchor that Becky fired from the show when she started. The comments that he made throughout their first team meeting were very sexist and degrading. Becky seems to set the tone for the rest of the film by firing him on the spot.

Throughout the film, Becky appears to work twenty hour days. She is always at work, talking about work, or doing research for work. She is tied to her cell phone, which rings continuously. She does not appear to have a life outside of work. However--this appears to pay off when Becky succeeds in making Daybreak a successful morning show. In my opinion, this sends the message that in order to be successful in the business world, one must devote their lives to it. In my view, this is a fairly negative message about the business world, despite the fact that Becky eventually succeeds because of it. It tends to send the message that one cannot be truly successful in the business world without entirely giving up their personal lives in order to do so.

**Question 2: Choose 3 specific business ethical dilemmas**

*Dilemma 1: Hiring Mike Pomeroy as Co-Anchor*

**Portrayal**

One of the stipulations of Becky being hired by Jerry was that Becky must increase the show’s ratings. Becky feels this pressure and makes the decision to hire an anchor to help her increase
the show’s ratings. One of the biggest dilemmas from a business ethics perspective surfaces when Becky, feeling the pressure to increase ratings, discovers that television anchor Mike Pomeroy that is still “under contract” for the network, but that he is not currently on air. Becky brings this up to her boss, Jerry, who tries to brush her off and does not seem interested. Her boss states that Mike Pomeroy’s contract is for a “magazine show” for the network but that they have not been able to use anything that Pomeroy has pitched because it does not fit with their vision. Becky continues to ask him questions about the contract until she finally asks Jerry if she can review Mike Pomeroy’s contract herself.

Resolution

Although the film does not show Jerry agreeing to this, the next scene shows Becky reading through the contract. Becky then shows up at Mike Pomeroy’s home and badgers him about joining the show by pointing out a stipulation in the contract: if Mike Pomeroy is off-air for six months and is offered a position by the network that he does not accept, he can be fired and will lose his six million dollar salary. Mike Pomeroy is shown appearing on the set of Daybreak in the next scene.

Opinion

I don’t think that Becky went about this in the best way. It appears to have “worked” in the movie, but I do not think that this would be the way to handle that situation in the “real world”. Although Becky was feeling the pressures to increase ratings and may have discovered on her own that Mike Pomeroy had some type of contract, I do not think that it was ethical for Becky to review the contract in detail and to show up at Mike Pomeroy’s home in order to badger him into joining the show. I see this as “black mail” because the only reason that Becky was able to get Mike to agree was by pointing out that the large salary that he was receiving could be taken away
if he does not join the show. Even though the six-month stipulation was clearly written in his contract, I think that there is a better way to have handled the situation. I think that Becky should have called a meeting at the network’s office with lawyers, Becky’s boss, and the head of the magazine show to discuss the possibility of Mike joining Daybreak. There was a lot that could have gone wrong in the way that Becky handled the situation.

**Dilemma 2: Becky asks her boss not to tell her team that the show may be cancelled**

**Portrayal**
A short time after Becky is hired to produce Daybreak, she and her boss Jerry meet in his office to talk about the show. A short time into the conversation, her boss tells her that the show is on track to be cancelled in six weeks due to the show’s low ratings. Becky convinces him to extend the life of the show if she can get the ratings up. In the meantime, Becky asks Jerry not to tell her team that the show is on track to be cancelled.

**Resolution**
Becky works feverishly to increase ratings. She starts producing segments for entertainment value. This includes having the anchors ride rollercoasters, skydive, sumo wrestle, and get tattoos while the show is on air. Becky’s approach works. She steadily increases ratings and does not tell her team why she is working so hard to do so.

**Opinion**
I do not agree with the way that Becky handled the situation. Yes, it seems to have worked for her, but it could have ended badly in the “real world”. If Becky had not been able to increase ratings and the show had been cancelled, the employees of the show could potentially be very
upset if they were to find out that Becky had known for six weeks that the show was on track to be cancelled. I think that the employees would feel as though they had not been given a fair amount of time find a new position and that they would feel as though they could have helped to have increased ratings if they would have known the situation.

Dilemma 3: Mike Pomeroy does a surprise segment

Portrayal
At one of the team meetings, Mike Pomeroy suggests the idea of doing a segment on a Sauerkraut festival in upstate New York. The Daybreak staff is shocked; Mike Pomeroy is never enthused about the segments that they do and has never suggested doing a segment. Becky agrees to do it and asks if she can go with him. The next scene shows Becky getting into the new station’s van with Mike Pomeroy and a cameraman. The van takes off, but not in the direction of the Sauerkraut festival. Mike Pomeroy takes the company van, the cameraman, and Becky out to a Governor’s summer home to do a surprise segment. Becky protests and calls the show’s staff to tell them to put on another segment instead of shooting the segment that Mike Pomeroy has in mind. At the last minute, Becky changes her mind and allows the station to air what is happening at the Governor’s home.

Resolution
When the Governor’s door opens, Mike Pomeroy is standing there. He starts questioning the Governor about charges that the Governor has just had brought against him. At that moment, squad cars pull into the driveway and the Governor is arrested on air. The segment was a huge hit, increases ratings, and earns praise from the entire Daybreak team.
Opinion

Even though Mike Pomeroy lying to Daybreak team and using company resources (the van and camera equipment) for the sake of his own recognition was not ethical, I don’t think that there was harm that was caused by it. I think that I would have done something similar in that situation. The resources would have been used to shoot another segment, so I do not think that there was anything that was “lost” from the company’s perspective.

Question 3: List any other Business Ethics Issues that were portrayed:

- Becky’s boss Jerry tells her to do “whatever it takes” to get ratings up. When Becky asks whether she can spend her own money, he repeats to her that she should do “whatever it takes”. In my opinion, this does not send a good message to Becky, whose job is relying on the ratings.
- Becky works extremely hard to get “good” entertainers on the show. The film shows her bribing a rap artist to perform on the show by offering him twice as much time as he would get on the Today show and by offering him the ability to play four songs from his new record.
- Becky compromises her teams’ safety at times for entertainment value. One scene shows one of her team members seemingly unconscious in a plane and the plane continuing to do “flips”.
- Becky is dating a man from another television network. This could be a possible ethics issue if the two networks are competitors in the same market because the couple could be sharing information.
• One of Becky’s television anchors is dating her boss, Jerry. The woman that Jerry is dating is not shown as being an intelligent, productive member of the team. If Jerry is as concerned about the show doing well as he says he is, he should be looking at the cast and making decisions based on what is good for the show—not on what is good for his personal life.

Summary

This was a very interesting exercise. It allowed me to take a film that I enjoy and really decipher it from a business ethics perspective. It allowed be to take the knowledge that I have gained throughout this course and to be able to see the ethics issues in a film that I would not have previously regarded as “ethically controversial”. There were many scenes throughout the film that I questioned as I was watching it again, which allowed me to see the three dilemmas outlined in the paragraphs above. While in the film these three dilemmas ended the way that one would want, I can see that that may not always be the case if the same dilemmas were to surface in “real life”. For example, dilemma 1, the dilemma in which Becky pursued Mike Pomeroy, could have ended in a lawsuit and the network canceling the show due to the way that Becky approached him. Dilemma 2 could have resulted in Becky negatively impacting her team’s future and financial wellbeing by not sharing the information that she had received from her boss. Dilemma 3 could have ended with both Mike Pomeroy and Becky losing their jobs if the news story had not panned out the way that it did. In addition to these three dilemmas, there were also a few other business ethics issues that I was able to recognize. These issues are not uncommon in everyday life. The plot of the film, the business ethics issues subtly presented, and the strong characters in the film all worked together to portray the business world as it relates to the television industry in a very interesting way.