

Ethical Decision Making



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WHAT IS ETHICS?

1. Greek root, ethos: the character and sentiment of the community.
2. The eternal verities of right and wrong, the rules of behavior that form the general conception of right and wrong for individuals, communities, and institutions.
3. Ethics is not a set of rules; it's a complex set of ideas, guidelines or rules of conduct by which we aim to live.
4. Ethics – doing what is right or more right in a given situation.

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KITCHENER'S Five Principles of Ethical Behavior

“...ethical principles are more than convenient guidelines, but less than absolutes. They are always ethically relevant, and they can be overturned only by strong ethical obligations.”

1) RESPECTING AUTONOMY

Having freedom of thought or choice; acting as a free agent; allowing the same right in others; showing respect for the rights of others.

2) DOING NO HARM

Avoiding inflicting physical and/or psychological harm on others; avoiding engaging in harmful or hurtful behavior even unintentionally; being empathetic; trying to imagine how others feel.

3) BENEFITING OTHERS

Being kind and actively contributing to the general welfare of others; putting the welfare of others above one's own interest.

4) BEING JUST

Being fair and impartial; treating others equally; considering the needs of underserved populations that may need special attention or treatment.

5) BEING FAITHFUL

Recognizing implicit contracts or agreements; entering into agreements in good faith; keeping promises, being loyal and telling the truth.

KOHLBERG'S

Stages of Moral Growth

STAGE ONE

PUNISHMENT/OBEDIENCE

Concern is focused on the self. Obedience is to a powerful authority and fear of punishment dominates motives. One sees oneself as being dominated by other forces and actions are judged in terms of their physical consequences.

STAGE TWO

THE MARKETPLACE

Concern about others is one-way and focused on what one person can do for another and how they can agree to act so both will benefit. The basic motive is to satisfy one's own needs. The needs of others are not considered unless one thinks it will benefit oneself to do so.

STAGE THREE

GOOD BOY/GOOD GIRL

Concern is focused on groups of people and conformity to group norms. There is a two-way relationship (we are good for each other) and the motive is to be a "good boy/good girl" – to be accepted. Affection plays a strong role.

STAGE FOUR

LAW AND ORDER

Concern is focused on order in society. Honor and duty come from keeping the rules of society. Preservation of the society is the dominant motive, not just obeying as in Stage One.

STAGE FIVE

LEGALISTIC POINT OF VIEW

Concern is focused on the principle that what is right is what the whole society decides. There are no legal absolutes. The society can change standards by everyone agreeing to the change. Changes in the law are usually made for reasons of the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The U.S. Constitution is written in terms of Stage Five orientation.

STAGE SIX

UNIVERSAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Concern is focused on the principle that what is right is a decision of one's conscience that is based on ideas about rightness that apply to everyone—all nations, people, etc. These are called ethical principles. The most important ethical principles deal with justice, equality, and the dignity of all people. These principles are higher than any given law because they come from the experiences of all people.

GILLIGAN'S Moral Perspectives

“Women’s construction of the moral problem as a problem of care and responsibility in relationships rather than as one of the rights and rules ties the development of their moral thinking to changes in their understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality as justice ties (men’s) development to the logic of equality and reciprocity.”

FIRST PERSPECTIVE

ORIENTATION TO INDIVIDUAL SURVIVAL

The initial focus is on caring for the self in order to ensure survival.

Transition: From Selfishness to a Sense of Responsibility

Being centered on the self is criticized as selfishness. There is a new understanding of the connection between self and others which is articulated by the concept of responsibility.

SECOND PERSPECTIVE

GOODNESS AS SELF SACRIFICE

There is reliance on societal values. Good is equated with caring for others. Often only others are legitimized as the recipients of this care.

Transition: From Goodness to Truth

The equating of conformity with care and the illogic of the inequality between others and self lead to reconsideration of relationships.

THIRD PERSPECTIVE

RECONCILIATION OF SELF AND RESPONSIBILITY

There is a new understanding of the interconnection between others and self, that others and self are interdependent.

Transition: To Care as a Universal Obligation

Care becomes the self-chosen principle of a judgment that remains psychological in its concern with relationships and response, but becomes universal in its condemnation of exploitation and hurt.

Ethical Decision Making
A Framework for Ethical Decision-Making
THOMAS SHANKS

Ethics or morality poses questions about how we ought to act and how we should live. It asks, "According to what standards are these actions right or wrong? It asks, "What character traits (like honesty, compassion, fairness) are necessary to live a truly human life?" It also asks, "What concerns or groups do we usually minimize or ignore?" And "why might that be?"

Recognize an Ethical Issue

- Is there something wrong personally, interpersonally, or socially? Is there conflict that could be damaging to people? To the environment? To institutions? To society?
- Does the issue go deeper than legal or constitutional concerns? What does it do to people or persons who have dignity, rights, and hopes for a better life together?

Get the Facts

- What are the relevant facts of the situations?
- What individuals or groups have an important stake in the outcome? What is at stake for each? Do some have a greater stake because they have a special need (e.g., those who are poor or excluded) or because we have special obligations to them? Are there other important stakeholders in addition to those directly involved?
- What are the options for acting? Have all the relevant persons or groups been consulted? If you showed your list of options to someone you respect, what would that person say?

Evaluate the Alternative Actions

- Which option will produce the most good and do the least harm?
- Which option respects the rights and dignity of all stakeholders? Even if not everyone gets all they want, will everyone still be treated fairly?
- Which option would promote the common good and help all to participate more fully in the goods we share as a society, as a community, as a company, as a family?
- Which option would enable the deepening or development of those virtues or character traits that we value as individuals? As a profession? As a society?

Make a Decision (taking into account the two questions below)

- Considering these perspectives, which of the options is the right thing to do?
- If you told someone you respect why you chose this option, what would that person say?

Act, then reflect on the decision later

- How did it turn out for all concerned? If you had to do it over again, what, if anything, would you do differently? Why?

Ethical Decision Making

A Model for Ethical Decision Making

1) Get the Facts Straight

Collect as much accurate information as you can. Ask questions. Who has a stake in this decision? What are the issues?

2) Identify the Ethical Dilemma

Agreement on the facts is important, but you must also agree on the content of the problem you must resolve. If you are not sure, try breaking the larger problem into smaller, more easily identified problems and deal with them one at a time.

3) Propose and Implement a Solution

Consider the following basic elements of ethical decision making:

Impartiality: Your wants and needs are important, but they are not more important than anyone else's wants and needs. If there is to be some form of discrimination, there must be very good reasons for doing so.

Consistency: The correct ethical decision in one situation must also be the correct ethical decision when the same situation arises again. You cannot arbitrarily change the rules of the game. Once you compromise your principles ever so slightly, it becomes easier to do so again.

Consider Both the Means and the Ends: You should be concerned with the methods, attitudes and processes, as well as both the short and long term consequences of your decisions.

Respect Human Dignity: Ethical conduct seeks to educate by providing people the means they need to make reasoned decisions. Even when acting in the name of what is right and just, you cannot allow ethics to be reduced to manipulation.

Consult Your Conscience: Once you think about what you are doing, you will know right from wrong.

4) Evaluate the Solution Implemented.

After the decision is made, you need to go back and see if your decision had the desired effect. More importantly, you must consider ways that the situation could have been avoided through better planning or management.

Coming to Grips with Ethics in Business
Richard A. Wueste

Ethical Decision Making

How Did I Live Today?

Thomas Shanks, S.J., Ph.D., Executive Director of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, recommends that everyone ask themselves these five questions at the end of the day:

1. Did I practice any virtues (e.g., integrity, honesty, compassion)?
2. Did I do more good than harm?
3. Did I treat others with dignity and respect?
4. Was I fair and just?
5. Was my community better because I was in it?
Was I better because I was in my community?

Ethical Decision Making Thoughts on Ethics

- “A man’s ethical behavior should be based on sympathy, education, and social ties; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death.”

Albert Einstein

- “In law a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others. In ethics he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so. We must treat human beings as ends, not means.”

Immanuel Kant

- “A man is truly ethical only when he obeys the compulsion to help all life which he is able to assist, and shrinks from injuring anything that lives.”

Albert Schweitzer

- “Education teaches men to act nobly.”

Plato

- “...the end of ethics is action.”

Aristotle

- “We who now live are parts of a humanity that extends into the remote past, a humanity that has interacted with nature. The things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by the grace of the doings and sufferings of the continuous human community in which we are a link. Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it.”

John Dewey

- “The louder he talked of his honor, the faster we counted our spoons.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

- Calvin: “I don’t believe in ethics any more. It’s a dog-eat-dog world, so I’ll do whatever I have to do, and let others argue about whether it’s “right” or not. Get what you can while the getting’s good – that’s what I say! Might makes right! The winners write the history books! As far as I’m concerned, the ends justify the means.”

HOBBS SHOVES CALVIN AND CALVIN FALLS DOWN.

Calvin: “Why’d you do that!!!!!!!”

Hobbs: “You were in my way. Now you’re not. The ends justify the means.”

Calvin: “I didn’t mean for EVERYONE, you dolt! Just ME!”

Hobbs: “Ahh.

Calvin and Hobbs

From Crime and Punishment
by Fyodor Dostoyefski (1821 – 1881)

....look here: on one side we have a stupid, senseless, worthless, spiteful, ailing, horrid old woman, not simply useless, but doing actual mischief, who has not an idea what she is living for herself, and who will die in a day or two in any case....On the other side, fresh young lives thrown away for want of help, and by thousands, on every side. A hundred thousand good deeds could be done....on that old woman's money which will be buried in a monastery. Hundreds, thousands perhaps, might be set on the right path, dozens of families saved from destitution, from vice, from the lock hospitals....and all with her money. Kill her, take her money and with the help of it devote oneself to the service of humanity and the good of all. What do you think, would not one tiny crime be wiped out by thousands of good deeds? For one life thousands would be saved from corruption and decay. One death, and a hundred lives in exchange....it's simple arithmetic.

A Tribute to Yourself

Imagine tonight you will be honored as the “Leader of the Year.” Hundreds of people will gather to pay tribute to your contributions to your organization and community. There will be several speeches praising your performance and your character.

What three to five words or phrases would you most like others to say about you?

Start with the ideal image of yourself.

- How would you like to be remembered tonight?
- What descriptions would make you feel the proudest?
- If you could influence what people say about you when you are not around, what would you want them to say?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

These may be lofty or ideal, but that is exactly the point. We all have personal standards of excellence. The greater our personal clarity, belief in, and passion for these ideals, the greater the probability we will act consistently with them.

**From *The Leadership Challenge*
James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner**

Ethical Decision Making

Rank Order Exercise

Rank the statements below from **1 to 8** based on your opinion and how you feel. Number **1** will be the **most** ethical action and number **8** in your opinion is the most **unethical** action. You cannot assign a number more than once.

Individual

Group

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------|
| _____ | Looking on someone's exam for help with an answer | _____ |
| _____ | Playing a joke on a friend and he or she gets slightly hurt | _____ |
| _____ | Hiding a book in the library so no one else can find it except you | _____ |
| _____ | Using a fake ID | _____ |
| _____ | Not telling your professor when you see someone cheating on a test | _____ |
| _____ | Missing class and then making up an excuse to give to your professor | _____ |
| _____ | Switching a price tag on a book at the bookstore so you can pay a lower price | _____ |
| _____ | Posting unauthorized flyers on campus | _____ |

Ethical Decision Making

Check-List

1. Is it legal?

Will I be violating any civil law?

2. Is it against University policy?

3. Is it balanced?

Is it fair to all concerned?

4. How will it make me feel about myself?

Will I be proud?

Would I feel good if the newspaper published my decision?

Would I feel good if my family knew about my choice?

**Blanchard, Kenneth,
"The Power of Ethical Management"**

Case Study 1

1. You are an officer in the XYZ Honor Organization. Part of your duty involves selection of candidates for membership. The charter of your organization states that each member shall maintain the highest degree of integrity in their academic pursuits. A good friend, John, has been nominated for membership. During the discussion, the group asks for your input. John had earlier in the semester confided in you that he had gotten behind in his psychology class because of his mother's cancer treatments and had looked on someone else's paper during an exam. He had not gotten caught by the professor and had managed to do well on the exam to maintain his grade in the class. You know that he has been under a lot of stress because of his mother's illness and that he would also be a good member of the organization. People would be surprised if he were not selected. What would you do?

Case Study 2:

2. Your organization makes a decision to participate in a national program to raise money to help the hungry and homeless. The president writes a letter to the coordinating committee of the national program promising to present a program, the proceeds of which will be sent to the hunger fund. A chairperson is delegated responsibility for planning the fundraising program. Due to other responsibilities, she does not plan the event. She submits a proposal to the executive board to donate organizational monies to the homeless fund in order to replace the contribution that would have been raised by the event as promised. The organization has historically not made cash contributions to charitable drives, although there is no written policy which prohibits them from doing so. How would you vote on the proposal?

Case Study 3:

3. As the vice-president of the ZZZ Recreation Club you are coordinating a week-long ski trip to Aspen over winter break. You have put in many hours trying to get the best deal for your members with various travel agencies and hotels. You have finally worked out a package with one company that is \$100.00 cheaper than the trip cost every member the previous year although the hotel does not have all the same amenities and fewer meals are included in the package. While on the trip it will be your responsibility to respond to any emergencies, coordinate transportation to the ski lifts and generally be the responsible agent for the club. The company will also throw in a full paid trip for two covering transportation, hotel, a meal ticket, and lift tickets. Your girlfriend who is not a member of the club would love to go but can't afford the cost. She suggests that the two of you use the two free trips – what do you do?

Case Study 4:

4. Sara is a graduating senior. Although she had many job offers, she continues to go through interviews arranged by the career planning and placement office. She reasons that the interview experience will be valuable and may even turn up a better offer. In fact, she has discovered a way to make money from job interviews.

On one occasion, two firms invited her to San Francisco for a tour of the home office. She managed to schedule both firms on the same day, and then billed each of them for her full travel expenses. In this way, she was able to pocket about \$100. Each firm had asked her to submit an expense account and one firm had not even asked for bills. Did Sara do anything wrong?

“What Should You Do?”

1. What are the facts?
2. Who are the stakeholders?
3. What are the ethical issues? Decide which of Kitchener’s ethical principles, if any, apply.
4. What are the alternatives for action? What are your options?
5. What is the ethical evaluation of each alternative? Why is this a good option?
6. What are the constraints for action? Why would this action be hard to do?
7. What action should be taken?