

Challenges & Ethical Dilemmas

Ethics training has become a priority in many institutions due to the ethical challenges in the workplace. With differing nationalities, cultures, religions, ages, and educational and socio-economics statuses, individuals are increasingly aware of co-workers and customers as people with differing backgrounds, values, goals, and perceptions of acceptable behaviors. Working within an organization forces a wide range of individuals to work as a unified group, and as a result, conflicts may arise. Sometimes under pressure to adapt quickly to the changes and diversity in the workplace, individuals may be forced to fall back on ingrained patterns of behavior to solve problems. The pressure placed on individuals to do more with fewer resources which sometimes may lead to unethical behavior.

A code of ethics is necessary in the workforce to deal with the ethical challenges that are encountered on a daily basis. Problems faced by today's business world include the downsizing of staff, employee rights, discrimination, and cost containment. These problems create ethical dilemmas that may be difficult to resolve. In resolving these dilemmas, the following components are important: discussion, analysis, problem solving, and decision making. According to Kirrane (1990) the emerging leader may have to analyze:

- conflict between two or more personally held values;
- conflict between personal values and the values held by another person or the organization;
- conflict between basic principles and the need to achieve a desired outcome;
- conflict between two or more individuals or groups to whom one has an obligation.

A widely held practice in resolving ethical dilemmas is the development of a documentation procedure for reviewing an organization's practice. In an organization, a review board may be created consisting of top leaders and staff members. Three methods are recommended in assisting the new leader in resolving ethical issues as they arise. Consultants Doug Wallace and Jon Pikel suggests (1) an ethical checklist, (2) a ten-step method for decision making and (3) twelve questions to address ethical dilemmas developed by Laura L. Nash

The Ethical checklist consists of the following tests:

- Relevant Information
- Involvement
- Consequential (preparation for the repercussions based on the decision made)
- Fairness
- Enduring values
- Universality (should the decision made become practice for similar issues in the future)
- Light of Day (how would I feel if the decision became public knowledge)

The Ten-step method of decision making requires the decision maker to consider

- The known facts of the problem
- What are the values and desired outcome of the committee members
- What issues are causing the problems
- Prioritize what ethical principles or values should be reinforced in this problem
- Who will be involved in making the decision
- What other options are available to achieve a win-win situation
- What is the worst that can happen, then rethink and revise the alternative if deemed necessary
- Develop a method that will deal with the underlying causes
- Review your decision and see how it compares with the Ethical Checklist above
- Make your decision, develop a procedure, enforce the procedure and monitor
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In "Ethics Without the Sermon," Laura L. Nash has developed twelve questions she deems relevant in addressing ethical dilemmas. The questions include:

- Have you defined the problem accurately?
- How would you define the problem if you stood on the other side of the fence?
- How did the situation occur in the first place?
- To whom or to what do you give your loyalty as a person and as a member of the corporation?
- What is your intention in making the decision?
- How does this intention compare with the probable results?
- Whom could your decision or action injure?
- Can you discuss the problem with the affected parties before you make your decision?
- Are you confident that your position will be valid over a long period of time as it is now?
- Could you disclose without qualm your decision or action to your boss, your CEO, the board of directors, your family, society as a whole?
- What is the symbolic potential of your action if understood? misunderstood?
- Under what conditions would you allow exceptions to your stand?

Accompanying this section is a list of ethical dilemmas on pages 38 and 39. Based on the information above, answer the questions to determine how ethical you are.

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.

~John Quincy Adams



Additional Resources:

Resolving Ethical Dilemmas in the Workplace: A New Focus for Career Development. ERIC Digest No. 112

Blanchard, K., and Peale, N. V. The Power of Ethical Management. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1988.

Kirrane, D. E. "Managing Values: A Systematic Approach to Business Ethics." Training and Development Journal 44, no. 11 (November 1990): 53-60.

Lankard, B. A. Practice Ethical Behavior. Connections. School and Work Transitions. Columbus: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1987. (ED 288 981).

McNamara, Carter, MBA, Ph.D. Complete Guide to Ethics Management: An Ethics Toolkit for Managers. Authenticity Consulting, LLC. Copyright 1997-2008. <http://www.managementhelp.org/ethics/ethxgde.htm>

Doug Wallace and Jon Pekel, of the Fulcrum Group (651-714-9033; e-mail at jon.pekel@comcast.net), Fulcrum Consulting Group, 1093 Snelling Ave. South, Saint Paul, MN 55116. Phone 1-800-55-ETHIC.

Nash, L. (1981). "Ethics Without the Sermon". Harvard Business Review, (59).

Management has a lot to do with answers. Leadership is a function of questions. And the first question for a leader always is: 'Who do we intend to be?' Not 'What are we going to do?' but 'Who do we intend to be?'

—Max DePree, Hermann Miller



Case studies for practice in Ethical Decision Making

Transitioning from Colleague to Supervisor

Making the transition from colleague to supervisor can be complex. Not only will your job responsibilities change, but so will the relationships you have built with others. Review the below case studies and answer the questions provided.

Case Study #1

You've worked with this person for years and consider him a good personal friend. You have shared a great deal of personal information over the years and have had many social interactions outside work. You have now been promoted and will be supervising this person directly.

Case Study #2

Your former leader left the organization and her position is vacant. You and two other people on your team interview for her position and you get the job. Your coworkers are jealous.

Case Study #3

You are in a leadership position over a former peer. She is having problems getting her work done in a timely fashion and the quality of her work is poor.

Questions for Discussion

- How would you handle each of these situations?
- Or, if this has happened to you, how did you handle it?
 - What was the outcome?
 - Would you handle it any differently if you had to do it again?
- What are some challenges you will have to overcome?

For Review:

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Stepping-Up---Making-the-Transition-From-Peer-to-Supervisor&id=1891537>

Case studies for practice in Ethical Decision Making

Ageism

Age discrimination occurs when a person is actively discriminated against in the work place because of their age. Many cases of age discrimination affect older adults (those near or past retirement age), but cases of age discrimination do occur to younger individuals as well. Review the below case studies and answer the questions provided.

Case Study #1

A person has been a successful employee with positive evaluations for 15 years. When the employee reaches retirement age, the employee decides to continue working. Management, however, states that because of the person's age they are an increased safety risk and are asked to retire.

Case Study #2

Two candidates apply for the same job. Both applicants have the same qualifications, experience, and advanced degrees. One candidate, however, is 10 years younger than the other. The younger individual is not hired because the company feels they cannot justify paying a person that young the salary required for their qualifications.

Case Study #3

You are a young individual (under the age of 22), and you are placed in a leadership position. One of the people under your leadership is 60 years old. She has held a variety of positions and has extensive life experience. How do you handle leading this person?

Questions for Discussion

How would you react in these situations?

Can the practices of these companies be considered ethical?

How can an individual protect themselves in these situations?

Do you think there should be age limits in place for certain jobs?

For Review:

<http://www.management-issues.com/ageism.asp>