



ETHICAL DECISION MAKING



Ethical Decision Making

Self-Study Guide

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How to Use This Guide

This Self-Study Guide is designed and laid out in a way that will guide student learning much in the same way that an instructor would. This workbook is comprised of several modules called *Sessions*. Each Session focuses on a major concept in the course.

In each *Session*, we have included short-answer and (in some instances) multiple choice questions which relate directly to the *Session* material. Several times throughout the guide, you can take the opportunity to internalize what you have learned by completing the self-reflection exercises entitled “Making Connections”.

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Session One: Course Overview

What exactly makes a decision ethical? The problem with ethics is that what may seem morally right (or ethical) to one person may seem appalling to another. There is no easy way to solve every ethical decision you will have to make as a manager. However, there are ways you can define your ethical framework to make solving those ethical dilemmas easier.

In this course, we will review some tools that you can use when you're faced with an ethical decision. As well, we discuss techniques to use so you don't get stuck in an ethical quandary. The case studies in this course have been included so that you can practice making decisions in a safe environment.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Understand the difference between ethics and morals
- Understand the value of ethics
- Identify some of your values and moral principles
- Be familiar with some philosophical approaches to ethical decisions
- Identify some ways to improve ethics in your office
- Know what is required to start developing an office code of ethics
- Know some ways to avoid ethical dilemmas
- Have some tools to help you make better decisions
- Be familiar with some common ethical dilemmas

Please take this opportunity to consider your personal learning objectives and reasons for taking this course.

Pre-Assignment

Nan DeMars's Office Ethics Audit

Think about your office environment. Then, answer Yes or No to each question.

Question	Yes	No
1) Do you think anyone in the office is doing something illegal?		
1) Do you think anyone in the office is doing something unethical?		
1) Is any behavior or action taking place in the office that you would be embarrassed to see reported in the media?		
1) Are people leaving to go home, go crazy, go to jail, or go to the authorities?		
1) Do you trust your boss?		
1) Does your boss trust you?		
1) Do you trust your co-workers?		
1) Have there been any incidents in the past that made you ashamed of your company?		
1) Is there anything going on in your office that you would feel uncomfortable about explaining to your kids? A reporter? Your parents?		
1) Is everyone (customers, co-workers, vendors) being treated fairly?		
1) Is there any perception of a conflict of interest?		
1) Are there any obvious or subtle behaviors that seem unfair, or seem to undermine the effectiveness of the work done in your office?		
1) Has your ability to make an impartial and objective decision been compromised or forced to be biased?		

Session Two: What are Ethics?

Until you are faced with this question, you may not ever consider what your answer would be. The decisions you make every day are based on the ethical values which are engrained in you as an individual, through your culture. Your system of values and beliefs are extremely personal; however, as an individual you are part of a wider society that demands ethical behavior from its citizens.

In this session, we begin our discussion of business ethics by defining the terms and concepts we use in this course. We encourage you to complete a self-reflective exercise to promote your awareness of your own values.

Defining Ethics and Morals

The Oxford English dictionary defines Ethics as: “The moral principles governing or influencing conduct.”

This leads us to the question, “What are morals?” The Oxford English dictionary defines it as: “Standards of behavior, or principles of right and wrong.”

So, we can define an ethical decision as a decision that fits within our standards of behavior, our sense of right and wrong.

Exercise: The Grey Area

The problem is that everyone sees right and wrong in different ways. For example, in North America it is considered wrong to treat women different from men. In other cultures, this is perfectly acceptable and expected. Similarly, in North America bribery in business is illegal. In other cultures, again, this is perfectly acceptable and expected.

Have you ever encountered an ethical conflict like this? Describe the situation.

How did you solve it?

How can we identify these ethical conflicts?

What are some solutions?