

QUICK TIPS:

STEPS IN MAKING AN ETHICAL DECISION

Ethical decision making is in many ways based on sound general decision making principles. One model which an ethical leader can use to make an ethical decision is this one:

- Think through the ethical dilemma which you are facing. Try to identify all of its components as objectively as possible.
- Think of all the options which are available to you.
- Determine which option you believe to be the most ethical. At this point, you may wish to make this decision alone, or in consultation with others.
- Give your decision the “ethical test.” Ask yourself if you would feel comfortable if your decision and reasoning for it were printed in the newspaper.
- Think of the consequences of your decision. What is the worst thing that could occur? What is the best thing that could occur? Can you accept both of these potential outcomes?

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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP



*"Oh, what a tangled web
we weave, When first we
practice to deceive!"*

-Sir Walter Scott,

LEARN MORE ABOUT ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

What are Ethics?

At its most basic, ethics is deciding what is right (or more right) in a particular situation—determining what ought to be—deciding what is consistent with one’s personal or organizational value system.

What is Ethical Leadership?

Ethical leadership combines ethical decision-making and ethical behavior, and occurs in both an individual and an organizational context. A major responsibility of a leader is to make ethical decisions and behave in ethical ways—and to see that the organization understands and practices its ethical code.



Suggestions for Behaving Ethically

If the ethical leader has his or her own personal ethics clear and has a sense of the organization’s ethics, then ethical behavior is that which is consistent with these codes.

- Behave in ways that are consistent with your purpose (the road you choose to travel in your life—that which gives meaning and definition to your life). A clear personal purpose is the foundation for ethical behavior. A clear organizational purpose would seem to enhance organizational ethics as well.
- Behave in ways that you are personally proud of. Self esteem is a powerful tool for behaving ethically—and they stipulate that self esteem is personal pride mixed with a fair amount of humility, and this balance creates the confidence to “hang tough” when dealing with ethical dilemmas.
- Behave with patience and with faith in your decisions and yourself. Patience helps us to behave in ways that will be the best in the long run, and to avoid the trap of having to have things happen immediately.
- Behave with persistence. This means behaving ethically all of the time—not just when it is convenient to do so. An ethical leader has persistence to stick to her/his purpose and to achieve what she/he envisions.

- Behave in ways that are consistent with what is really important. This means keeping perspective. Perspective allows us to reflect and to see things more clearly so that we can see what is really important to guide our behavior.

Information borrowed and adapted from a presentation by Sara A. Boatman, “Ethical Leadership: Doing What’s Right.”

Solving Problems Ethically

- **What’s the core problem?** Define in plain language what’s wrong. Limit your response to one sentence to keep it simple.
- **What facts will help me decide what to do?** List the supporting data you will need to identify your options and analyze solutions.
- **What’s at stake?** Assess the cost of acting vs. not acting.
- **What does experience teach me?** Reflect on similar problems and how you have dealt with them. Cite facts and draw lessons that relate to the current situation.

Adapted from *Leading Quietly*, Joseph L. Badaracco Jr. Harvard Business School Press.

