
CHAPTER 2

ETHICS AT WORK - LEADERSHIP AND INTEGRITY

In the workplace, we are faced daily with the responsibility of making decisions. How do we respond when someone speaks to us? How do we decide what to do first when the boss gives us an assignment? Companies and institutions hire leaders with **integrity** and **expertise**. Those leaders have a responsibility to the people who work for them and to society, in general, to provide employees with guidelines for making ethical decisions.

Ethics at work – Leadership and Integrity is the theme of the second chapter of the Business Ethics volume. Ethics and ways in which leaders apply ethical standards in work settings is of concern and important to all. Lessons are presented and suggestions for ways of expanding on the lessons will guide teachers and students and may encourage teachers to pursue longer, more in-depth lessons. Appendix III contains a list of Important Terms that will be useful when discussing, reading and writing about the topic.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

If you watch television and movies and read newspapers, you may believe that all business leaders lie and cheat, want to destroy the environment, make any **compromise** for financial gain, and risk the lives and health of their employees and the public to make money. Front page news reports of airplane crashes, injury and illness, illegal stock market trading, and **sweatshops** make business professionals appear to be greedy, selfish, money-hungry villains.

According to E. Marie Bothe, president of Wetherill, even small lies and infractions of ethics are unacceptable. "Operating from honesty, truth, fairness and integrity is the only way to truly succeed."

How do corporate and institutional leaders decide what is the best decision? How do employees learn to behave and work in an ethical way? The best way to make a decision, then, is to think of results: What is the best way to achieve several goals? Once that question is answered, the ethical decision is made.

How Ethical Decisions Are Made

Ethical decisions are made by business leaders based on these considerations:

1. How can employees feel fulfilled professionally?
2. How can customers be satisfied?
3. How can profit be assured for **stakeholders** or shareholders?
4. How can the community be served?

Many pressures affect business leaders. Ethical considerations are sometimes difficult for business leaders when they must choose among different **priorities**. Making decisions based on the needs of employees, customers, stakeholders and the community requires a good leader. What do good leaders do in order to achieve ethical standards?

Laws

First, there are laws that guide business leaders. Breaking laws can lead to arrest and imprisonment. For example, one company's sales manager decided to discount prices of outdated fruit. In the end, some children who ate the fruit got very sick with **hepatitis A**. The disease was traced to the company's outdated fruit. Several of the company's leaders were indicted on criminal charges. Today, the company no longer exists.

Individual Ethics

Laws are not always enough to assure ethical behaviors. Individual leaders and their decision-making behaviors (ethical or unethical) **set examples** for employees. In the United States, anonymous manager surveys show that 30% of managers admit that they have sent in inaccurate reports. Clearly, there is a need to think about and work on developing ethical decision making skills for managers.

On-the-Job Ethical Conflicts

Four ethical conflicts confront leaders in business:

1. Conflict of Interest - A leader achieves personal gain from a decision he/she makes)
2. Loyalty versus truth - A leader must decide between loyalty to the company and truthfulness in business relationships
3. Honesty and integrity - A leader must decide if he/she will be honest or lie; if he/she will take responsibility for decisions and actions or blame someone else?
4. Whistleblowing - Does the leader tell others (media or government authorities) about the unethical behavior of the company or institution?



CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

- Identify examples from your own experience of each of the following and share with a classmate or colleague. Notice how your experiences are similar and different:
 - Conflict of interest
 - Loyalty versus truth
 - Honesty versus integrity
 - Whistleblowing

In the lessons that follow, students will be asked to think about ethical issues. Teachers, sensitive to the context in which the students work and live, will guide the discussions and use the activities, materials, and websites, as well as other materials.

Guidance from teachers is key in any lesson where students are learning new, interesting, and at times, sensitive information. These lessons are a starting point for teaching about business ethics. Teachers may want to take these ideas and use them to develop other lessons.



PRELIMINARY LESSON PLANNING

Materials:

- Prepare and duplicate copies of the chart entitled "Ethical Dilemmas at Work." A sample is attached as [Appendix A](#).

Note: This activity will be most effective if completed based on the students' own experiences with ethical decision making and not based on other people's experiences.

- Prepare a set of "Ethical Dilemmas at Work." A set of 4-5 can be found as a sample set in [Appendix B](#). Duplicate one for each student or pair of students.
- Print out a set of Key Terms from [Appendix C](#) for each student.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

- Before starting the lesson, consider what vocabulary and grammar points students will need to review in order to complete the lesson successfully. Start with vocabulary and grammar points that they already know, and then move to those with which they may not be confident and/or familiar.



WARM UP ACTIVITY

(Approximately 15-20 minutes)

Objectives:

- To activate student interest and background knowledge in the topic of ethical decision-making at work
- To introduce new vocabulary and grammar that will assist them in reading about and discussing the topic
- To build trust and confidence in addressing a topic of high importance; this is perhaps new to some students.

Procedures:

1. Write (or have a student write) on the blackboard: Ethical Decisions at Work.
Ask individual students to define each word in the phrase.
Summarize all student-generated definitions into a coherent single definition of the concept, Ethical Decisions at Work. Here, the focus is on generating student motivation in the topic, and less on creating a highly technical definition. The teacher's role is to provide guidance and to generate enthusiasm and creativity.
2. Tell students that this is the topic for today's lesson. Tell them that at the end of the lesson they will understand, be able to discuss, and be able to read about this topic with more confidence and knowledge.
3. Ask students to think of an ethical decision that they or a family member had to make at work. If students do not work, ask them to think of an ethical decision that they had to make at school or at home. Tell them, "Ethics are everywhere! Today, we will be talking about work-related business ethics."
4. Encourage students to share their stories. Some students may be willing to tell their stories about ethical dilemmas that they, their parents, co-workers, or friends have had to make. The goal here is to encourage students to talk about real-life ethical dilemmas in their lives. The teacher's role is to support as much student input as possible while noting specific stories and ideas for later discussion or writing.



ACTIVITY #1: SUMMARY WRITING

(approximately 20-30 minutes)

Note: Timing will depend in part on needs, proficiency and level of interest of students.

Goals:

- To have students learn or review and use key vocabulary and grammar associated with the lesson
- To provide opportunities for discussion of the topic

Procedures:

1. Distribute the [Background Information](#) from this lesson. Make sure that all students have a copy.
2. Create eight work groups (2-4 students is optimal; no more than 5 students per group). Ask each of the groups to read and summarize one of the eight paragraphs. For example, one group will read and summarize the first paragraph; the second group, the second paragraph, and so on. Tell students that each summary should be a paragraph of 10-15 words. Then, ask for two or three students to write the individual summaries on the blackboard.
3. Once students have completed the summaries on the blackboard, the teacher summarizes and corrects (as needed).
Note: Teachers should consider focusing on either accuracy or fluency. Remind students (before they start work) what the focus of the lesson will be, for example, using passive voice, or emphasizing detail.
4. The teacher solicits questions from the whole class. Students comment on the content of the summaries and raise questions.
5. The teacher asks for students' reactions to the reading and asks them to consider the ideas presented in terms of their own experiences at work. Here, the teacher may want to refer to student-generated examples of ethical dilemmas raised in the [Warm-up Activity, Step #5](#).



ACTIVITY #2: LEARNING ABOUT ETHICS AT WORK

(Approximately 15-30 minutes)

(See note above on timing and proficiency level.)

Goals

- To have students work directly with the material presented on ethics at work
- To practice vocabulary and grammar
- To practice discussing and writing about the topic

Procedures:

1. Divide students into pairs.
Note: Student groupings have a significant impact on learning. It is recommended that the teacher assign students into pairs in an effort to maximize effective and enthusiastic discussions and writing on this topic.
2. Distribute the "Ethical Dilemmas at Work" chart [Appendix A](#). Assure that each pair is given one chart. Make sure students understand the words at the top of each of the three columns on the chart.
3. Instruct students to fill out the chart (in their pairs) following these steps:
 - A. Tell your partner about an ethical dilemma you had at work, home or school. The partner asks questions about the details and writes down a brief description of the first ethical dilemma on the chart.
 - B. Pairs of students then reverse roles - the partner tells the first student a second ethical dilemma. The first student writes down a summary description of the second ethical

dilemma. Students produce a list of four to six ethical dilemmas at work. The first column of the chart is now complete.

- C. In the middle section, "Conflict," students use the same procedures as described in steps A and B. This time, they identify one from the list: "Four ethical conflicts confront leaders in business." (See [Background section.](#)) Students write down one of these four choices for each of their ethical dilemmas at work jotted down in the first column: Conflict of Interest, Loyalty versus Truth; Honesty and Integrity; or Whistleblowing. Students are likely to want to discuss these four in pairs. The teacher is available to offer correction, clarification and direction, as warranted by student needs.
 - D. Finally, students fill out the final (far right) column entitled "Possible Solution" where they offer suggestions on how to resolve the ethical dilemma. Students discuss each ethical dilemma at work and the conflict, and determine what the employee or leader can do to begin to solve the conflict.
4. Once all pairs of students have completed the charts, the teacher asks one student from each pair to describe one interesting or complex ethical dilemma at work for the class. Classmates listen and discuss the case.
 5. The teacher summarizes the presentations briefly and asks students to reflect on their learning from this activity: What did you learn? What did you like? About what would you like to know more? What would you like to do with the information you learned?



ACTIVITY #3: FOLLOW THE LEADER: ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING AT WORK

(30-45 minutes)

Goals

- To experience leadership in ethical decision making
- To practice using language skills for addressing ethical issues
- To become familiar with some of the significant ethical issues in business.

Procedures:

Tell students that they will now be working on some real-life case studies in ethical decision making in business. Add that this lesson is designed to give them opportunities to learn more about business ethics.

What does Goodyear do to promote itself as an ethical company? Is Goodyear an ethical company? Why/why not?

<http://www.goodyear.com/corporate/about/responsibility/index.html>

Proctor and Gamble makes cosmetics, fabric and paper products. Visit the Proctor and Gamble Product Safety Testing web site. What does the company want people to think of them?

<http://www.pg.com/animalalternatives/index.htm>

COOL DOWN ACTIVITY: ETHICS AT WORK & STUDENTS IN THE CLASS- A REVIEW

(approximately 10-15 minutes)

Goals:

- To provide students with an opportunity to give the teacher feedback, and give the teacher an opportunity to evaluate the students.

Procedures:

- Ask students to provide a list of what they learned through these lessons on Ethics at Work.
- When a full list is complete, ask the students to rank the complete list. (It may be best to make this a whole class activity.)
- The teacher tells the students what he/she noted throughout the lesson regarding student learning and communication. The teacher should not single out individual students, but make general statements about the extent to which learning occurred and how effective the communication was.
- The teacher completes the lesson by giving students written feedback. A sheet of paper with the student's name and the activity with these criteria may be used.

Sample Evaluation

Student performance: Activity 2 (Pair Work)

Student name: _____

Communication Score ____

4 = appropriate and useful communication

3 = good communication

2 = mixed skill in communication

1 = needs to work on communication skills

Provide detailed documentation for communication score below:

Content Score ____

4 = excellent understanding of the content

3 = good understanding of content with some weaknesses

2 = mixed knowledge about content

1 = needs further work on content of this lesson)

Provide detailed documentation for content score below:

Total Score: ____

LESSON EXTENSIONS

- Find a website (see **Internet Resources** below) for a company whose leadership is committed to ethical business practices. Tell your classmates about it. Discuss it outside of class (at work), and report back to the class on what others said about the company.
- Work with a colleague and develop a list of ethical issues specific to the company, school, or community in which you both work or live. Share lists with classmates.
- Select a company that has a web site (preferably one with operations in the community where the class meets). Research the company's web site for further information about how their leaders address ethical issues at work.
- Exchange e-mail communication with one of the companies identified in the extension of the lesson mentioned above. Report to the class on those communications. Try to learn more about how the company addresses ethical conflicts at work.
- Record the discussion in [Activity 3](#). On a following class day, re-play some or all of the discussion. Ask students to self-assess their performance in the discussion. Be certain to have students reflect (preferably in writing) about their learning and about what they will do the next time they are invited to discuss the topic of ethics at work.



INTERNET RESOURCES

Classroom Activities and Lessons

Lesson plans and activities intended for classroom use; can be adapted to meet the needs of students.

<http://mediaroom.scholastic.com/node/303> and www.benjerry.com

Ben & Jerry's produces a wide variety of super-premium ice cream and ice cream novelties, using high-quality ingredients including milk and cream from family farmers who do not treat their cows with the synthetic hormone rBGH. The company states its position on rBGH on its labels. Ben and Jerry's products are distributed nationwide and in selected foreign countries in supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, franchise Ben & Jerry's Scoop Shops, restaurants and other venues. Ben & Jerry's, a Vermont corporation and wholly-owned subsidiary of Unilever, operates its business on a three-part Mission Statement emphasizing product quality, economic reward and a commitment to the community. Contributions made via the employee led Ben & Jerry's Foundation in 2009 totaled approximately \$1.7 million. Additionally, the company makes significant product donations to community groups and nonprofits both in Vermont and across the nation. The purpose of Ben & Jerry's philanthropy is to support the founding values of the company: economic and social justice, environmental restoration and peace through understanding, and to support our Vermont communities.

Materials with Exploitable Content

The content of the materials listed below can be used to create theme-based lessons.

- <http://www.generalmills.com/en/Responsibility.aspx>
General Mills is committed to diversity, according to their web site. Use their site to have students evaluate General Mills' efforts at ethical business practices.

Official Documents

These can be used to provide background information and to create materials.

- <http://www.nikebiz.com/responsibility/>
Nike "Just Doing It"
- <http://www.walmartfoundation.org/economy.html>
The Wal-Mart Foundation gives awards for ethical business practices. Almar Printing, winner of the Wal-Mart Foundation Sam Walton Business Leader Award, is one of many small companies recognized for its efforts to provide service to the community and be a profitable business.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Ethical Dilemmas at Work (chart)

	Ethical Dilemma (Column 1)	Conflict (Column 2)	Possible Solution (Column 3)
Student 1			
Student 2			

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APPENDIX B

Scenarios

Ethical Dilemma #1

The boss asks workers to stay late at the office. Although several employees have gone to him/her and said that they could not stay late, he/she persists in telling workers that there is "a bit" more work for them to do.

Ethical Dilemma #2

Your colleague rarely completes work assignments. You have been helping him finish the last two projects. You want him to stop asking you to help him because you have work of your own to do.

Ethical Dilemma #3

The company is growing and the amount of work is increasing. You think the boss should hire more employees.

Ethical Dilemma #4

You work in the quality control division of a company. You have rejected some of the parts that have come through your department because they did not meet company standards. Your boss tells you that you should ignore the low standard parts.

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APPENDIX C

Important Terms

The list of terms below may be useful to students to learn and use as they begin the chapter on Ethics at Work. More terms and idioms will appear in later chapters.

Compromise: an agreement that is achieved after everyone involved accepts less than he or she wanted at first

Expertise: a special skill or knowledge gained by experience

Hepatitis A: inflammation of the liver

Integrity: the quality of being honest and having high moral principles

Priorities: what you believe to be most important and put before all else

Set an example: to purposely mold your actions and behavior to what you wish others to follow

Stakeholder: one who holds stakes when a wager is made by others and pays it to the winner

Sweatshop: a factory where people work hard in bad conditions for very little money

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