Unit - 3

Developing Codes for Office Ethics

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the difference between ethics and morals
- ✓ Understand the value of ethics

Unit 3
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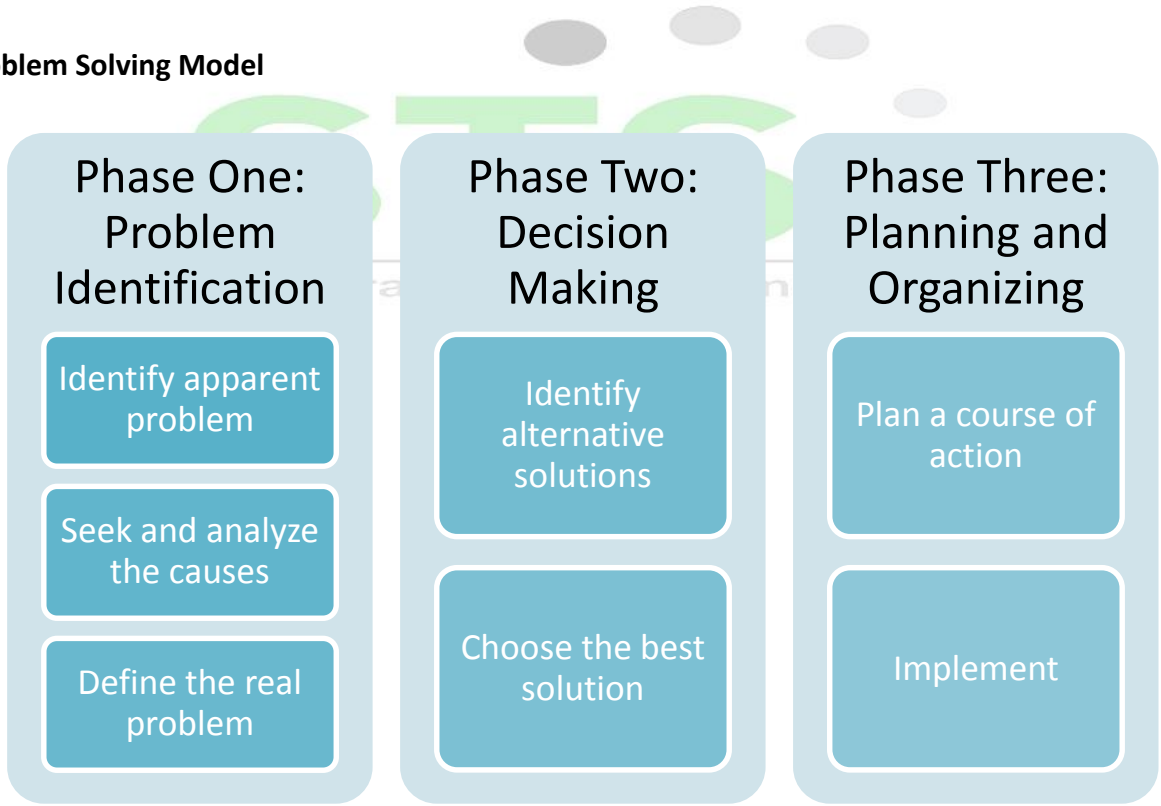
The Three-Phase Model

Whenever you read a book on problem solving, this model, in some form or other, is sure to be there. It may have six steps rather than seven, or it may have five steps. However, the model doesn't really change...just the authors' ways of breaking it down.

As you work your way from problem to solution, you are actually shifting your focus.

- When you define a problem, you ask yourself: What is my problem?
- As you try to analyze the root causes you ask: Why is it a problem?
- When you are generating options, you ask yourself: What are some ways I can solve my problem?

The Problem Solving Model



This model doesn't just work on paper: it applies across a range of problem solving activities. It is the very basis for informed and consistent problem solving. If you are someone who loves tools, this is your basic tool.

We often don't spend enough time in defining a problem, and that in itself is a problem. Don't be in too big a rush to get the solution worked out: make sure you know what you need to know. Then, make a commitment to continually check back with the first stage to make sure the problem is the same.

Another Perspective

Here is another way of breaking down the three phases:

We recommend that you spend most of your time on the first block: perception, definition, and analysis. As we've mentioned already in this course, we often don't spend enough time in defining a problem, and that in itself is a problem. Don't be in too big a rush to get the solution worked out: make sure you know what you need to know first. Then, make a commitment to continually check back with the first stage to make sure the problem is the same.

Phase One

Let's take a look at the first phase of the three-phase model: Problem Identification. Here is a breakdown of each step in the problem identification process. In all three steps, your focus is on the problem itself. Only afterward will you start thinking about solutions.

Perception

You ask yourself: Is there a problem? Where is the problem? Whose problem is it? This is the sniffing, groping, grasping stage. It includes whatever you do to get a handle on the problem.

What are the symptoms? Funny noises in the engine, an unhappy look on your employee's face, or a change in the productivity rate? You've got to find out what the problem is.

The purpose of this phase is:

- To surface an issue.
- To make it okay to discuss it (legitimize).
- To air different points of view.
- To avoid perception wars.
- To get group agreement to work on the problem.

Steps in this phase include:

- Legitimizing the problem; make it okay to discuss it.
- Asking, "How does the problem feel?" and, "What's the real problem?"
- Identifying the best, worst, and most probable situation.
- Identifying whose problem it is.

Definition

Here, we state the problem as a question. Our goal is to grasp the general idea of the problem and then draw the rope tighter to get a more specific idea of the problem.

Steps in this phase include identifying:

- What is the problem?
- What is not the problem?

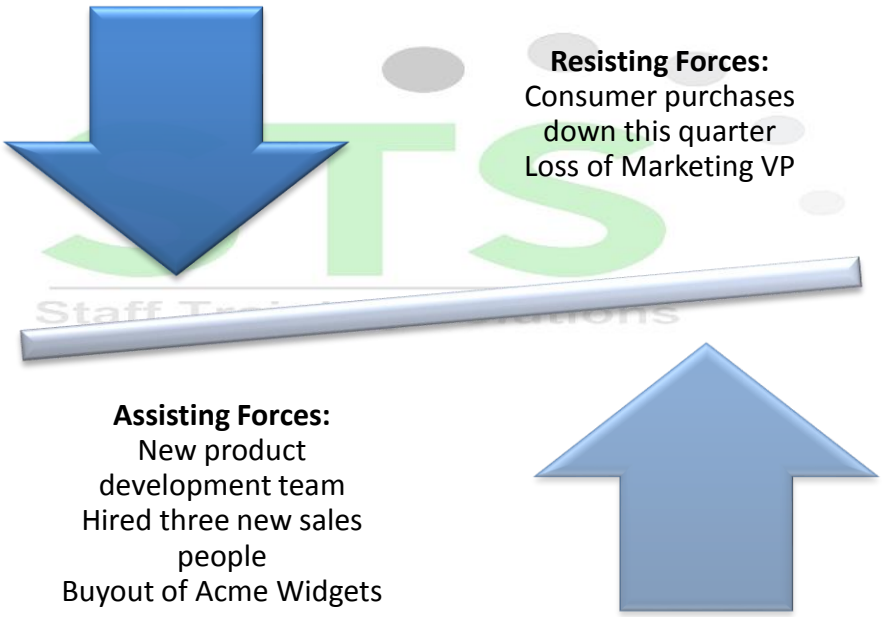
Analysis

Now that we have a general idea of the problem, we will use analytical tools to define it even further. Steps in this phase can include the following.

Ask basic questions, such as who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Break it down into smaller pieces. For example, if we know that the problem is that revenue is down, we can break it down into possible areas of cause: manufacturing, shipping, or sales.

Use force field analysis. This is a structured method of looking at two opposing forces acting on a situation. Simply draw a line on a piece of paper. On one half of the line, list the forces that are working to solve the problem. On the other half, list the forces that are stopping you from solving the problem. Let's say that revenue is down this quarter. Our force field might look like this:



Move from **generalizations to specific examples** as a way of testing what the problem is or is not. For example, you could say, "Our company has really been doing poorly all year." We could further identify how the company has been doing poorly; let's say that the production department in particular has been less efficient, costing the company money. Then, we can look at what aspect in particular is doing poorly.

Ask the expert. Find a person who has dealt with this sort of issue before.

Phase Two

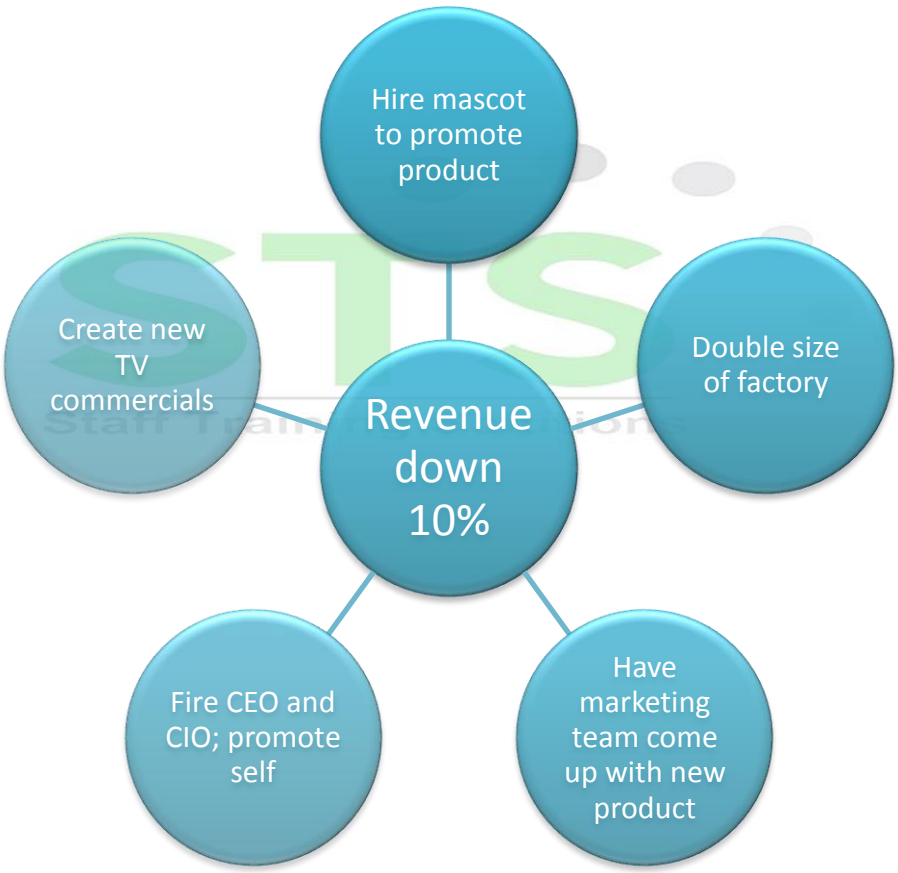
Until the three steps of problem identification have been covered, don't proceed to phase two (decision making). (If people don't agree on the problem, they will never agree on a solution!)

Creative Thinking Methods

Here are some tools you can use to come up with ideas.

Brainstorming

Draw a circle in the middle of a page and write down your problem. Then, draw lines from that circle and write down some solutions. Don't worry if they're wacky, impossible, or silly; this is a time for creative thinking, not critical thinking. Capturing the range of ideas is what is important here.



Checkerboard

This is a more organized form of brainstorming and can be particularly helpful for people who don't like how chaotic a brainstorming session can become. With this method, you organize your thoughts into a table. We still want creative thinking rather than critical thinking, but this method may help you develop ideas.

Here is an example of a checkerboard.

Main Issue	Possible Specific Solutions		
Create safe passage between building and parking/bus stop	Have security escort night staff to their cars or bus stop	Rearrange shifts so that people come and go during daylight hours	Set up a buddy system with employees
People missing work in snowstorm	Set up 50% of staff with ability to work from home during storms	Arrange for temporary shelters so that staff can stay overnight	Provide incentives for employees to put winter tires on their vehicles and learn safe winter driving
Threat of strike is rumored	Set up contract negotiations well before contract expires	Approach union and ask to speak with them	Set up contingency plan to ensure business continuity in the event of a strike

Next, cut up solutions and move them around, or use your computer. This can help you organize your ideas and generate even more solutions!

Research and Report

Look at what others have done. Do some research and prepare a report. What lessons can you learn from this information?

Evaluation

Now that we have some solutions in mind, it's time to evaluate the solutions to see which ones are feasible.

- Sort solutions by category. This can be similar to the checkerboard above, just with some critical thinking applied.
- Identify the advantages and disadvantages to each solution.
- Identify what you like about each idea and what you don't like.
- Number your ideas in order, from the one that seems the most feasible to the one that seems the least feasible. This is useful for small problems.

Decision Making

Once you have evaluated the options, it's time to make a decision. Here are some ways you can do it:

- Get a consensus from the group on the best solution.
- Don't limit yourself to one option; you may find that you can combine solutions for super success. (This is called the both/and method.)
- To make voting easier, you may want to eliminate the solutions that the group as a whole absolutely won't consider.
- Try to focus on agreements during all voting.
- Use straw voting: Take a quick, non-binding yes/no vote on the current solution as proposed.
- Try negative voting: Rather than asking who is for a solution, ask who is against the proposed solution.
- Back off! The group may need some time to evaluate the options before making a decision.

Phase Three

Our last phase should be planning how to implement the solution and performing the actual implementation.

Planning

For the planning portion, start by breaking the task down into smaller portions. Then, for each mini-task, plan the following information:

- What needs to be done?
- Who will do it?
- What resources will we need?
- How much time will it take? (Set a deadline!)

Once all the smaller tasks are planned out, you will have an idea of how long the main solution will take to implement. You may also want to make sure that the above questions are answered for the main task.

Implementation

Implementation is a cycle of three activities:

- Figuring out what you are going to do
- Doing it
- Reacting to what happened or getting feedback

Sooner or later, you have to try out your solution!

Solution Planning Worksheet

It can help to lay out what you are planning to do. Here is an example of a solution planning worksheet.

Problem: Revenue down 10%

Solution: Develop new product

Task 1	**Engineering will design product.**	
	What needs to be done?	Product needs to be designed.
	Who will do it?	Jim and Sue from Engineering.
	What resources will they need?	Unknown. They should have all resources in house; we will make sure they know we can assist in obtaining more resources if necessary.
	How much time will it take?	Targeted completion date: Dec. 31
Task 2	**Prototype will be created.**	
	What needs to be done?	Prototype needs to be developed.
	Who will do it?	Sam from Manufacturing, Jill from Engineering
	What resources will they need?	May need testing group; we will help provide this
	How much time will it take?	Targeted completion date: Feb. 28

Task 3	**Product will be manufactured.**	
	What needs to be done?	Product needs to be created.
	Who will do it?	Joe from Manufacturing
	What resources will they need?	All resources in-house
	How much time will it take?	Targeted completion date: Dec. 31

The Problem Solving Toolkit

There are some techniques we can use to help us at every stage of the problem solving process.

The Lasso

Can we tighten up our definition of the problem?

- "How can we improve communication in our group?" What do we mean by communication?
- "How can we get our work done more efficiently?" What do we mean by efficiently?

Is/Is Not

The Is/Is Not technique lets us eliminate assumptions and emphasize facts. For example, someone says, "The telephone system isn't working." You might ask them to list what isn't working and list what is working. Perhaps all functions are affected, or perhaps only incoming calls have been affected.

Graphics

A diagram allows us to see things visually. For example, think of personality types, which can be depicted visually as well as verbally. For some, a graph is more beneficial than a score or a label. For others, one type of categorizing is better than another type of categorizing.

Basic Questions

Who, what, where, when, why, how?

Criteria

In many situations it can be very helpful to have already determined what the criteria will be for your best solution. For example, let's say that you and your spouse are going out to celebrate your anniversary. Where are you going to go? Well, rather than the old harangue about: "Where do you want to go?" and, "I don't care. It's up to you," how about developing criteria ahead of time?

Some examples:

- The place must have a liquor license, since you want a glass of wine with your meal.
- It shouldn't cost an arm and a leg, yet you don't want the fast food joint just down the road. A cost of $20 to $30 per person is another criterion.
- You want a place where you can have chicken and your spouse can have seafood.
- It shouldn't be more than 50 miles away, since you both have to work tomorrow.
- It should take reservations. You don't want to go to all that trouble and then find the place has no table for you.

Now you can brainstorm, but the brainstorming will be modified or restrained, since you've already identified the criteria that the restaurant must meet.

Force Field Analysis

Force field analysis examines restraining forces (forces that discourage the problem) vs. sustaining forces (forces that encourage a problem). Take an example like John arriving late for work.

What are the restraining forces?

- Boss is angry
- John is behind with his work
- Parking spots all gone

What are the sustaining forces?

- Gets to sleep an extra 15 minutes
- Takes the kids to the babysitter
- Misses traffic on way to work

Then the question becomes, how can we weaken the sustaining forces and strengthen or shore up some of the restraining forces?

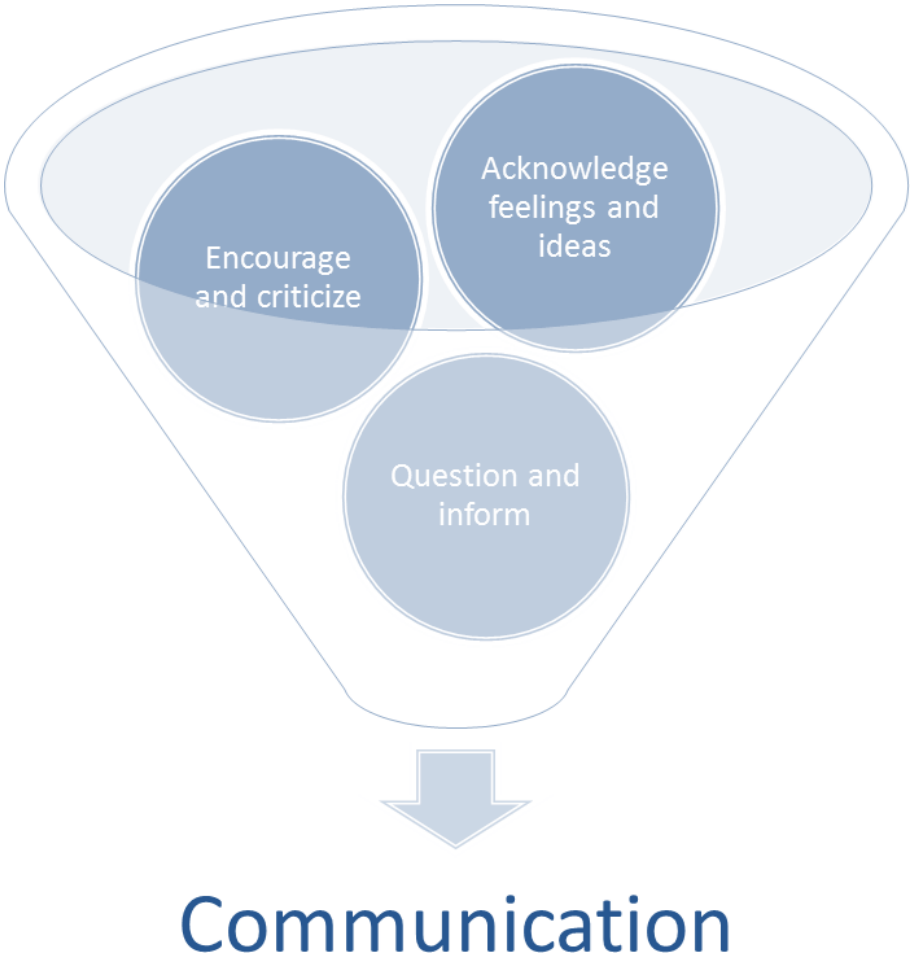
Legitimizing Problems and Positions

Problems are okay. Everyone has problems. They are a fact of life. Human beings couldn't live without change in their environment, without stimulation, and problems provide that change and stimulation. So it's all right to have a problem as long as you are willing to do something about it.

In our society we often think that having a problem is like admitting failure. Some of us refuse to admit we have problems, or we ignore or hide them.

Everyone sees things differently, especially problems. Did you ever stop children from fighting and ask what the problem was? You would usually get a discordant chorus of responses as to why they were fighting, and each would see the fight from their own perspective. This expression of our personal view, no matter how discordant it may be, needs to be legitimized.

To do this, we can use the communication funnel.



If you are working with two employees who are in conflict, for example, each one must have their perception of the problem legitimized. You aren't telling one they are right and the other they are wrong. Rather, you are demonstrating that you accept and support each view as legitimate, and will protect it from attack until it has been explored. Showing people that their view has been heard and accepted will reduce the tension and let them relax, at least a bit. Only then can you go on to find common ground, identify what's at the root of the problem, make decisions on solutions, and move ahead.

Ethical Decision Making Tools

Three Types of Tools

The tools we just discussed are great for solving all kinds of problems. However, there are some special considerations and tools when solving ethical problems.

Basic Principles

Before we look at some specific tools you can use to help solve ethical decisions, let's look at some general principles you should follow.

- Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Will the affected person also think that this decision is ethical?
- Make sure you have all the information.
- Look at the problem through various principles. How can the principle of loyalty be fulfilled through this problem? How does confidentiality come into play?

For Quick Decisions

Let's look at two tools that can be used when you have to make snap decisions.

Ethical Priorities

Nan DeMars suggests three priorities, in this order:

- Take care of yourself.
- Take care of your company.
- Take care of your supervisor.

So let's say your supervisor asks you to lie about their whereabouts to someone. Make sure your needs are covered first, then take care of the company's needs, and then worry about your supervisor.

The Smell Test

When you are considering a solution, ask yourself these questions:

- How would I explain this decision to my children?
- How would I feel if this decision were reported on the news?
- Can I live with this decision? Will it keep me up at night?
- How would my mother feel about this decision?

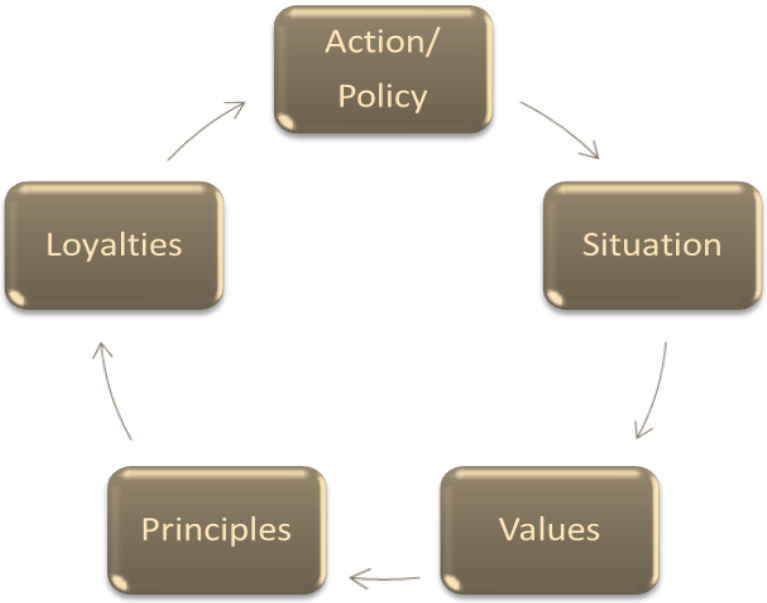
These questions will highlight potential problems with the solution you're considering.

Advanced Processes

Now let's take a look at some more advanced tools that you can use if you have some time to ponder your options before making a decision.

The Potter Box

Developed by Ralph Potter of the Harvard Divinity School in 1965, this provides a more detailed method of decision making.



Let's take a look at the steps.

1. We start with the action or policy that has caused the dilemma.
2. Next, we analyze the situation. Write down the who, what, where, when, why, and how.
3. Now, determine what values are called into play by the dilemma. Credibility? Trust? Reliability? Honesty?
4. Next add the principles that might affect the situation. Perhaps the maxim that human life should be valued above all else comes into play. Or perhaps you personally believe that theft is always wrong.
5. Now, determine where loyalties lie. To your company? The client? The supplier? What other loyalties might affect the situation?
6. Now you're back at the action or policy. How will you alter things to solve the dilemma, using the information gathered?

The Kidder Process

Ethics expert Rushworth Kidder has developed a nine-step process that will help you sort out ethical issues. You may find this process more practical and easier to use than the other approaches we have discussed.

1. Recognize that there is a moral dilemma.
2. Determine the actor. Are you morally obligated to do anything about the dilemma? Do you have the power to act?
3. Gather the relevant facts. Determine who, what, how, when, why, and where. Try to predict possible future events that could affect your decision.
4. Test for right versus wrong issues. Does the moral issue potentially concern law breaking? Does the action go against your moral principles? How would you feel if the decision you're considering was reported in the news? Would your mother make the same decision? If these questions point out that your decision is obviously wrong, then you can stop at this step.
5. Test for right versus right paradigms. Is this a case of truth versus loyalty, self versus community, short term versus long term, or justice versus mercy? Generalizing the issue into one of these paradigms helps you identify that the core issue is two values facing off against each other.
6. Apply the resolution principles. Determine what the resolution would be based on the Golden Rule, Kantian principles, and utilitarian principles. This is simply to identify lines of reasoning.
7. Investigate the trilemma options. This step can actually take place at any point during the process. Is there a third way through this dilemma?
8. Make the decision.
9. Revisit and reflect on the decision.

Case Study

It Just Doesn't Add Up

You are the assistant for the president of your company's marketing department. One of the major stipulations of the company's code of ethics is that staff are not allowed to accept freebies from their clients.

You opened your boss's calendar the other day to schedule a meeting but you opened his personal calendar by accident. You noticed an entry for a gala sponsored by one of the company's clients. What do you do?

Questions

Our Tool

Our Solution

Further Reading: