

A Decision-Making Model for Business Ethics

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1. **Determine the facts.** Gather all of the relevant facts. It is critical at this stage that we do not unintentionally bias our later decision by gathering only those facts in support of one particular outcome.
2. **Identify the ethical issues involved.** What is the ethical dimension? What is the ethical issue? Often we do not even notice the ethical dilemma. Avoid normative myopia.
3. **Identify stakeholders.** Who will be affected by this decision? What are their relationships, to me, and what is their power over my decision or results? Who has a stake in the outcome? Do not limit your inquiry only to those stakeholders to whom you believe you owe a duty; sometimes a duty arises as a result of the impact. For instance, you might not necessarily first consider your competitors as stakeholders; however, once you understand the impact of your decision on those competitors, an ethical duty may arise.
4. **Consider the available alternatives.** Exercise "moral imagination." Are there creative ways to resolve conflicts? Explore not only the obvious choices, but also those that are less obvious and that require some creative thinking or moral imagination to create.
5. **Consider how a decision affects stakeholders.** Take the point of view of other people involved. How is each stakeholder affected by my decision? Compare and weigh the alternatives: ethical theories and traditions can help here.
 - a. Consequences
 - i. Beneficial and harmful consequences
 - b. Duties, rights, principles
 - i. What does the law say?
 - ii. Are there professional duties involved?
 - iii. Which principles are most obligatory?
 - iv. Are people being treated fairly, with respect for their autonomy and equality?
 - c. Implications for personal integrity and character
 - i. What type of person am I becoming through this decision?
 - ii. What are my own principles and purposes?
 - iii. Can I live with public disclosure of this decision?
6. **Guidance.** Can you discuss the case with relevant others; can you gather additional opinions or perspectives? Are there any guidelines, codes, or other external sources that might shed light on the dilemma?
7. **Assessment.** Have you built in mechanisms for assessment of your decision and possible modifications? Are they necessary? Make sure that you learn from each decision and move forward with that increased knowledge; you may face similar decisions in the future or find it necessary to make changes to your current situation.