

An Ethical Decision Model

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about a model that can be used to help you make ethical decisions. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Josephson's Core Values Model

Once you recognize that there is a decision that involves ethical judgment, Michael Josephson would first have you ask as many questions as are necessary to get a full background on the relevant facts.

Then, assuming you have all the needed information, the decision process for **Josephson's core values model** is as follows:



STEP BY STEP

1. Identify the stakeholders. That is, who are the potential gainers and losers in the various decisions that might be made here?
2. Identify several likely or reasonable decisions that could be made.
3. Consider which stakeholders gain or lose with each decision.
4. Determine which decision satisfies the greatest number of core values.
5. If there is no decision that satisfies the greatest number of core values, try to determine which decision delivers the greatest good to the various stakeholders.

It is often helpful to identify who (or what group) is the most important stakeholder, and why. In economist Milton Friedman's view, it will always be the shareholders. In the view of John Mackey, the CEO of Whole Foods Market, the long-term viability and profitability of the organization may require that customers come first, or, at times, some other stakeholder group.



TERM TO KNOW

Josephson's Core Values Model

A process to arrive at the most ethical option for an individual or a business organization, using a virtue ethics approach combined with some elements of stakeholder analysis and utilitarianism.

2. The Core Values

Here are the core values and their subcomponents as developed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics.

Value	Subcomponents
Trustworthiness	<p>Be honest: Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; be sincere, forthright; don't deceive, mislead, or be tricky with the truth; don't cheat or steal, and don't betray a trust.</p> <p>Demonstrate integrity: Stand up for what you believe, walk the walk as well as talking the talk; be what you seem to be; show commitment and courage.</p> <p>Be loyal: Stand by your family, friends, coworkers, community, and nation; be discreet with information that comes into your hands; don't spread rumors or engage in harmful gossip; don't violate your principles just to win friendship or approval; don't ask a friend to do something that is wrong.</p> <p>Keep promises: Keep your word, honor your commitments, and pay your debts; return what you borrow.</p>
Respect	<p>Judge people on their merits, not their appearance; be courteous, polite, appreciative, and accepting of differences; respect others' right to make decisions about their own lives; don't abuse, demean, or mistreat anyone; don't use, manipulate, exploit, or take advantage of others.</p>
Responsibility	<p>Be accountable: Think about the consequences on yourself and others likely to be affected before you act; be reliable; perform your duties; take responsibility for the consequences of your choices; set a good example and don't make excuses or take credit for other people's work.</p> <p>Pursue excellence: Do your best, don't quit easily, persevere, be diligent, make all you do worthy of pride.</p> <p>Exercise self-restraint: Be disciplined, know the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do.</p>
Fairness	<p>Treat all people fairly, be open-minded; listen; consider opposing viewpoints; be consistent; use only appropriate considerations; don't let personal feelings improperly interfere with decisions; don't take unfair advantage of mistakes; don't take more than your fair share.</p>
Caring	<p>Show you care about others through kindness, sharing, compassion, and empathy; treat others the way you want to be treated; don't be selfish, mean, cruel, or insensitive to others' feelings.</p>
Citizenship	<p>Play by the rules, obey laws; do your share, respect authority, stay informed, vote, protect your neighbors, pay your taxes; be charitable, help your community; protect the environment, conserve resources.</p>

When individuals and organizations confront ethical problems, the core values decision model offered by Josephson generally works well to:

1. Clarify the gains and losses of the various stakeholders, which then raises ethical awareness on the part of the decision maker.
2. Provide a fairly reliable guide as to what the most ethical decision would be. In nine out of ten cases, step five in the decision process is not needed.

That said, it does not follow that students (or managers) would necessarily act in accord with the results of the core values decision process. There are many psychological pressures and organizational constraints that place limits on people both individually and in organizations. These pressures and constraints tend to compromise ideal - or the most ethical - solutions for individuals and for organizations.

For a business, one essential problem is that ethics can cost the organization money or resources, at least in the short term. Doing the most ethical thing will often appear to be something that fails to maximize profits in the short term or that may seem pointless because if you or your organization acts ethically, others will not, and society will be no better off, anyway.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about **Josephson's core values model**, a five-step ethical decision model that is designed to help you arrive at the personal or business decision that will satisfy the greatest number of values. **The core values** at the center of the model are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

Best of luck in your learning!

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