Ethical Decision Making and Assessment

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Ethical decision making and communication are important aspects of an organization’s overall reputation. The ability to communicate honest, accurate information in a transparent manner, particularly during times of crisis, can have an enormous impact on the survival of a given company. This paper will explore ethical behavior and communication as part of graduate level coursework at [fill in blank university] to demonstrate synthesis. Responses to questions requested will be provided in detail. A reflective conclusion will be offered as a summary.

Ethical Decision Making Blueprints

Ethical decision making at times can be confusing and disorganized, particularly during moments of crisis. Kiddler (2012), founder of the Institute for Global Ethics (Portland Herald Press, 2012), offers a blueprint for just such occasions. The components of his checklist include the following: 1. Recognize there exists a moral issue, 2. Determine the actor; 3. Gather relevant facts; 4. Test for right verses wrong issues; 5. Test for right versus right paradigms; 6. Apply resolutions; 7. Look for a third way; 8. Make the decision and 9. Revisit and reflect on the decision.

Analysis of Kiddler’s Checkpoints

This writer believes the ethical checkpoints presented by Kiddler make a great deal of sense. Being able to make ethical decisions during a time of crisis, as mentioned earlier, can be challenging and difficult.

Making incorrect decisions during moments of organizational crisis can have disastrous consequences for the company, investors and employees. Kiddler’s checkpoints provide a working blueprint from which to start.

SAD Formula
An additional ethical blueprint is offered by Day (2012) in his SAD formula. SAD is the acronym for situational definition, analysis and decision. Somewhat similar to Kiddler’s work, Day encourages individuals and organizations to look at the barebones issues involving a particular matter as part of the ethical decision-making process.

In the first part of Day’s approach, the situational definition encourages the identification of facts. The analysis part of his blueprint encourages a meaningful analysis of the conflicting values or facts. The third part of his approach relates to making the final decision.

Analysis of SAD

This writer believes the SAD approach to be a good, working approach to ethical decision making. While somewhat simplistic in nature, the SAD formula does offer a quick, easy to understand guidepost for organizational leaders and managers to go about the business of ethical communication during a crisis.

Nash’s 12 Questions

Laura Nash (Nash, 2013), a business ethicist, published 12 questions in the Harvard Business Review in 1981. The 12 questions are designed to assist organizational leaders and individuals with the ethical decision-making process. The essential questions of her model closely follow what other models offer, including Kiddler (2012) and Day (2012). This writer will not list all 12 questions here but instead, offer an analysis of the model.

Analysis of Nash’s 12 Questions

Nash’s 12 questions, which include important, self-reflective questions such as, who could the decision hurt and how did the situation occur in the first place are excellent approaches to ethical decisions, particularly during times of crisis. Concrete tools, in the form of self-questions as offered by Nash, provide users something tangible from which to formulate an
ethical approach to a given problem. The ethical ethos is grounded in these 12 questions, in this writer’s personal opinion.

**Commonalities and Universal Steps**

Upon reflection of the three models described in the previous section, this writer can identify several common threads that bind the trio of theories together. These three commonalities include: 1. The identification of facts; 2. Transparency in communication and; 3. Application of a resolution.

**Universal Steps**

This writer believes that the three steps discussed above should be part of every ethical decision and infused throughout the ethical decision-making process. While boiled down to just three points, this writer believes these can be effective guideposts, particularly during times of crisis.

**TWA Flight 800**

The crash of TWA flight 800 was a terrible event that claimed the lives of 212 passengers (National Transportation and Safety Board, 2011). Martha Cooper (1997), a media ethicists who had a personal connection to the crash, examined four main issues involving media coverage of the tragedy. Using specific key points in time [moments], Cooper exposes serious issues in some media sources “tell” the news to viewers.

Specifically, she objected to some of the more salacious elements of the reporting of the crash and the insensitivity to families on the part of the media. She essentially suggests that media outlets employ the ethical code of the Society of Professional Journalists (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014).
Analysis of TWA Case Study

This writer is in agreement with the author of the case study. The coverage of TWA Flight 800 seemed to be focused on the gruesome with little factual information being reported to the general public. For the purposes of full disclosure, this writer also needs to share that this writer was employed by the airline prior to the accident and that this writer’s personal viewpoint may be somewhat bias or overly sensitive to the entire crash matter.

This writer’s own ethical assessment is that a much more transparent, fair and meaningful approach to the coverage could have taken place at the time of the crash. Less attention to the horrible details of death should have taken place and more focus on what happened that caused the accident was needed. Specifically, investigative reporting should have been more widely employed by media organizations.

Choices for the Future

This writer believes the information shared in the reading material connected to assignment #7 was meaningful and insightful. The take-aways for improvement this writer can employ upon reflection include the adoption of a model for working through and communicating about ethical dilemmas in the future. Specific emphasis on the plan however, is less important than understanding the components.

Reflective Conclusion

Ethical communications are the end product of ethical decision making. Knowing how to make an ethical decision during times of crisis can be challenging and difficult. Use of models, such as the ones mentioned in this paper, can be helpful in providing concrete tools during crisis situations or emergencies.
This writer believes ethical dilemmas in part come into existence when faulty communication takes place. Communicating in ways that are transparent, truthful and honest are ways to help remedy difficult situations. Ownership of the problem and personal responsibility also have their place in ethical communications.

This writer will use the material experienced in this course for use in ethical decision making in the future.
References


