

Ethical dilemmas are something many engineers will face at one point or another in their careers. It is crucial for all engineers and other pioneers in STEM fields to know what course of action is appropriate in the case of an ethical roadblock as well. Without some sort of universal guideline, the path to safe and helpful designs becomes harder to navigate.

Although a Code of Ethics may not solve every ethical problem, it provides helpful thinking points and a strong, consistent basis to make those decisions. A company or engineer will be much less likely to find themselves at odds with the public and authoritative entities if the entire industry has a tool like this to use. It can't be used as a crutch though, so critical thinking is still a requirement.

As an engineering student, I have not had many chances to make ethical decisions in my field yet, but where I have, I have approached my designs with safety and consideration for the end user in mind. Outside of my discipline, ethical problems I face are always tackled with the biggest factor being how my decisions impact others. It seems simple, and many times it is, but a selfless attitude can go a long way in making the right choice. One ethical issue that stuck out to me was companies prioritizing profit over all else, even if it ended up costing more in the long run. I took notice of this because it is something that can unfortunately be observed frequently, even in the modern age. Cutting corners to save costs almost never works, and if it does, it tells a lot about the true nature of who is making the decisions in a company. It is interesting, and frankly unsurprising, that many modern ethical dilemmas stem from greed.

Overall I do think that most, if not all of us, were on the same page concerning ethical considerations. In general, it appears that we all recognized that the end user's well being and ensuring that sound design practices are being followed were the most important factors. If a product is developed with those things in mind, most ethical issues can be avoided as a byproduct. However, emerging technologies require extra vigilance and sometimes more rigorous evaluation on the part of engineers. New technology can be a harder area to navigate ethically speaking but it is not impossible, and should be treated with the same attitudes.

In my opinion, Responsibility, Integrity, and Honesty are the biggest factors to look at in the case study I chose. Those three things relate so closely with each other that it is difficult to separate them from a good general sense of ethical decision-making. Integrity and Honesty are the most important in the case of VW's ethical mishap, because the trustworthiness of the company was so affected in this situation, and their integrity as an organization was exposed for what it truly was as a result of their dishonesty. Another virtue I could see is selflessness, because the motivation to cut corners was ultimately a selfish decision.