**Codes of Conduct**

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Codes of conduct can be suggested by any organization. They are codes that are set by those organizations as guidelines for responsible behaviour of their members. Codes of conduct can be very detailed, especially corporate ones, but they can also express the values and norms that should guide behaviour and decision-making.

There are two types of codes of conduct, professional and corporate.

* Professional codes are created by professional societies of engineers, which may form different codes but generally have some common grounds.
* Corporate codes are created by companies for their employees.

Every code of conduct also has an objective, and based on those objectives, they can be classified into three types, aspirational, advisory or disciplinary.

* Aspirational codes express the moral values of a profession or company. These are a little vague.
* Advisory codes help professionals or employees make moral judgements based on the general values and norms of the profession or company. These also tend to be a little vague.
* Disciplinary codes demand that the behaviour of all professionals or employees meet certain values and norms. Disciplinary codes tend to be extremely detailed, and usually have penalties associated with breaches. However, there are usually no legal consequences except in specific cases e.g. sexual harassment.

## Professional Codes

There are many professional societies throughout the world who all make their own professional codes. However, they all tend to have some common characteristics.

* Maintaining morals and honesty and working with competence.
* Maintaining loyalty to employers and customers. It is common to be conflicted between this point and the previous one. A choice needs to be made here.
* Holding ourselves responsible to the public and society.

## Corporate Codes

Corporate codes are made by individual companies to set certain values, standards and principles of the conduct of corporations in their day-to-day business. These are founded on the Corporate Social Responsibilities, which are just the responsibilities these corporations have towards the society they operate in. This includes things like making donations and taking steps to help those affected by pandemics, but also less serious things such as competitions for universities. Even if the company’s work is generally harmful to society, such as tobacco production, they still have these corporate social responsibilities.

It can be argued that these acts also work to help improve the image of the corporations and is not a genuine act of goodwill. The ratio of profit made to amount spent on goodwill should give an indication about those corporations’ true motives.

The main elements of the corporate codes are:

* The mission
* The core values
* The responsibilities towards stakeholders
* Detailed rules and norms

Of course, corporate codes and professional codes can frequently be conflicting, leading to difficult decisions having to be made, especially if there are legal consequences to breaking corporate codes.

## Objections to Codes of Conduct

Some objections to codes of conduct include:

* Codes of conduct tend to be window-dressing in that actions do not always support what has been presented in the codes.
* Codes of conduct may contradict each other, especially when they are vague. This is especially common for the scenario where morals are in conflict with loyalty to employers. The best way to resolve this is to understand the difference between critical and uncritical loyalty. Uncritical loyalty is bad since it does not leave room to even consider that one’s employer may be in the wrong. Critical loyalty allows room to criticize actions of the employers, recognize when they are doing something immoral and act accordingly.
* Ethics cannot be coded. It is something that must come from inside oneself. Creating a bunch of codes and putting people into categories of good and bad depending on whether or not they follow the codes does not maintain ethical behaviour.
* Codes of conduct cannot be lived by, mostly due to the conflicts that frequently occur as discussed above.
* Most of the things in codes of conduct cannot be enforced since there are no legal consequences to most of them. There may be disciplinary actions, but generally not any legal consequences.

## Code of Ethics of the ASCE

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) have the following basic principles in their professional code of conducts:

* Engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health and welfare of the public and shall strive to comply with the principles of sustainable development in the performance of their professional duties.
* Engineers shall perform services only in areas of their competence.
* Engineers shall issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.
* Engineers shall act in professional matters for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees, and shall avoid conflicts of interest.
* Engineers shall build their professional reputation on the merit of their services and shall not compete unfairly with others.
* Engineers shall act in such a manner as to uphold and enhance the honour, integrity, and dignity of the engineering profession and shall act with zero-tolerance for bribery, fraud, and corruption.
* Engineers shall continue their professional development throughout their careers, and shall provide opportunities for the professional development of those engineers under their supervision.