

Ethics Toolkit

Theoretical Roots	Decision Criteria	An Action is Ethical When...	Questions I Should Ask Myself	Discussion Starters (in “work-speak”)
Deontology (Immanuel Kant)	universality	I would be willing for it to become universal law	What if everyone did it? What obligations do I have?	“Would we be content if others (organizations, employees, partners) did what we plan to do?”
	dignity	It treats other people as ends in themselves, and not just as a means	Am I protecting the rights and dignity of other people?	“Will our decision make some people feel that they are just being used?”
	agency	It allows other people to make their own choices	Am I giving others an opportunity to make their own decisions?	“Will people feel disempowered or alienated by our decision?”
	justice	Benefits and costs are equitably distributed	Will this decision be fair to all involved?	“Will any of our stakeholders feel this decision is unfair to them?”
Utilitarianism (John Stuart Mill)	utility	It maximizes happiness and minimizes pain	Who will be affected by my decision? Who will benefit, and who will be harmed?	“Let’s talk about who our decision will impact the most. Who are the key stakeholders here?”
		It provides the greatest benefit to the most people		
Virtue Ethics (Aristotle)	personal virtues	It helps me become a better person	What kind of person would this action make me? What would the best person in the world do?	“Let’s consider what kind of organizational identity we want to convey to the public.” “What would the best company in the world do?”
	disclosure	I would be willing to have it broadcast to the public	Would I want my action broadcast to the world? Can I live with my decision?	“How will this decision affect our image or reputation if it goes public?”
	integrity/ eudaimonism	It is true to who I am and consistent with who I want to become	What action would best reflect the kind of person I want to be? Will this pass my “sleep test”?	“Is this consistent with our mission and vision?” “Is this really what we are best at doing as an organization?”
Social Contracts (Locke, Rousseau, Rawls)	social obligations	I am fulfilling my obligation to contribute to a harmonious society	Am I fulfilling my societal duties? What kind of world do I want to live in?	“What kind of organization do we want to be?” “What do we want to contribute to the world and how do we want to do it?”
Ethics of Care (Feminist Philosophy)	care	It meets the needs of the most vulnerable	Who is vulnerable here? Who does not have a voice that should?	What responsibility do we have toward vulnerable groups or individuals?
	relationships	It benefits those with whom I have trust in and obligations toward	Who has put their trust in me?	“How does this decision affect the people or groups who trust us most (i.e., employees, customers, etc.)?”