

In our modern world, it can be difficult to distinguish between what is right and wrong. This can be especially common in the workplace, where sometimes your company asks you to make a decision that could be considered morally grey. When times like this occur, having a personal code of ethics can help you to navigate these crucial decisions.

When I am faced with an ethical decision, I ask myself how the outcomes of said decision affect other people, the world, and myself. These outcomes are not always black and white, and sometimes I must weigh what is most important to me and my ideals. My goal is always to try and have as little negative affect on the world as possible. This goal guides me towards the correct decision.

During my CPR E 394 course, we evaluated a few ethical issues. These issues were related to people's personal data as well as engineering decisions that affected the environment and people's lives. The issue I looked at in depth related to the Volkswagen Emissions Scandal. The scandal not only harmed the environment, but also damaged Volkswagen's reputation for years to come.

Through the class discussion, a lot of ethical dilemmas were brought up. Should the engineers have refused to program the cars to cheat the emissions tests? Who gave the order to program the cars? How were other car manufactures able to pass these test? The general consensus of the class is that someone in middle management should vetoed the idea and refused to program the cars to cheat.

I agree with this, but I think it goes further than just the management. I believe the engineers should have realized what was going on and refused to program it. While this may cost them their job, a company that asks you to cheat in such a way is unethical and not a company you want to work for. It's probably safe to assume the engineers who did program the car were fired anyways once the scandal became well known, so I don't see what the point was in complying with the cheating.

When looking at this case from a virtue of ethics stand point, I believe the engineers and management of Volkswagen failed on integrity, honesty, and responsibility. Integrity is the idea that you are doing what's right even when no one is watching. Volkswagen assumed no one was watching, so they cheated on the emissions test, which is not the right thing to do. They also were not honest because they were clearly lying about their nitrogen oxide emissions. In terms of responsibility they failed because they did not take the responsibility upon themselves to help the environment and release less harmful emissions from their cars, instead they took the easy way out.

I chose these three virtues over the other three virtues of fidelity, charity, and self-discipline because I feel that these three virtues hit the nail on the head with where Volkswagen went wrong. While the other virtues may be applicable, they are not as applicable as the three I chose. I personally cannot think of another ethical virtue that would need to be added to describe this case study, as the lack of Volkswagen's integrity seems like the virtue that describes the case best.