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Power Choices© **May 2008**



Power Choice – Ethics

What is *ethics*? (Merriam-Webster)

- the discipline dealing with what is good and bad
- a set of moral principles :
- the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group: a guiding philosophy

Why *ethics*?

I'd like to suggest that our manner of dealing with good and bad, justice and injustice has a direct impact on our personal and professional health and wealth. When we clearly define values that support mutual respect and appreciation for diversity – we grow stronger and more global. When we define values that support integrity and honor – we grow richer. When we define values that support creativity and collaboration – we grow in community. For me, without a code of conduct we will disintegrate into universal chaos and mayhem. *Is it worth it to have guiding principles?* Only you can answer that for yourself.

How will we demonstrate *ethics*?

Everyday, we make choices that affect the lives of other people as well as ourselves. When making these choices, personally and professionally, we use guiding principles to help us achieve what is important to us. Without clear guiding principles, we often undermine our level of success in a relationship, in a job, on a team or in a community. The more we embrace and emulate ethics and values that support standards and a code of conduct that serve the greater good, the more likely we will be able to achieve extraordinary business and life results.

Now that's the Power of **Ethics!**

***"Live one day at a
time emphasizing
ethics rather than
rules."***

Wayne Dyer

THE GUY IN THE GLASS

*When you get what you want in your
struggle for self
And the world makes you "King" for a
day,
Then go to the mirror and look at
yourself
And see what that guy has to say.*

*For it isn't your father, or mother, or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass,
The fellow whose verdict
counts most in your life
Is the guy staring back from the glass.*

*He's the fellow to please...
never mind all the rest,
For he's with you clear to the end;
And you've passed your most
dangerous, difficult task
If the guy in the glass is your friend.*

*You may be like Jack Horner and
"chiseled" a plum
And think you're a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only
a bum*

If you can't look him straight in the eye.

*You can fool the whole world down the
pathway of years
And get pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be
heartache and tears*

If you've cheated the guy in the glass.

Dale Wimbro



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"Stand like a Rock."

Laura Novakowski

**"A man without ethics
is a wild beast loosed
upon this world."**

Albert Camus

I recently had a conversation with a client that had made a significant career change in the past based on **ethical** dilemma. He had been moving quickly up the corporate ladder and had thoroughly enjoyed his job, or so he thought. His father suddenly became ill and the young man had a brief time with him before he died to discover his father's appreciation of living an **ethical** life. In the time with his dad, his father talked with him about the value of relationships, showing respect and always being in integrity.

After the funeral, he returned to work and found that his first day back was jam packed with meetings. The marathon meetings contained a common thread – yelling, disrespect, deceit and deception. After one day back, he decided this was not the job for him. He resigned the next morning. In our conversation, he said that it was not worth losing his soul. He would rather work for less money and start over where there were core values and **ethics** that he could live by rather than live in such a diseased culture.

This quote by Thomas Jefferson came to mind as I reflected on that conversation. *"In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock."* Trends and times change, but does that give us the right to blend and flex just to fit in, get ahead and earn more. Are we willing to establish core values that support all humanity? Keep in mind that we are a part of and not separate from other individuals. If we identify key behaviors that reflect consideration, appreciation, innovation and service, we are much more likely to live a healthier, more joy filled life.

I've also been fortunate to work with several family, friends, colleagues and mentors, over the years that have taught me the value of being clear in my **ethics** and standing on principle. Whenever I keep **ethical** behavior in the forefront, I always come out ahead. I've walked away from some sweet business deals because they didn't *feel* right. There's a spring in my step. And, I can tell you that I feel physical discomfort and distress when I behave in ways that violate my personal and professional **ethics**. That I lose a little piece of my soul!

People cannot see our values they can only see our behaviors. One of my colleagues does a valuable exercise with his clients. He asks them to actually describe behaviors that will convey the **ethics** and values defined by the company. Initially, he said, his clients would say, we don't need to do this exercise, our values and **ethics** are "rock solid," However, once they engage in the exercise they come to find that in reality they were only giving their values lip service. To the company, his clients have walked away with a stronger commitment to **ethics** as they watch their businesses grow and flourish.

I have engaged and implemented this exercise in my life and in my organization. At the end of the day, I realize that I want to be able to look *"the guy in the glass,"* because I've stood like a rock on my principles, on my **ethics**!



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Work & Ethics

Leanne Hoagland-Smith, M.S.

"Action indeed is the sole medium of expression for ethics."
Jane Addams

Work **ethics** continues to be a hot topic in today's business and educational worlds. Yet, how do we define this hybrid phrase with the word work meaning more than a specific outcome and the word **ethics** being more than the values that enhance that outcome?

When we say we are going to work, work becomes the place of employment. When we say we are working, the implication is that we are engaged in a work-related activity and should be performing one or more specific tasks. However, the word work in today's global economy does not easily denote specific outcomes much less measurable ones.

Years ago when our economy was agrarian based, farmers said they were going to work the fields. Their work or more specifically the outcomes of their work could be viewed from the plowed fields to the stacked bales of hay. In today's technology and service driven economy, workers outcomes are not as nearly recognizable, but what is noticed is their behavior.

Now, **ethics** is a difficult word to define, as it is more than the enhancement of outcomes. This is aptly demonstrated by the variety of expectations such as being to work or school on time, performing quality work, being self-directed, having self-initiative, or being positive to both fellow team members and customers. **Ethics**, from these expectations, encompass the internal behaviors of the contributors or what I really believe are attitudes.

Let's step out of the box and construct a new and more accurate term that meets the expectations of both the business and educational worlds specific to work **ethics**. First, let's ask ourselves are we more concerned with the behavior or the attitudes? If we recognize that it is the attitudes that drive the behaviors that generate the outcomes, it would suggest that each contributors' attitudes have the greater impact on the outcomes.

Next, since behavior has numerous meanings, possibly we can substitute performance for behavior. Performance can be measured provided the organization has accurate and complete expectations, valid assessments that do not penalize the contributors along with a well-communicated strategic plan. Through clearly articulated goals with consistent leadership and management, contributors have the opportunity to improve their performance thereby achieving measurable results.

Attitudes of performance appear then to better describe the desired outcomes and expectations that we have as employers, educators or even parents have when we are discussing work **ethics**. As we all are contributors, by focusing on attitudes early in our performance experiences, we have the means to improve ourselves and more importantly the various communities that surround us each and every day. Winston Churchill had a great attitude of performance when he said:

Working hours are never long enough. Each day is a holiday and ordinary holidays are grudging as enforced interruptions in an absorbing vocation."



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Working in today's business world takes courage. There are challenges that every person faces that test their **ethics** system. Systems of **ethics** have been around since humans were blessed with conscious thought, and have brought up questions amongst many philosophers old and new. Aristotle wondered if **ethics** meant that "we do not desire everything for the sake of something else" (Arthur, 1999, pg.7). This is a powerful statement. As it was meant to, Aristotle's statement makes a thought provoking question come to mind. How much of what we do during the course of our business transactions are done for the reason which we are forth coming about and not for reasons that we hold back?

Perhaps the answer lies in a discussion about truth. We work in a world in which every conversation or action isn't recorded on video tape and therefore the truth is dependent upon a person's viewpoint. Is it necessary for everyone to know everything at all times or can we be selective about the truth and still be ethical? I believe the answer is yes. This is a different answer than I would have given you last year. As I have moved up and around in the business world I have had the desire to know everything I can that is going on and have great frustration when I don't have all the information that I think is present. However, with information comes a greater pressure on our **ethics** systems about what we do with the information we have. I can take a look back at my life both personal and professional and realize there are some things I wish I never knew. If we have information, we have to make a decision on how we are going to handle it. For example, if an employee tells you something in confidence that can jeopardize the health of a business do you share the information for the good of the business or do you remain truthful to the employee who takes you into their confidence?

We must be able to make situational choices. We have to be able to look ourselves in the mirror when we go home at night and brush our teeth. There is never a real perfect answer to any situation in business. At least one person is always going to be upset or discontented. Within the scope of your role in your business and your life, you have to make the choice that best reflects your reflection to yourself as it does not matter what others think about you if you do not think well of yourself.

Ethics, a great conversation starter, a great topic of wonderment from the days of Aristotle, but never a topic that brings easy answers. We all have desires, we all want something for the sake of something else. Perhaps **ethics** is about realizing just that about ourselves and that it is ok, because if it was not we would not have been blessed with conscious thought.

*Source: Arthur, J. (1999). **Morality & Moral Controversies** (5th Ed.). Prentice Hall. Upper Saddle River, NJ*



Make everyday a day to remember!
Stephen Sisselman, BS, MT (ASCP), MS
Positive Power Strategies, Inc

Tool Box

Laura and Leanne

Stories are an incredible powerful tool when speaking or writing. By using a story, you are conveying meaning, but that meaning is being personally translated by the individual who is listening to you or reading your message. Stories surround us each and every day. We just need to be open and learn how to adapt these experiences into stories. For example, let us share one such story.

A Short Story

Two businessmen stop to have a morning breakfast meeting. As they approach the restaurant, one walks over to the newspaper coin operated vending machine and deposits \$.50. He takes out a paper and this asks his companion if he would like a paper as well. The colleague takes it and says "Hey, 2 papers for the price of one."

[Now, you can add what you thought or did as you observed this interchange.]

A Short Story Continues

I then took 2 quarters out of my purse and walked over to the newspaper vending machine to deposit the coinage where the one businessman had taken two newspapers and only paid for one of them. After I opened and closed the access door, I then proceeded into the restaurant. One of the businessmen opened the door for me, but he could not look me in the eyes.

[Next you can add a quote from someone else that reinforces the story.]

Edmund Burke, English philosopher, stated:

"The only thing necessary for triumph (of evil) is for good men to do nothing."

[Finally, you finish the exchange with a couple of questions and a powerful ending.]

How many times in life do we do nothing because we do not want:

- To cause attention to ourselves?
- To make waves?
- To have people think of us in unkind ways?

We know what is wrong, yet we choose not to take action. We ignore the violation of **ethics** and character thinking, "No big deal, not my problem."

Yet, we want others from young people to employees to clients to vendors to everyone we come in contact with to be responsible by demonstrating high behaviors of **ethical** conduct. Until we have the belief in ourselves to be forthcoming and calling **unethical** behavior for what it is, wrong, evil will still prevail.

So the question is what would you have done? As this is something that actually happened to one of us, we know that by not saying anything we were giving the wink and the nod (flip a coin if you prefer) to **unethical** behavior. And for us, that is unacceptable. Is the same true for you?

More Ethics Quotes

"Let me give you a definition of ethics. It is good to maintain and further life. It is bad to damage and destroy life."

Dr. Albert Schweitzer

"In law a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others. In ethics, he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so."

Immanuel Kant

"Ethics must begin at the top of the organization. It is a leadership issue and the chief executive must set the example."

Edward Hennessy

"Divorced from ethics, leadership is reduced to management and politics to mere technique."

James MacGregor Burns



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