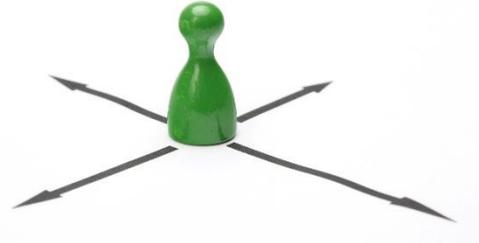


Ethics Tests

Using Ethics Tests

Operationalizing Ethics in Business Settings



How to use ethics tests effectively when making ethical decisions

Philosophical approaches for deciding what is right or wrong can provide practical help to insure that your ethical judgments are sound and to enlist the cooperation of others in doing what is right. In addition to a company's mission statement, core values, and ethics code, you can use ethical principles or "ethics tests" as a management decision process—a recognized set of steps leading to a decision about what should be done. To use these tests to stimulate insight and move a discussion toward consensus, you need to be able to

- **Introduce the test and name it**
- **If challenged, show why the test is a valid way to decide right or wrong**
- **Apply the test to the situation**
- **Draw a conclusion based on the test**
- **Compare the results of several tests if more than one is used**

In most situations you will not need to use all the tests. Pick one or two that best show why the action being considered is right or wrong. By knowing them all you can choose the ones that provide the best insights and reasons for deciding, and you can recognize what kind of ethical appeals others are making. It is also not necessary in a business or professional discussion to go through each of the steps in the tests outlined below. Detailed steps are provided so that you understand how the argument proceeds to the conclusion that an action or situation is good or bad, right or wrong.

It is easier to move people to a new point of view gradually and by enlisting their cooperation. Unless a forceful declaration like **"That's unethical!"** is required to stop an action or get someone's attention, it is usually more effective to begin with a question that introduces an ethics test into the discussion, such as "Is this a fair outcome?" or "Are we respecting their rights?" In order to have a shorthand way of referring to the ethics principle, it is helpful to name the test at some point in the conversation. For example, "We are talking about the 'justice' test."

Nine modules on making ethical decisions follow:

- Identify Ethical Issues: The Viral News Test
- Best Outcomes/Utility Test
- Rights Test
- Everybody Test
- Choices Test
- Justice Test
- Common Good Test
- Character/Virtue Test
- Compare Test Conclusions

These tests are keyed to a discussion on **Ethical Decision Making** on the website of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at the University of Santa Clara (www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making).

Read the description of the ethics test at the Markkula Ethics Center site and then return to EthicsOps.com to see how to operationalize that particular way to decide what is right or wrong. You can also use the **Theory + Practice** page on the EthicsOps site to quickly navigate among related pages (<http://bit.ly/theory-plus-practice>).

Since the best explanations are those that show how, you will also find links to two cases that I use to show how to apply the tests in business settings:

- **"Less Sugar" Marketing** (<http://bit.ly/less-sugar-marketing-case>)
- **Phantom Expenses** (<http://bit.ly/phantom-expenses-case>)

For a page of quick links to move between ethical theories and steps to operationalize these theories, return to the **Theory + Practice** page (<http://bit.ly/theory-plus-practice>).

To go directly to the ethical theory discussions, go to **Ethical Decision Making** at the Markkula Ethics Center site (www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making).