TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ......................................................... 2
INTRODUCTION .................................................. 3
VALUES ............................................................ 5
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING—IS THERE AN ETHICAL VIOLATION? ........ 9
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING—SHOULD I DO SOMETHING? ............. 14
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING—WHAT IS THE BEST SOLUTION? ........ 20
CONCLUSION ..................................................... 25
This study guide is designed to accompany the video training program, *Workplace Ethics*.

Our purpose in creating this program is to support organizational initiatives that establish standards of behavior and encourage a corporate culture of integrity.

We begin with addressing the fundamental question: why be ethical? We talk about basic values, and then move on to offer a decision-making framework that can help individuals think through ethical dilemmas—especially when solutions are not immediately apparent.

We include examples that define ethical and unethical behavior. Our intent is to help eliminate the doubt that allows rationalization and can lead to bad choices. And we point to reporting channels and sources for getting ethical advice, such as supervisors, HR, or others in the chain of command.

Since we’re all human and we all have the potential to make mistakes, we show how each of us can learn from our own and others’ ethical lapses. And we discuss how peer pressure can be used to prevent unethical conduct when individuals speak up and challenge bad behavior—rather than ignoring it or joining in.

A culture of integrity leads to a more productive business. It also enhances the company’s reputation and makes for a workplace that all employees can be proud of.
“We rely on each other.”

Why be ethical?

Some would say it’s for the greater good. Or for individual peace of mind. Or to earn the respect of peers and employers. Or just because it’s the “right” thing to do.

On the deepest level, it could be said that we need ethics for our very survival.

As humans, we rely on each other. From birth, each of us must have other people in order to meet our basic needs. Ultimately, we require others if we are to lead satisfying, successful and productive lives.

Ethics matter.
Introduction

Ethics matter in business, too. Ethics are the foundation of creating sustainable businesses.

Our entire system of commerce is based on the trust that others will perform according to commonly accepted standards. That goods will be shipped, invoices will be paid, payrolls will be met, schedules will be kept.

Within organizations, high ethical standards build a better brand, better relationships with customers and suppliers, and a more positive working environment. Employees of reputable companies take more pride in their work—and have more pride in their workplaces.

All this being said, maintaining an ethical organization doesn’t just happen. It takes effort. As much as we rely on each other, humans have other tendencies that lead us to be self-serving and to disregard the needs of others. Life can get complicated and there are situations where it can be difficult to recognize the ethical choice or the right thing to do. We make mistakes. That’s why it’s worth taking the time to study and think about ethics as they apply to your daily routine at work.

Fortunately, internalizing ethical principles will prepare you for those moments when you have to act quickly or make a snap judgment. And most importantly, having clarity yourself will make it easier to recognize when others are starting to slip so that you won’t find yourself going along with bad behavior. Many times, you can step in and turn things around before bad attitudes become contagious and spoil the atmosphere in your workplace.

Think about ethics and the application of ethical principles to your daily life. Maintain an ethical perspective. Discuss things with others whose judgment you respect. And when in doubt, take the high road. There’s no such thing as being “too ethical.”
"They were going to go to waste, anyway...."

The word “value” is related to the word “valuable.” A value is a principle, quality, or ideal that is held to have inherent worth—in and of itself.

Values that are shared by societies or communities reveal essential beliefs about what is good and what is important and what is expected within that group.

Companies have values, too. These values affect the character and culture of every business. They set the tone and context for every interaction. They influence the impression made on the outside world and ultimately the success and well-being of the entire organization.
Many companies publish their values and post or distribute them widely. These lists vary, depending on what’s most important to any one business or industry. Some of these value statements stick to abstract ideals while others get very detailed and specific. Either way, most are based on certain underlying truths, such as integrity, respect for others, fairness and honesty.

Of course, ethical companies obey the law. That goes without saying. However, most organizations consider this to be the lowest bar—not the standard. In other words, they not only insist on obeying the letter of the law but also the spirit of the law, going beyond the minimum of simple compliance. They want to prevent even the appearance of wrongdoing, since appearances can give the wrong impression and even lead others to follow suit.

Employees of ethical companies are expected not to be wasteful or careless with company time and resources. And they are expected to speak up if they see a violation, thus helping to protect the reputation and standing of the business.

Here are some other important values that many companies share:

Acting in good faith
Avoiding conflicts of interest
Environmental stewardship
Financial integrity
Honoring all stakeholders
Keeping privileged information confidential
Not discriminating or harassing
Pitching in (showing a “work ethic”)
Preventing harm to others
Putting safety first
Values

What are the most important values of your particular organization?

How do your personal values mesh with those of your organization?

What is one thing you can do each workday to remember and support at least one important value?