

MISSION

The College of Business

- Provides an educational foundation that enables its students to become successful, ethical organization and community leaders.
- Engages in research that makes meaningful contributions to the understanding and practice of business and to business education.
- Serves the region, state, community, university, and business disciplines through outreach activities.



Ethical Decision-Making Opportunities

The growing complexity of today's world provides many opportunities for ethical and unethical decisions. Tennessee Tech graduates should be able to identify ethical dilemmas, identify the stakeholders who will be affected by decisions, identify several alternative courses of action, and evaluate the consequences of those actions. Ethical decisions occur in every domain of life.

As Students¹

- Cheating & Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism may seem like "victimless crimes", but a stakeholder analysis reveals a more complicated picture. Cheating, for example, ultimately lowers the value of a TTU degree to the cheater and thousands of alumni.

- Discrimination & Harassment

Treating people differently because of irrelevant personal characteristics can harm the victim, but it also ignores the value that every fellow student can add to your education. The Golden Rule truly is golden: Treat others the way you want to be treated.

As Business Professionals

- Customer Relationships

Some companies make a quick buck by deceiving customers, but this success is virtually always short-lived. Long-term business success is based on providing high value for a fair price.

- Employee Relationships

Employees who feel respected by their employers are more productive, more dedicated, and more likely to stay with their employers. Leadership decisions should always consider the impact on an organization's most valuable resource: its people.

Ethical Decision-Making Guide

Why do good people sometimes make bad decisions? People are often thrust into situations where they feel compelled to act quickly and without considering the consequences of their actions.

The following decision-making guide² is a culmination from various sources and common sense. It is intended to be a mechanism to thoroughly think through an issue and evaluate the consequences of an action.

1. Determine the facts and state the problem.

What do we know that will help define the problem? What don't we know? Sometimes the "problem" is clearly identifiable, other times it is a situation that makes you uncomfortable.

2. Who are the stakeholders? Who will be affected by the decision?

Make sure to consider all stakeholders, including employees, shareholders, customers, vendors and unintended bystanders.

3. Identify relevant factors

List the laws, professional codes and other practical constraints pertinent to this problem.

4. Develop a list of options

List options that would solve the stated problem. Be creative and present options that may not seem plausible. Often through this brainstorming activity, a more viable and satisfactory option will materialize.

5. Test options

Apply the following tests to the options.

Harm test: Does this option do less harm than the alternatives?

Legality test: Is this option legal? If the answer is "no," stop here!

Precedence test: Does this option set precedent that may lead to undesirable outcomes if applied in the future.

Publicity test: Would I want my choice of this option published in the newspaper?

Defensibility test: Could I defend my choice of this option before a Congressional committee or a jury of my peers?

Mom test: What would my Mom say if she learned of this option?

Reversibility or "Golden Rule" test: Would I still think the choice of this option good if I were one of those adversely affected by it? How would I want to be treated?

Virtues test: What would I become if I choose this option?

Professional test: What might my profession's ethics committee say about this option?

Peer or colleague test: What do my peers or colleagues say when I describe my problem and suggest this option as my solution?

How does it make me feel? This is your conscience. How does this option make you feel physically or emotionally? Are you able to sleep?

Organization test: What does the organization's ethics officer or legal counsel say about this?

6. Select an option:

Test the options listed in step 4 to evaluate each option from different points of view. Assessing each option with the tests in Step 5 will help you thoroughly think through the impact of your decision and make better choices.

7. Evaluate outcomes and review steps 1-6:

What could make it less likely that you would have to make such a decision again?

1. TTU definitions and policies regarding Student Misconduct and Harassment can be found in policies 217 and 141.
2. Adapted from Northern Illinois University BELIEF model (<http://www.cob.niu.edu/academics/belief/index.shtml>)