

Lesson 9

Building an Ethical Organization

Lesson Time: 1 hour, 45 minutes

In this lesson, you will:

- Describe an ethical organization, including the aspects of culture and systems that are required for building an ethical organization, as well as some examples of ethical failure due to organizational issues.
- Describe organizational purpose and ethical values, and how these connect to everyday practice.
- Explain the significance of ethical awareness in organizations.
- Develop professional ethics within organizations.

Developing and deploying emerging technologies in an ethical way requires ethical organizations. This means having an organizational culture that supports ethics: having an ethical purpose, ethical values, awareness of ethical impacts, and standards of professional ethics.

9.1 TOPIC A: What Are Ethical Organizations?



Exam Objectives

5.0 Organizational Policy and Governance

5.1. Identify the elements that can help foster an ethical organizational culture

The ability to build an ethical culture requires understanding of the current culture of the organization as well as what steps need to be taken to achieve an organizational culture that prizes ethical behavior. In this topic, you will describe ethical organizations.

What Is Organizational Culture?

What does it mean for *organizational culture* to be "ethical"? An organization's culture encompasses its values, principles, and practices that guide its members' actions. It is shaped by the organization's leadership, governance structure, policies, and its various stakeholders. An organization's culture is more than its mission statement—it's the result of authentic and consistent conduct and behavior. An organization's culture comprises a set of shared assumptions that guide individuals' actions and specify appropriate behavior in different organizational contexts. Or, put another way, organizational culture is "the way we do things in this organization." *Ethical culture* refers to that aspect of an organization's culture that supports the organization and its members in consistently doing the right thing. Key elements of ethical culture include:

- ❖ An organization's purpose.
- ❖ The ways in which the organization rewards ethical behavior.
- ❖ The organization's degree of sensitivity to ethical issues.
- ❖ The organization's capacity to engage in ethical deliberation.
- ❖ The accountability practices adopted and followed by the organization.

If organizational culture is about "the way we do things in this organization," then ethical culture is about "the way we approach questions about 'what's the right thing to do?' in this organization."

Why Should We Care About Organizational Culture?

An organization's culture is inextricably intertwined with its performance. As we have seen, data-driven organizations face enormous responsibilities as a result of their powers and capacities. Many vital aspects of how organizations behave—from how they respond to challenges and crises, how they adapt to change, and how effectively they advance technological and social progress—are informed by their culture.

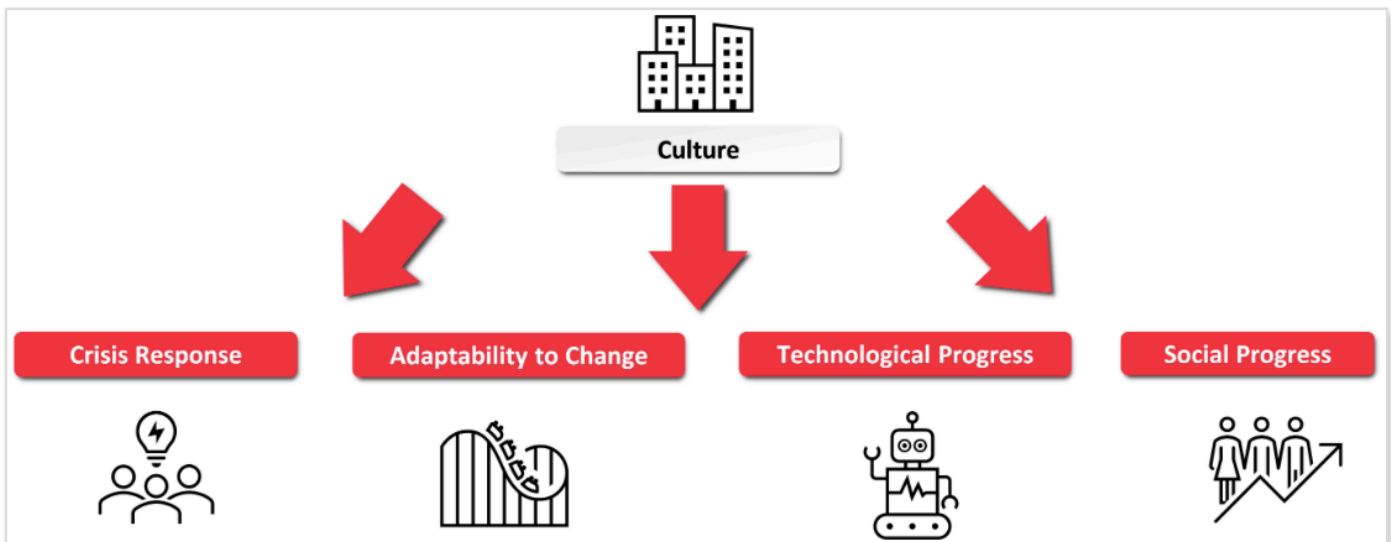


Figure 9-1: An organization's culture affects many facets of the organization.

An organization's culture informs the way in which product decisions are made, which can have a huge impact on what products are created, launched, and how they are ultimately used. For example, the attitude of "move fast and break things" has resulted in a kind of corporate culture in which questions like "Can we build this product?" took priority over questions like "Should we build this product?" Imagine if we applied the "move fast and break things" mantra to the development of autonomous weapons systems.

Organizational Culture and Ethics in Practice

A healthy organizational culture helps employees act in accordance with basic moral principles and makes it significantly less likely that people will violate legal and regulatory standards. A company's culture can make a significant difference in how likely people are to do the right thing.

Some cultures tolerate, or even encourage, misconduct. One of the most common problems is a kind of corporate culture that focuses exclusively on profits. When this comes at the cost of the interests of customers, suppliers, or other stakeholders, this can have disastrous consequences.

For example, the global oil company BP suffered several crises as a result of deficiencies in *corporate culture*. The 2010 Deepwater Horizon drilling rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico was the largest environmental disaster in history, and it cost BP more than \$65 billion in total. In previous years, BP had suffered several smaller incidents, including an explosion in a refinery in Texas in 2005, which killed 15 employees and injured 200, in addition to other fatal accidents and spills, to which BP failed to respond. BP's disregard for worker safety, legal requirements, and social and environmental concerns was a concomitant of its exclusive focus on profit. Had BP taken safety procedures, governance, and ethical culture more seriously, lethal incidents and large-scale disasters might have been avoided.

Another case where deficiencies in corporate culture had lethal consequences is that of Boeing. Shortcomings in Boeing's company culture led to a lack of safety and fatal plane crashes. Boeing's culture rewarded efficiency, and the containment of costs, over safety. This ultimately resulted in the design of unsafe pilot software, which in turn caused several planes to crash—including the crashes of two Boeing 737 MAX airplanes in 2018 and 2019, which caused the deaths of 346 people. After the crashes, many stories emerged of employees covering up deficiencies and hiding problems from regulators, as Boeing was trying to evade scrutiny and prevent its employees from speaking up.

Messages that the systems were faulty had emerged as early as 2016. Had Boeing's culture encouraged responsible behavior, and prioritized safety over profit, those deadly crashes might have been prevented.

What cases like these illustrate is that, even if harms are not intentional, adequate ethical practices, governance, and management systems are vital to preventing harms. In certain cases, the behaviors encouraged by a company's culture may make the difference between life and death. Culture is not only key to promoting behavior in keeping with ethical standards and legal obligations. It can also save lives.

ACTIVITY 9-1: Discussing Ethical Organizations

Scenario

Consider the following questions as you discuss the contents of this topic.

1. Can you think of examples of company culture influencing employee behavior in a positive manner?

Show Answer

2. Can you think of examples of company culture influencing employee behavior in a negative manner?

Show Answer

Knowledge Check

Connect the Idea

FULL SCREEN RESET SUBMIT

Fill in the blanks by dragging the appropriate types of culture from the bottom onto their correct boxes.

{ } culture is a set of shared assumptions (values, principles, and practices) that guide individuals' actions and specify appropriate behavior in different organizational contexts, whereas { } culture supports the organization and its members in consistently doing the right thing.

Organizational Informal formal ethical

9.2 TOPIC B: Organizational Purpose



Exam Objectives

4.0 Communication

- 4.1. Effectively communicate with key stakeholders and/or team members (internal communication)
- 4.2. Effectively communicate about the ethical practices of the organization to outside parties (external communication)

5.0 Organizational Policy and Governance

- 5.2. Identify and describe the ethical considerations that shape policies regarding the development, use, and governance of technology

This topic looks at the very heart of the organization and its ethical culture. It asks:

- » Why does an organization exist?
- » What are its values?
- » And what impact does it want to have on the world?

These questions will be answered by discussing organizational purpose, ethical values, and commitments towards society.

The Core Questions

An organization or company also has aim or purpose. In the capitalist economy, for-profit companies need to make a profit to be economically sustainable. Yet purpose points to an organization's reason for being beyond financial objectives. Ultimately, organizations exist to contribute to society in some way. As we have seen, this is one way of understanding what it means to do the right thing.

For this reason, building an ethical organization starts with asking some basic questions. These are:

- » Why do we exist? What is the purpose beyond profit of our organization? What do we want to contribute to society?
- » How do we behave? What are our core values, around which we model our organization? What constitutes a job well done?
- » What do we do? How does the work we do impact the world? And how do we understand and assess this impact?

What Is Organizational Purpose?

To ask for the purpose of an organization, is to ask: Why do we exist? This is a simple question, and yet, it's often difficult to answer. Often, organizations already have a stated purpose, yet it is important to frequently reflect on this purpose with the idea of an ethical organization in mind. The purpose of an organization is often presented in terms of its mission.

1. The first step in formulating an organizational purpose is accepting that the organization exists to make people's lives better, and not just to make profits. It therefore consists in understanding what people would lack if the organization wouldn't be there.

Philips describes its purpose as: "Improving people's lives through meaningful innovation."

2. The second step in developing an organizational purpose is generating *ownership* of this purpose. This means that an organization's leadership should consult with employees and other stakeholders in the organization to ensure alignment. If the stated purpose of an organization does not resonate with its members, it breeds disengagement, rather than alignment.
3. The third step is considering purpose from different points of view:
 - » What does our organization bring to the *customer*?
 - » How do we contribute to our *industry*?
 - » What *greater cause* does our organization help realize?
 - » How do we help our *communities*?
 - » And what does the organization bring to its *employees*?

It is important to note that an organization's purpose is not marketing talk. To be effective, it needs to reflect the true ambition of the organization; i.e., be aligned with what the organization does and how people work in a day-to-day fashion.

Sometimes, organizational purpose can be aligned with greater ethical challenges in society, such as the 17 UN goals for sustainable development.

Consider, for instance, the mission statement of Tesla: "To accelerate the advent of sustainable transport by bringing compelling mass market electric cars to market as soon as possible."

Additional Reading

For more information about the UN goals for sustainable development, visit sdgs.un.org.

Instructor Note: Point out that stakeholder engagement is covered in depth in the next lesson.

Organizational Values

An organization's purpose is broad and future-oriented and needs to be translated into day-to-day reality. The related question to ask is: Given our purpose, how do we think and behave?

It is important to frame organizational values not too broadly, covering everything that humans find important, because this will make them vague and ineffective. Rather, values reflect what an organizational culture is really about, what sets it apart from other organizations. It therefore usually consists of only a handful of statements.

To build an ethical organization, values need to be approached critically. Some values, such as "move fast and break things" can have severe negative side effects. To determine core values, one should therefore ask two questions:

- ❖ How should we behave?
- ❖ How could this behavior have negative impacts?

Moreover, organizations need to guarantee a level of professional autonomy, to give individuals the capacity to critically reflect on whether or not their organization embodies the right values.

Example Value Statements

Consider some of the core values of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream:

- ❖ We strive to minimize our negative impact on the environment.
- ❖ We strive to show a deep respect for human beings inside and outside our company and for the communities in which they live.

These statements effectively communicate the goals of the organization's culture and its vision statement: "Making the best possible ice cream, in the nicest possible way."

How Values Fit the Organization

There are some compelling reasons for organizations to define certain ethical values.

1. First, these values help the organization navigate toward its purpose without causing harm.
2. Second, it makes sure the work done by an organization is aligned with values our societies embrace, such as *human rights* and *principles for medical ethics* like the Belmont Report.
3. Third, there is a growing trend in industries to make business-to-business interactions dependent on having shared ethical values.

Ethical values are organization- and product-specific. When an organization develops a technology with a very narrow function, such as an electronic drill, it should commit to respect safety and accountability, but will not have to deal with themes such as fairness and transparency. In other words, values related to societal impacts are context-dependent, and each organization has the task of understanding its own context.

Additional Reading

For more information about the Belmont Report, visit: www.hhs.gov.

Guidelines for Developing Organizational Values

Follow these guidelines when you are developing organizational values.

Develop Organizational Values

Organizations can develop their values in the following way:

- ❖ Collect and analyze organizational values from existing authoritative sources. For instance, they can consult academic work on AI principles such as the Harvard report on Principled AI; company codes such as Google's AI Principles and the Microsoft responsible AI principles.
- ❖ Draft organizational value statements, taking into account the products and services the organization offers and their potential impacts on society. Organizations can use tools such as consequence scanning, scenario analysis, and ethical frameworks and theories to identify and analyze those impacts.
- ❖ Identify internal and external stakeholders, such as employees and interest groups, to discuss the relevance of proposed organizational values, and to check whether some organizational values are missing.
- ❖ Publish the organizational values, and raise awareness about them within the organization.

Additional Reading

For more information, visit:

- ❖ Harvard report on Principled AI: cyber.harvard.edu.
- ❖ Google's AI Principles: ai.google.
- ❖ Microsoft responsible AI principles: www.microsoft.com.

Making Values Count

Ethical values are important guidelines that shape the work done in an organization; for instance, signaling that the technologies that are developed should respect things like privacy, accountability, and fairness.

Still, organizations should also put effort into translating values into measurable action. One way of doing so is following the [VCIO model](#), outlining how values can be translated into criteria that have certain indicators linked to observable actions.

To use the VCIO model:

1. First, the organization determines its **values**. For example: transparency.
2. Second, each value is translated into **criteria**—requirements of products or services that should be met to fulfill the commitment implied by a stated value. For example: disclosure of original data sets.
3. Third, these criteria are linked to **indicators**—certain features of a product or service that indicate whether criteria are met or not. For example: Is the origin of the data that's used documented?
4. Fourth, these criteria are linked to **observable behaviors** that can be measured in the organization. For example: logging of all training and operating data; version control of the datasets.

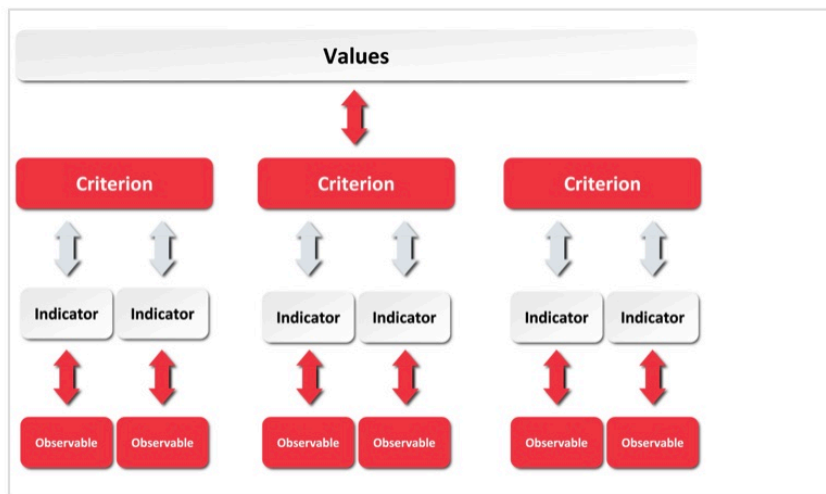


Figure 9-2: The VCIO model developed by the AI Ethics Impact Group.

Purpose and Value Statements and Their Impact

Even though organizational purpose and values are of great importance, they are also often met with reasonable skepticism. History teaches us that some organizations that presented themselves in accordance with very aspirational ideals have caused great harm to people and society. It is one thing for an organization to state that it values ideas like sustainability and well-being, it is another thing to also act on those values.

In many organizations, the leadership and employees are only vaguely aware of the organizational purpose and value statements, and have had little say in how these were formulated. This generates a lack of ownership and effect.

It is therefore important to consider a purpose and values statement as only the tip of an iceberg. These should be the expression of what an organization truly stands for and works towards. What is hidden under the surface is how organizational principles and values affect the day-to-day work of the leadership and employees. This is where ethics starts to count.

9.3 TOPIC C: Ethics Awareness



Exam Objectives

- 1.0 Fundamental Concepts for Data-Driven Technology Ethics
 - 1.1. Identify and describe common terminology or concepts important to data-driven technology ethics
- 2.0 Ethical Frameworks
 - 2.4. Identify ethical challenges that may conflict or require compromise with regulatory and/or business constraints or demands
- 4.0 Communication
 - 4.1. Effectively communicate with key stakeholders and/or team members (internal communication)
- 5.0 Organizational Policy and Governance
 - 5.1. Identify the elements that can help foster an ethical organizational culture

An organization can spend money and time crafting organizational purpose and value statements, but all that investment can go to waste if employees and other stakeholders are not aware of the organization's posture. This topic focuses on raising awareness of ethical issues and practices.

Why Awareness Matters

At the start of the course, we discussed reasons why ethical risks are often overlooked. We found that while people acting with bad intent sometimes do cause havoc, other reasons are more common, such as:

- ✦ Failure to consider key stakeholders.
- ✦ Assuming that someone else is in charge.
- ✦ Lack of practices for anticipating ethical risks.

These factors all come down to two things: First, a lack of awareness of ethical risks that we have already covered. Second, impacts of and on your business. This table lists some of the impacts that people in the organization need to be aware of to make good decisions.

Type of Business Impact	Example
Negative social impacts	How your organization affects issues such as inequality, fairness, or political polarization in society.
Loss of organizational reputation	How a decision to ban messages by certain politicians on your social media platform impacts your organization's reputation.
Loss of consumer trust	How introducing algorithmic decision-making for loan approval impacts trust by customers in your company.
Liability	When acquiring a company, your organization may become liable for harms caused by the acquired company, even if you knew nothing about those impacts.
Legal/regulatory obligations	By processing personal data, you become subject to strict privacy laws like GDPR, causing significant compliance costs.

Drivers of Awareness

The many types of ethical risks and business impacts organizations need to be aware of show that building awareness is a difficult task. Moreover, when dealing with emerging technologies, small decisions by individual contributors can have major impacts. Hence, awareness needs to be built at all levels in the organization. What can organizations do?

- ✦ **Clarity of Purpose and Expectations:** Communicate the purpose of the organization and the expectations of employees clearly and regularly.
- ✦ **Diversity of Thought:** Hire people that bring different perspectives, and staff teams to create diversity of thought.
- ✦ **Organizational Memory:** Learn from mistakes and spread that knowledge throughout the organization.
- ✦ **Speak Up!:** Encourage employees to share knowledge and challenge superiors. The next sections look at these options in detail.

Clarity of Purpose and Expectations

The ability to connect your day-to-day work with the purpose of the organization is one of the most important drivers of ethical conduct in organizations. Awareness of one's contribution to the organization's purpose beyond profit acts as a moral compass for decision-making. It encourages everyone in the organization to hold themselves to high ethical standards. But this sense of contribution to a shared purpose is not achieved by painting a lofty purpose statement on the wall. Organizations need to make values count, as explained in the previous topic. Moreover, leaders need to credibly endorse the purpose. This requires clear and constant communication. But mostly it requires taking action that clearly embodies the purpose. Leaders that credibly endorse the purpose of the organization can share assessments about how the organization is already making good on its purpose, and where it is still falling short. They can use these opportunities to reinforce the ethical expectations of the organization towards every employee, which may also be codified in policies such as a code of conduct.

Three ways in which organizations can drive clarity of purpose and expectations include:

- ❖ **Leadership communication:** Leadership should refer to purpose and values as frequently as possible and explain how the organization made crucial decisions in light of purpose and values. For instance, leaders can make it a habit to share a story about a brave decision someone in the organization took that brings to life the organization's purpose and expectations.
- ❖ **Iconic actions:** Identify highly visible actions or policies that encapsulate your organization's purpose and the expectations on its people. For instance, Netflix drove home the expectation that employees manage their own time responsibly with their unlimited vacation policy, according to which any employee can take as much paid vacation time as they like.
- ❖ **Ethics moments:** Invite members of the organization to raise difficult decisions they faced or currently face in a safe and open forum in the organization. The purpose is to invite members of the organization to reflect about difficult decisions in light of purpose and expectations. For instance, organizations can reserve the first 20 minutes of monthly all-hands meetings to reflect on an ethics moment.

Additional Reading

For more information about the Netflix no-vacation limits policy, visit www.inc.com.

Instructor Note: Urge learners to avoid cynicism. This is the organization's (and employees') chance to "walk the talk," putting ideas into meaningful action.

Diversity of Thought

Diversity of thought is the idea that people in a group should bring varying, diverse viewpoints to the table. While diversity and inclusion efforts are not sufficient to achieve diversity of thought, they are crucially important to achieve that aim. Recall how Facebook discovered that a prototype of the smart camera in its video-conferencing tool Portal did not track non-white people reliably. It is no coincidence that Technical Business Lead Lade Obamehinti, a person of color herself, noticed the problem. The more diverse the teams working on new technology, the more likely it is that someone will spot an ethical risk.

Yet other types of diversity are also required to achieve diversity of thought. Even if teams are diverse in terms of dimensions like gender, ethnicity, and religion, they may share a similar mindset if they all graduated from the same university programs at the same few universities, or are from a similar socio-economic background. Nor can teams ever hope to represent the full spectrum of relevant perspectives. This makes it crucial to create teams whose members have different cognitive styles, and to encourage open-mindedness. Moreover, engagement with stakeholders and outside experts is crucial to foster diversity of thought.

Here are four things organizations can do:

- ❖ **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts:** Develop a Diversity and Inclusion policy, and provide training on Diversity and Inclusion for all employees.
- ❖ **Encourage open-mindedness and intellectual humility:** Insist on every employee displaying respect for other viewpoints; role-model willingness to revise your own standpoint.
- ❖ **Engage stakeholders and outside experts:** Invite outside experts or stakeholder representatives to an open discussion to hear their hopes and concerns first-hand.
- ❖ **Use ethical foresight tools:** Earlier in the course, we introduced tools to identify ethical risks, such as consequence scanning, scenario analysis, and stakeholder cards. For example, you can conduct a scenario analysis as part of your regular planning process.

Additional Reading

For more information, visit:

- ❖ AI and bias: www.nytimes.com.
- ❖ Diversity and inclusion: hbr.org.
- ❖ Respect for other viewpoints: hbr.org.


Organizational Memory ○

While building ethical foresight into everyday practices allows organizations to anticipate ethical risks, strengthening organizational memory allows them to learn from their mistakes.

Organizational memory is the ability of organizations to record, share, and act on learnings from the past. Organizations can learn from mistakes by reflecting on the root causes of ethical incidents, looking at what could have been done differently, and reviewing what can be done to prevent incidents in the future.

Organizations should take the following steps to strengthen institutional memory:

- ✦ **Establish a Review Board:** Establish an external ethics review board and/or an internal ethics function.
- ✦ **Investigate ethical failures:** Investigate ethical failures to identify individual, as well as structural, root causes.
- ✦ **Share learnings:** Share learnings with employees, and embed learnings in ethics training.
- ✦ **Document learnings:** Document ethics review and decision-making processes.

 **Instructor Note:** Point out that the creation of an internal ethics function is covered in the next lesson.

As you describe the idea of organizational memory, you might want to mention the example of NASA and the Challenger explosion. It has been suggested by some that continual reorganization and staff cutbacks erased the organizational memory of the Challenger disaster, and could have contributed to the Columbia incident that occurred more than 15 years later.

Speak Up! ○



When organizations fail to anticipate an ethical risk, this does not mean that it went unnoticed by everybody. The Challenger exploded because the O-ring seals used in a critical part of the shuttle were not designed to handle the unusually cold weather on launch day. The night before the Challenger launch, a group of engineers met with NASA officials in an emergency meeting. Despite having full knowledge of faulty O-rings on the shuttle, the engineers remained silent.

To avoid speak-up failures, organizations should create an open culture where people can raise serious concerns and be heard. Leaders should place a responsibility on employees to speak up if they disagree. To be credible, leaders must react to criticism in an open and welcoming way. A no-retaliation policy can also help encourage employees to speak up. However, note that encouraging speak-up can get organizations only so far. Organizations should not rely on employees bravely speaking up to correct for fundamental flaws in the organization's governance or leadership. Here are two things organizations can do to encourage speak-up:

- ✦ **Foster a culture of trust and candor:** Employees must trust and respect one another and the organization's leadership for candid feedback to flow freely. Receiving challenging feedback constructively is something leaders must learn.
- ✦ **Create safe and confidential reporting channels:** Additionally, an ethics hotline allows employees to speak up anonymously. Ethics hotlines should be operated by a trusted third-party vendor.

Additional Reading

For more information, visit:

- ✦ Culture of trust: hbr.org .
- ✦ Safe reporting channels: hbr.org .

9.4 TOPIC D: Develop Professional Ethics within Organizations



Exam Objectives

- 2.0 Ethical Frameworks
 - 2.1. Identify common ethical principles cited by major ethical frameworks
- 5.0 Organizational Policy and Governance
 - 5.1. Identify the elements that can help foster an ethical organizational culture

This topic looks at the importance of the quality of people in an organization and professional ethics. Even when an organization has an ethical purpose and clear ethical values, as well as strict policies concerning ethics, its leadership and employees might behave badly (both through ill intent and neglect). Therefore, an ethical organization needs ethical people.

Instructor Note: This topic encompasses several key areas dealing with professional ethics, both in general and for the emerging technology worker.

People's Qualities and Organizational Culture

Ethical organizations depend on the qualities of their people. We expect people in organizations to have certain dispositions, like collegiality, loyalty, vigilance, and prudence. What this means differs for each organization. For instance, for people working with nuclear power prudence means to be extremely cautious and careful, while for athletes it means responsibly pushing one's performance to the limits.

Unethical organizations cultivate unethical dispositions and therefore "make" bad people. For instance, criminal organizations cultivate dispositions like distrust, dishonesty, and secrecy.

This also means that ethical organizations stimulate good qualities in their people. This can be done in many ways. For instance:

- ✦ **Community building:** Make everyone feel they stand for the same ethical purpose and ethical values.
- ✦ **Professional skills development:** Focusing on ethical elements in addition to technical elements when developing staff skills.
- ✦ **Training and education:** Align people's skills with the ethical values of the organization.
- ✦ **Team management:** Build ethical values between collegial relations, ensuring that colleagues will support and challenge each other in making the right decisions.

Each of these is described in the next few sections.

Ethics in Traditional Professions

Professions such as medicine and finance have realized the huge impact they have on society and the responsibility this brings. Consequently, organizations in these fields have made steps towards shaping a sense of professional ethics.

Medicine is a case in point. Already in Ancient Greece, physicians bound themselves to the Hippocratic Oath, named after Hippocrates. By invoking this oath, physicians swear to uphold certain ethical values, such as medical confidentiality and non-maleficence. Today, a version of this oath is still in use in medical schools. The idea is that being a good doctor does not only mean to have the right medical skills, but also to have a good character: to treat patients with respect and dignity.

The tech sector can learn from this example. For instance, to be a good software developer does not only mean to have the right technical skills and build innovative products, but also to pay attention to the potential positive and negative impacts of these products on society.

In part, this shift is visible in a change of the ways in which professional ethics is framed. For instance, Google's motto of professional ethics started out as being "don't be evil" but later changed to "do the right thing."

Instructor Note: In addition to medicine and finance, ask learners to brainstorm other professions in which ethics plays a large role. Possible ideas include law and engineering.

Community Building

Every organization is also a community: a network of ongoing, relatively stable relations between people. These people hold diverse views. And, yet, they also have a basis of shared ethical values and norms. Community building is about balancing this diversity and shared values: respecting people's individuality and liberty, while at the same time asking them to live up to some basic, shared ethical values.

Ethical community building does not happen at one point in time, during a single meeting, but is a never-ending task. At the heart of community building lies the *conversation*; it requires people to come together and discuss the ethical values that bind them. A difficulty of community building is that it is an emergent process: it happens bottom-up rather than top-down. The leadership can therefore not force it on the rest of the organization.

However, there are some central ways to *facilitate* community building:

- ✦ The leadership of an organization should re-imagine its role. It is not the final authority on matters that concern the organization but has a role to *serve* the organization. This serving happens by giving others the chance to speak, and to listen to their opinions and concerns.
- ✦ Create a space for organization-wide discussion and deliberation. Such a space is often multi-faceted—it consists of face-to-face conversations between the leadership and other people in the organization, town hall meetings, culture building workshops, and online spaces such as a discussion forum.
- ✦ Frame the conversation on community building—*not* around concrete policies and design problems, but around the "bigger picture" issues, which include organizational purpose and ethical values.
- ✦ Frame the conversation *not* around issues and problems that are likely to generate consensus, but around those that inspire a diversity of opinions. Disagreement and conflict are essential to deal with to finally build a community.

Professional Skills Development

Most professional skills development focuses on technical abilities that are required to develop products and services. Consider, for instance, coding skills, accounting skills, or planning skills. These hard skills are essential for an organization to function.

Ethics, however, depends largely on communicative skills and critical thinking. Earlier, we explained that ethics has a lot to do with finding good reasons for acting in a certain way. Soft skills are needed to find and express such good reasons.

Organizations can do different things to align professional skills with the skills needed for ethics:

- ✦ **Ethical oath:** As we saw earlier, physicians declare an ethical oath to align their technical work with ethical values. An organization can write an ethical oath by listing the core virtues it wants its members to have as imperatives: e.g., "in my profession, I will act transparently." No official ethical oath for the emerging technologies sector exists, but organizations can gain inspiration from the Archimedean Oath for engineers, or the data science oath.
- ✦ **Training:** Organizations can facilitate internal trainings for their members to gain the essential soft skills needed for ethics. This involves both knowledge-intensive trainings, like trainings that link to this instruction material, and practical engagement with ethics, such as ethical foresight workshops.
- ✦ **Organizational resourcing:** Organizations can invest in ethics by aligning professional roles with the ethical impact they want to have. For instance, they can hire or train ethics experts who have an exemplary function, inspiring others to behave ethically and educating them.

Additional Reading

For more information, visit:

- ✦ Archimedean Oath for engineers: en.wikipedia.org.
- ✦ Data science oath: www.nap.edu.

Training and Education

Scientific studies have shown that professionals who receive ethics education have a significantly higher ability to perceive ethical issues and are reported to act more frequently to uphold ethical conduct. In other words, ethics education works.

In selecting an ethics training and education program, organizations can take the following points into account:

- ✦ Ensure that the program is organized around industry-specific, practical cases. Cases help people to easily understand what might go well or wrong in organizations in terms of ethics.
- ✦ Use materials from organizations that specialize in professional education. A lot of material on organizational and technology ethics is written in an academic style that is hard to access. Organizations that specialize in professional education offer state-of-the-art ethics curricula that are aligned with the practical reality of organizations working with emerging technologies.
- ✦ Make use of practical tools and heuristics to discuss ethics, such as the Ethical OS Toolkit or the Ethics Canvas.
- ✦ Customize the program for different roles in the organization. Some people will need to be educated as ethics experts, which requires intensive training, while others will need to be acquainted with the basics, which can be taught in less intensive teaching blocks.

Additional Reading

For more information, visit:

- ❖ Scientific studies about ethics education: www.tandfonline.com
- ❖ Ethical OS Toolkit: oecd-opsi.org
- ❖ Ethics Canvas: ethicscanvas.org

Team Management

Cultivating the right dispositions among members of an organization is primarily a matter of organizing day-to-day work in a team setting. How teams are organized is therefore a pivotal issue.

In order to organize teams in an ethical manner, managers can take the following into account:

- ❖ To take tasks and practices in teams beyond a narrow technical focus and link them to people's ethical beliefs and aspirations. For instance, consider that an engineer is not just responsible for coding, but for coding to achieve certain positive impacts in society.
- ❖ To allow for participatory decision-making in teams. This means making sure everyone is heard when making important decisions, and giving everyone a say in steering the work done by the team.
- ❖ To channel ethical concerns that people have into procedures that turn these concerns into positive change. This includes allowing for internal whistleblowing when there is organizational failure.
- ❖ To give people the opportunities to excel in an ethical way. This means allowing for initiatives that go beyond narrow business interests and benefit society.

ACTIVITY 9-4: Discussing Professional Ethics

Scenario

For this activity, you can use the RudiBrace example you were introduced to earlier, or you can select a product you are working on in your own workplace. Sample responses are provided for RudiBrace.

The RudiBrace team has decided that its members will declare an ethical oath that fits the work they do. Remember that primary concerns that they have are related to privacy and fairness.

1. **With this information in mind, can you suggest two statements for the RudiBrace ethical oath?**

Show Answer

Glossary

organizational culture

A set of shared assumptions (values, principles, and practices) that guide individuals' actions and specify appropriate behavior in different organizational contexts.

ethical culture

The aspect of an organization's culture that supports the organization and its members in consistently doing the right thing.

VCIO model

A way for organizations to ensure that their values translate into observable actions.

diversity of thought

A situation where the people in a group bring varying, diverse viewpoints to the table.

organizational memory

The ability of organizations to record, share, and act on learnings from the past.

policy

The rules imposed by external authorities, the internal legal design of the organization, and rules governing conduct within that structure.

compliance

The process of enforcing and abiding by policies.

ethics review board

A standing body that adjudicates sensitive ethical issues, such as research on human subjects or products with risks of harm.

ethical OS toolkit

A resource designed to help individuals and organizations anticipate and address ethical challenges and implications associated with emerging technologies.

ethical manner

Behaving in a way that is considered morally right, fair, and respectful towards others, adhering to principles such as honesty, integrity, and compassion.