

# Ethics 4 Everyone

**SAMPLE PAGES FROM LEADER'S GUIDE**

*Despite the codes of ethics, the ethics programs and special departments, corporations don't make the ultimate decisions about ethics.*

*Ethical choices are made by individuals.*

*– M. Euel Wade, Jr.*

## INTRODUCTION

You need look no further than today's business section or front page to get a sense of the value of this workshop's topic. Over the past few years, it has become clear that many organizations have played it loosely when it comes to the ethical standards, rules and guidelines intended to protect their customers, employees, and clients.

Half of all employees surveyed in a recent national study admitted to acting unethically or illegally while on the job in the past year.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, 55% of US consumers take into account a company's ethics and values when buying a product or service.<sup>2</sup>

CRM Learning's *Ethics 4 Everyone* captures the essence of the issue surrounding the ethics crisis in our organizations: Organizations don't make the ultimate decisions about ethics — ethical choices are made by people. If people are given the right tools and support, they will be able to make better decisions when placed in difficult situations. The benefits to both the organization and its employees will be significant.

This fast-paced workshop helps managers, supervisors, and staff understand the role ethics plays in their organization, and suggests ways to improve their thought processes and decision-making around ethical issues.

This workshop has some unique characteristics that may affect the way you present it:

- People *want* to talk about ethics. They relate to the topic in a very personal way. Virtually every participant has encountered ethical situations directly, or as an observer.
- Because ethics is not an easy topic to discuss openly with others, people appreciate a chance to air their concerns and thoughts about the subject, and are eager for techniques and tools to guide them.

<sup>1</sup>EOA News, Spring 1997, survey by EOA and the American Society of Chartered Life Underwriters and Chartered Financial Consultants

<sup>2</sup>EOA News, Fall 1996

- The workshop's design makes it comfortable for participants to think about their own experiences and to share their ideas. It acknowledges that, from time to time, everyone experiences influences and pressures that threaten to compromise their standards and affect their decisions.
- The workshop exercises combine individual exercises (with safeguards for comfort and confidentiality) with opportunities to share general concerns and ideas with others.
- The workshop design is structured to deliver — if you choose — feedback to management on areas where improved communication and guidance is needed to improve the quality of the decisions that each employee can make.

Maintaining an organization's ethical compass requires persistence and vigilance. A company culture based on high ethical standards is built and strengthened, decision-by-decision and choice-by-choice. CRM Learning's *Ethics 4 Everyone* workshop provides valuable perspective and tools to help that process along.

## HOW THIS WORKSHOP BUILDS AWARENESS AND ETHICAL DISCIPLINE

The *Ethics 4 Everyone* workshop is based on a fast-paced, engaging and impactful video, hosted by Eric Harvey. The video vignettes demonstrate and discuss a broad range of ethical choices and dilemmas encountered in the workplace.

The video and workshop content will:

- Help session attendees identify situations that commonly occur in the workplace. These are situations and behaviors that every participant will recognize.
- Emphasize that ethical choices are made by people, not by the organization. The workshop gives participants tools and techniques for working through difficult ethical situations.
- Set the basis for improvements the organization's management can make in communicating their values, expectations, requirements and performance standards throughout the organization.
- Facilitate discussion around the benefits of ethical behaviors and the impacts of poor ethical choices. The workshop demonstrates how personal decisions about ethical issues have the potential to spread into the organization's culture.

## WORKSHOP GOALS

The activities in this workshop help build confidence and a sense of the importance of ethical discipline and ethical choices.

The overall goals of the workshop are:

1. To explore how your organization can more clearly define and communicate what is “right, fair, honest and legal.”
2. To illustrate the day-to-day, decision-by-decision nature of ethics issues in every organization.
3. To go beyond awareness and recognition to discuss and demonstrate specific techniques to help participants make ethical decisions or respond to ethical conflicts.

Specific workshop objectives can be found on page 21 of this Leader's Guide, and are summarized on Slides 3–4.

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

CRM Learning's *Ethics 4 Everyone* workshop is designed for managers, supervisors and line staff—virtually every level and every department of the organization.

Workshop material should be presented in a group setting where the responses of others can be shared. We recommend limiting the group to no more than 12–14 participants in order to promote active discussion of the workshop topics and your organization's methods of supporting ethical choices.

## WHEN TO USE THIS PROGRAM

As with any training activity, a clear purpose for using the program will encourage participation and follow-through. Use the *Ethics 4 Everyone* workshop:

- As part of your orientation for new or recently-hired employees.
- As one component of a management or staff development program.
- As part of the process of reviewing or introducing new policies and procedures.
- Following an ethics-related incident, as part of a lessons-learned process. In this case, the discussions and suggestions related to the best ways to support individuals in ethical choices take on added importance and value, as do the post-session follow-through tasks described on page 17.

## WORKSHOP AGENDA

The recommended workshop agenda runs 3-1/2 hours. Leaders are encouraged to add or remove activities from the overall plan to meet specific needs or time constraints.

## Saving Time

If you do not have enough time to complete all of the Workshop activities, you may want to skip Exercise 1 (10 minutes) and/or Exercise 5 (15 minutes). Since Exercise 1 is referred to several times, this will reduce the Workshop by more than 30 minutes.

Workshop Segment	Duration (min)
<b>Welcome</b> Purpose of Workshop Ground Rules and Confidentiality Logistics	5
Participant Introductions	10
Workshop Objectives	5
Exercise 1: What Happened?	10
Video Presentation	15
Video Follow-up and Discussion	10
<b>Thinking in Terms of Ethical and Unethical</b> Exercise 2: Group Polling Activity and Discussion Exercise 3: Supporting and Distracting Influences	25 10
<b>Break</b>	10
Rationalization Exercise 4: Sources of Guidance and Assistance	10 10
<b>Making Ethical Choices</b> Optional Presentation (Company-specific) Three R's Presentation Exercise 5: Role Play - Taking a Stand	--- 10 15
<b>Recognizing Ethical Dilemmas</b> Discussion	15
<b>Managing Ethical Dilemmas</b> Introduction Exercise 6: Design a Dilemma Group Activity	5 35
Workshop Conclusion	10
<b>Total Estimated Time*</b>	<b>3-1/4 hours</b>
<b>Leadership Debrief</b> ( <i>separate session</i> )	<b>90-120 min.</b>

\*Does not include Break or Optional Presentation time

## LOOKING BACK

### EXERCISE 1: WHAT HAPPENED? (10 MINUTES)



If you are pressed for time, Exercise 1 can be eliminated. Note that this exercise is referred to at several points in the workshop.

#### *Introduce the Activity*

Tell participants that responses for this exercise will not be shared. The purpose of the activity is to help them reflect on their own feelings and thinking around ethical issues they've encountered.

*Use the outline on WORKBOOK PAGE 3 to recall a past situation that has made you ethically “uncomfortable.” Your own actions might have caused the situation, or you might have become involved through another individual’s actions. This should be a situation that directly involved you in some way, rather than one you heard about.*



Ask participants to *think* about this situation in detail. No one will read or see their notes.

Explain that upcoming workshop activities will ask participants to revisit the situations they identify here and consider how the new information and skills they are learning might have been applied to this situation.

*In filling out your worksheet, consider the following:*

- *What were the particulars of the situation? (Participants can recall this without making notes if they are uncomfortable doing so.)*
- *What influenced your thinking about the situation?*
- *How did you respond?*

*If you are making notes, stop at the heavy line after the fourth box.*

ALLOW approximately 4–5 minutes for this work.

*You have probably identified a wide variety of situations, influences and responses. The upcoming video will present more examples, demonstrate the range of ethical issues we all face, and begin to define how to resolve difficult ethical dilemmas.*

### **VIDEO PRESENTATION (15 MINUTES)**

Introduce the video and display a copy of Eric Harvey's book, *Ethics 4 Everyone*.

EXPLAIN that the situations illustrated are hypothetical, but that we've probably all seen or been involved in situations just like them.

#### ***Background on Eric Harvey***

*The narrator in the video is Eric Harvey, president and founder of the WALK THE TALK Company, and a leading expert on ethics and values-based business practices. As a speaker, business consultant, and author, he and his team have worked with more than 80% of Fortune Magazine's "Most Admired Companies."*

*Eric has been published in scores of trade and professional journals, and is a recognized expert in helping organizations build efficient and consistent approaches to resolving ethical issues.*

### **Preview Next Steps**

SAY:

*We'll explore clear-cut right / wrong issues and how to deal with them in the next part of this workshop. Then, we'll explore the concept of ethical "dilemmas," a special type of ethical conflict, and methods of addressing these more difficult questions.*

*There is a difference between knowing what's right and wrong, and acting accordingly. The acting side of things can be difficult. This is why the techniques provided will be so useful.*

### **THINKING IN TERMS OF ETHICAL AND UNETHICAL**

#### **Exercise Two: Polling (25 minutes)**



IMPORTANT:

- Review the action statements on WORKBOOK PAGE 6.
- This activity runs more smoothly if you prepare the Summary Sheet, preferably on a flip chart page, in advance. SEE page 26 of this guide for an example.
- You will need help calculating and displaying the results of this activity. Identify a participant in advance who can help you quickly, accurately, and legibly tabulate the responses on a flip chart sheet that you have prepared in advance of the session.

#### **Introduce Activity/Give Instructions**



REVIEW the instructions for Exercise 2 on WORKBOOK PAGE 6, and EXPLAIN that their opinions — the way they label the behaviors — will be anonymously collected, summarized and then discussed with the group.

The worksheet asks what category each of 20 behaviors belongs to: Clearly ethical, clearly unethical, or some shade of gray.



### **Exercise 3: Supporting and Distracting Influences**



While you and an assistant are recording the results from the Exercise 2 Polling Activity, ASK participants to begin working on Exercise 3: Supporting and Distracting Influences, on WORKBOOK PAGE 7.

Read through the instructions with the participants. Make sure they understand the concepts of “Supporting” and “Distracting” influences.

- Supporting influences help people make ethical choices. An example of a supporting influence could be a manager who consistently demonstrates fair treatment of her employees.
- In this context, distracting influences are those that press for a decision toward unethical behavior. An example of distracting influences might be unrealistic time pressure to complete an assignment, or an emphasis on meeting a quota at all costs.

DIRECT participants to list three or four *supporting* influences and three or four *distracting* influences that affect their decisions in the workplace.

EXPLAIN that discussion of their responses will follow the completion of the Exercise 2 Polling Activity.



Give the participants enough time to finish their work on Exercise 3 before you begin the Polling Activity debrief.

#### **Polling Activity Debrief**

When the participants' individual tallies have been recorded on the summary sheet, advise participants they will return to Exercise 3 in a few minutes. Proceed with the debrief on Exercise 2.

DISCUSS:

- *What makes categorizing some of the behaviors difficult? Which items were difficult to categorize?*
- *Can a behavior be “slightly unethical?” or “Close, but not quite unethical?”*

- *What criteria did you use to categorize your choices? In other words, as you grouped the behaviors on the list, what were your choices based on?*

**Possible examples of criteria:**

- ♦ **Would the violation be discovered?**
  - ♦ **Were people emotionally affected?**
  - ♦ **Were significant dollars involved?**
  - ♦ **Would this behavior physically harm anyone?**
- *Do you think people consider impacts when they are making their choices about ethical issues? Which impacts make the most difference?*

DISCUSS the results displayed on the flip chart summary. Look for certain item numbers. Were most of the behaviors listed as **E** or **U**, or were many more listed in the gray columns? ASK participants what patterns stand out for them.

POINT OUT items (behaviors) that have the widest range of responses. Have the group discuss why these items might have received the range of responses they did.

SUGGEST that a possible explanation for items having a range of responses (tally marks in several categories) or items where a large number of responses labeled the behavior as **M**—is that the organization's policies and guidance on these behaviors might not be clear enough.



As time permits, discuss other patterns participants see in the responses.

It's likely that very rich discussions will occur around the issues raised by this exercise. Depending on the time available, you may need to cut the discussion off. If it becomes necessary to cut the discussion short, save the list of topics for future use.

Suggest that participants (privately) categorize their recalled situations in Exercise 1 (WORKBOOK PAGE 4) in these terms (**E, L, M, D, U**). Allow them a minute to think this through.

MAKE ONE OR MORE OF THESE KEY POINTS:

- As we gain experience in the workplace, we tend to see things less often in terms of black and white. Where we draw the line between right and wrong tends to become a bit blurry.
- When right and wrong become blurry — when we are operating in the gray zone — we should fall back on the guidance of our experience, or the guidance of rules, procedures, and laws for direction.
- It's not possible for organizations to guide every specific behavior, or to have a rule or regulation to cover every situation. That's why it comes down to the individual and to his or her choices.
- Employees need to understand the intent of the organization's code of conduct, and have an understanding of its values. And it is important for the organization to *have* clear values.


### ***Debrief Exercise 3: Supporting and Distracting Influences (5 minutes)***



On a white board or flip chart, set up two columns (Supporting and Distracting) to collect the participants' responses. If you are using a white board, ask someone to record the influences as accurately as possible. The names of individuals should not be connected with specific comments.


- *What examples of supporting influences do you see in your organization?*
- *What examples of distracting influences have you seen operating in your work environment? (Remind participants to discuss situations in their organization in general terms only, and to not use specific names or other recognizable descriptions.)*
- *How much control do you think you have over the influences in the distracting column?*

**MANAGING ETHICAL DILEMMAS (5 MINUTES)**

 SHOW SLIDES #17–19: Managing Conflicting Rights


*These three slides describe the steps to resolving ethical dilemmas. These content points are also summarized in your workbook on page 13.*

- 1. If possible, eliminate the conflict.*
- 2. Decide what's more right.*
- 3. Seek assistance. Get help.*

 POINT OUT that the questions on the other side of the Reminder Card (“Which of the conflicting rights...”) are helpful in making a decision about what to do in these situations.

**EXERCISE 6: YOU MAKE THE CHOICE (35 MINUTES)**

Divide participants into table groups of three to four people.

 REVIEW the instructions on WORKBOOK PAGE 14 with the participants. Make sure they understand that they are to create an ethical dilemma—a situation where two right answers are plausible.

Step 1: Using WORKBOOK PAGE 14, each group composes a dilemma.  
(10 minutes)

Step 2: The dilemma is then passed on to the next group to resolve and present to the group using WORKBOOK PAGE 15. (15 minutes)

**Debrief Exercise 6**

A spokesperson from each group presents their solution to the case they resolved to the entire group of participants, and the entire group offers comments (5 - 10 minutes per case).

Emphasis in this debrief discussion should be on the criteria used to establish which response was “more right.”

## EXERCISE 1: A PERSONAL ETHICAL ENCOUNTER

Think back to a situation you've personally encountered at work—one that involved ethical choices. This situation may have involved your actions, you may have been on the receiving end of someone else's actions, or you may have simply observed the situation and its results.

- Make brief notes about the situation below.
- Stop at the bold line.

*Note: This form won't be handed in.*

Recall the details of the situation.	
At the time, did you feel as if you were dealing with an ethical decision of some kind?	
Was it immediately clear how to respond to the situation? What outcome were you attempting to produce or avoid?	
How did you respond?	
What rationalizations were made?	
As best you can recall, what influenced your thinking? Did you feel pressured to decide a certain way?	
Did you think about seeking assistance? From where? Did you choose to use it?	

## EXERCISE 2: ETHICAL OPINION POLLING

**Directions:** What category does each of the behaviors on the list belong to?

<b>E</b>	Clearly Ethical.
<b>L</b>	Light Gray. Ethical, but a little fuzzy.
<b>M</b>	Medium Gray/Fuzzy. Not obviously unethical, but not really ethical either.
<b>D</b>	Dark Gray. Shady. Leaning strongly toward unethical.
<b>U</b>	Clearly Unethical.

- \_\_\_ 1. Conducting personal business on company time, (sending personal messages on company e-mail; extending lunch breaks to run errands).
- \_\_\_ 2. Using or taking company resources for personal purposes (home office, kids' school, etc.).
- \_\_\_ 3. Calling in sick when you're not really sick.
- \_\_\_ 4. Going to work to meet a deadline when you're obviously sick or contagious.
- \_\_\_ 5. Telling or passing along an ethnically- or sexually-oriented joke.
- \_\_\_ 6. Reporting a safety violation in another department.
- \_\_\_ 7. Engaging in negative gossip or spreading rumors about someone.
- \_\_\_ 8. Bad-mouthing the company or management to people outside the company.
- \_\_\_ 9. Reading information or documents on a co-worker's desk or computer screen without their knowledge.
- \_\_\_ 10. Passing along personal information shared in confidence.
- \_\_\_ 11. Calling a customer to report a small billing error that will require your company to give them a refund.
- \_\_\_ 12. Ignoring an organizational rule or procedure.
- \_\_\_ 13. Explaining behavior with, "No one told me *not* to do this."
- \_\_\_ 14. Failing to follow through on something promised by a date/time without renegotiating the deadline.
- \_\_\_ 15. Withholding work-related information shared in confidence that others may need.
- \_\_\_ 16. Letting someone fail at a task to strengthen your own position.
- \_\_\_ 17. Accepting credit for something that someone else did.
- \_\_\_ 18. Manipulating or withholding information in order to make a sale.
- \_\_\_ 19. Relying on your boss to check your work for errors.
- \_\_\_ 20. At tax time, making two copies of your personal returns on the office copier.

## EXERCISE 6: DESIGN A DILEMMA

In this exercise, you'll work with a small group. Your group will think about difficult ethical situations that could arise at your organization, develop strategies for resolving them, and see how others view your efforts.

### ***Step 1: Design a Dilemma***

Create a **competing rights dilemma** based on one of the group member's recalled experiences, or another ethical dilemma you can quickly devise.

Here are some examples of **right vs. right** situations:

It's **right** to apply rules and regulations equally...

But it's also **right** to give special consideration to hard working, dependable and productive people.

It's **right** to communicate information that other people need to do their work...

But it's also **right** to respect the confidentiality of information if you have agreed to do so.

It's **right** to follow through on commitments made...

But it's also **right** to address a higher priority task that suddenly needs to be completed.

Describe the dilemma on a blank sheet of paper, providing enough detail to allow the next group to resolve it. Be sure to clearly identify the two "rights" that are in conflict.

Write legibly so that the next group will clearly understand the dilemma. Provide character names (please do not use names of associates or colleagues, or make it possible to recognize their characters).

# For more information...

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