



# REQUIEM FOR THE ETHICAL WORKPLACE

IGFOA

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# Every Day, Strive for Something Better.

1. Love small experiments with yourself.

2. Peter Senge: “Through learning we

*i. re-create ourselves...*

*ii. we reperceive the world and our relationship to it.”*

# Dispel Expectation of Session Solutions:

Given what I'm  
about to cover, by  
the end of session  
two, you should  
have:

new insights about  
ethical issues and  
problems

insights to improve  
your day-to-day  
human interactions  
– therefore peace  
and productivity

Would you like to sit  
next to you at dinner?

# Core Ideas to Help Make Session Clear:

Ethics is about two universal principles:

- 1. Would my actions stand up universally?*
- 2. I must see and treat myself and others equally*

Ethics laws (most laws) are:

- 1. Usually place and group specific; targeted, legally binding*

Ethics codes, Codes of Conduct – Policies

- 1. Group & career specific*
- 2. Work Rules – one set for all*
- 3. Social expectations & values*

# Leadership Training and Ethics

1. Leadership models tend to be focused on the special skills and charisma of leaders.
2. We are taught that leaders are heroes and worthy of following because of lofty skills – including humbleness and vision.
3. Yet with rare exception, when there is an ethics breach, the issue is a leader – or traced back to a leader.

# From Robert Rotberg in *Daedalus*, Summer 2018

“Corruption is a systemic malady, emerging from the top down rather than the bottom up. That is, the stain of corruption spreads from the top of political and corporate entities downward. Leaders set the tone; misconduct at one level of authority implicitly authorizes the next. Integrity or its absence therefore seeps into the collective societal consciousness.”

# My Intent is Serious – an Overview

## I believe:

1. Most corruption (bad ethics) is started and fueled from the top – followed by cascades of corruption.
2. Two principles of core ethics exist – but not taught/emphasized.
3. Pressure on all to be socially compatible is abundant.
4. This creates a buffer for a leaders misdeeds and corruption.
5. Our eyes are in the wrong place.
6. We are paying a steep price. All sectors are \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Turning the corner isn't in the cards.



# People in Responsible Positions are Able to be Unethical Because

1. Epidemic: Leaders don't self-police
2. Others allow, enable and excuse early signs. We are too embarrassed and too concerned about own self-interests to confront others early on or in the moment. Enter slippery-slope.
3. An actual ethical standard is hard to apply – requires enormous discipline and courage. Why bother? I'd rather focus on my own stuff.
4. Absurd - distorted consequentialism
5. Requiem because we are stuck with 1 - 3.

‘There’s something dirty/nasty about the world today...30% of complaints made against your company are made by your competitors.’ Kevin O’Leary, Shark (GI, Twitter)



# Being Ethical Doesn't Mean Much...

1. because people have different ideas about being ethical (jello)
2. because one mistake can cost you dearly
3. because leaders continue to ruin our society and public service
4. because there is no game plan to solve corruption
5. because leaders are hedonistic (consequentialist - utilitarians)
6. because at street level, ethical behavior is “Be nice Peter”

# Now, Three Points to Focus on:

- I. A specific definition of ethics
- II. Study what's occurring locally, in Illinois and globally – all sectors
- III. Step back - consider how to act

# I. Start with Basic Non-Sectarian Def of Ethics. What all Humans Should Aspire to:

## Two actions to embrace:

1. For an action to be good/true, it must be good/true universally. Determined by rational thinking.
2. Every person gets to exercise autonomy – free will – (speak and act freely) and can self-govern. People are ends not mere means.

## Two actions to avoid:

1. Manipulate/force others in order to get your way
2. Embrace social values as your basis for ethics

# Ethics has Become Subordinate to Social Values & Pressure

## Ethics vs. Social Pressure/Values

### Ethics:

1. What's true for one, is true for all
2. Perfect equality of persons

### Social values:

1. Be nice, Be humble. Be kind. Listen. "Can't we all just get along?" Don't embarrass people.
2. **Almost entirely based in leaders telling others how to act.**

# Consequence for Workplace?

## Discussion

# Historical Context of Ethics vs Values:

“God is dead. God remains dead. *And we have killed him.*” - Friedrich Nietzsche. The Gay Science, 1882

“Ethics is dead. For personal convenience, leaders killed it. It’s convenient for leaders to distance themselves from ethics and make social issues the norm.” - Peter Burchard



# The Growth and Acceptance of Consequentialism

Theory of Utility offered by John Stewart Mills and others.

1. Whatever decision creates most benefit for greatest number wins.
2. Hedonism – selfish interests of leaders.

# Breaking it Down – Today's System

1. There is no universally practiced/followed ethic
2. This opens door for top-down workplace social pressure to be the newest best practice/standard for most of us.
3. This standard paves way for workplace disruption, more/endless corruption and over-reliance on laws - rules.
4. This contributes to leader rule based in consequentialism – self protection, hedonism and nihilism, e.g., “I’m a nice guy and I get to decide what I want based on my interpretation of what’s best.”
5. We have deep-seated leadership problems.



# I Connect to Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Summer 2018 edition regarding Anticorruption

1. Not one country has been pushed above the threshold of good governance during the past 20 years.
2. “”...corrupt countries are generally run by corrupt people with little interests in killing their own rents...”

- Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Berlin, Chair, European Research Centre for Anti-Corruption

## II. Ethically Speaking, what's Occurring Globally and Around the Corner?

We start with questioning what we believe about the ethical dysfunction (performance) of people near and far.

# Around the Corner: Illinois is a Typical Ethics Law State

## Step 1: Illinois Gov't Ethics Act

- ✓ Includes Code of Conduct for legislators
- ✓ Includes Disclosure of Economic Interests

## Step 2: State Officials and Employee Ethics Act

- ✓ Wide ranging (read Sec of State brochure)
- ✓ Includes prohibited political activity (local gov required)
- ✓ Includes Gift Ban (local gov required)
- ✓ Includes Whistle Blower protection
- ✓ Applies to local gov – Home Rule Preemption

# Typical Ethics Mgt/Legal/Regulation Flow

## IL State

- Ethics Law
- Home Rule Preemption

## Local Govt

- Must Partly Adhere
- May Expand

## Professional

- Ethics Codes
- Codes of Conduct

# Semi-Objective State Rating (Leadership):

Center for Public Integrity

<https://www.publicintegrity.org/2015/11/09/18822/how-does-your-state-rank-integrity>

How ethical is Illinois government?

Where is the problem with ethics?

What evidence proves your point?



# Now, Ethics on the International Front. Namibia Anti-Corruption Commission



# How Should We Score Ethics on the International Scene?

1. Look beyond our own knowledge
2. Resist “Other countries aren’t the same.”
3. Consider Fragile States Index – Fund for Peace

“The CAST framework was designed to measure this vulnerability in pre-conflict, active conflict and post-conflict situations, and continues to be used widely by policy makers, field practitioners, and local community networks.”

<http://global.fundforpeace.org/>

# A New Look at Workplace Conduct

1. Significant leader corruption rooted in consequentialism.
2. The amount of corruption and lack of ethics is astonishing.
3. Social constructs have a powerful hold
4. People won't (or slow to) challenge leaders.
5. Shift: Absent, principles, employers are left to create rules and employees are under pressure to be socially correct.
6. Good old embarrassment isn't tolerated.
7. We are consequently lower performers and attitudes suck

Now what do you do?

# Consider How to Act

What comes to mind?

# Greatest Opportunity to Demonstrate What it Means to be Ethical Occurs:

- In decision making process
- In daily interactions with others – especially in meetings

# Closing

- ✓ If I pretend to be able to tell you how to be ethical, and you expect me to do so, we've engage in a universal immoral act.
- ✓ We've negated the definitions
- ✓ The how-to is for you to work out (until the next session)