

# Contents

- ✓ Chapter 1: Introduction to Technical Leadership
  - ✓ 1.1 Technical Leadership Fundamentals
  - ✓ 1.2 Building Trust and Credibility
  - ✓ 1.3 Risk-taking and Creativity
  - ✓ 1.4 Ethics, Professionalism and Time Management
- ✓ Chapter 2: Putting Leadership Principles into Practice
  - ✓ 2.1 Creating a Vision
  - ✓ 2.2 Team Building and Communication
  - ✓ 2.3 Conflict Management and Resolution
  - ✓ 2.4 Making Strategic Decisions
- ✓ Chapter 3: Ethical Leadership
  - ✓ 3.1 Towards an Ethical Culture
  - ✓ 3.2 Organisational and Individual requirements
  - 3.3 An Inclusive Leader





## Chapter 3: Ethical Leadership

### 3.1 Towards an Ethical Culture

### 3.2 Organisational and Individual requirements

Reference: D. W. Hess, *Leadership by Engineers and Scientists*, Wiley, 2018

# Ethical Leadership

## Quotes

Ethics give businesses, their leaders and employees a moral compass. They ensure the most important policies and business decisions don't just work in favour of revenue, but are also fair, unbiased and honest – *Tamanna Mishra*

When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower - *Alexander Den Heijer*

## Ethical Leadership

- ✓ Ethical Leaders must demonstrate specific characteristics of exemplar behaviour and integrity if commitment and loyalty from employees is to be achieved and maintained.
- ✓ In order of importance, the four primary traits expected of ethical leaders according to several surveys are:
  1. Honesty,
  2. Integrity,
  3. Unbiased, and
  4. Competent.
- ✓ Honesty is at the top of the list, because this creates trust throughout the organisation, promotes buy-in of the goals and vision professed by the leader, and sets an example of the behaviour expected from everyone.

What is meant by Ethical Leadership?

- Ethical Leadership means using ethics and making an ethical decision in situations that are faced by leaders



# Ethical Leadership

1. Ethical leaders have high expectations for their employees, and they hold themselves to the same standards and they lead by example.
2. Ethical leaders demonstrate good values and integrity through their words and actions, and also demonstrate accountability.
3. Ethical leadership is leadership within an organisation centred around respect for ethics and values, as well as the rights and dignity of others.
4. The concepts of honesty, integrity, trust, fairness, inclusion and equity are all critical to ethical leadership.

## Five Principles of Ethical Leadership

92





# Becoming an Ethical Leader: *Five Principles Ethical Leadership* [97]

## 1. Respect Others

- Empower others and let your team members be themselves creatively
- Give credit to everyone's ideas
- Listen to your team members (Subordinates or Followers)
- Be empathetic
- Be tolerant to opposing points on views

## 2. Serve Others

- Contribute to greater good
- Service behaviour includes:
  - ❖ Mentoring
  - ❖ Empower others
  - ❖ Team building



## 3. Show Justice

- Treat all team members equally and equitably
- Fairness and equity should be the main priority in decision making
- Be clear about rules for distributing rewards. No favourites, always be fair.

## 4. Be Honest

- Always tell the truth and have integrity
- Be open with others and represent reality exactly the way it is:
  - ❖ Do not promise something that you cannot do
  - ❖ Do not misrepresent
  - ❖ Do not walk away from difficult conversations

## 5. Build Community

- Influence others to reach common goal
- Attend to more than just the leaders and followers goal. Also attend to the community's goal and purpose:
  - ❖ An Ethical Leader is concerned with the common good, in the broad sense

93



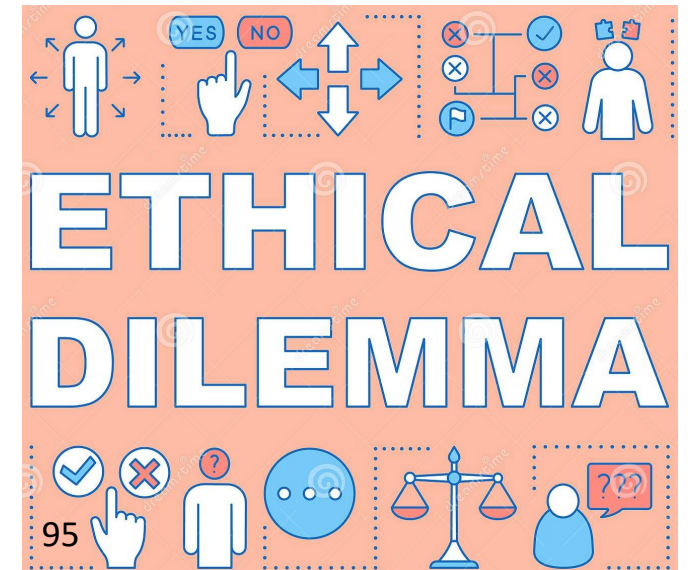
Leadership and building community

# What is meant by Ethical Dilemmas?

- ✓ When an ethical leader is faced with a situation where their important moral values come in to conflict and the leader has to make a choice between these values, then the situation is an 'Ethical Dilemma)
- ✓ Hence, for example, sometimes the leader may have to choose between two values that are important such as integrity and honesty:
  - So, in these situations the leader should assign priorities to the values and one takes precedence over the other.
  - However, it is crucial that the leader should take care to balance between both the values in order to avoid unethical decision making

## One's Weakness

- ✓ Being Aware of One's Weaknesses:
  - An ethical leader is aware of his/her strengths and is also aware of his weaknesses.
  - Only when a person knows his weakness, he/she will be able to compensate for that weakness.



# Individual Qualities of Ethical and Unethical Leaders [98]

## Unethical Leader

1. Uses power only for personal gain or impact
2. Promotes own personal vision
3. Censures critical or opposing views
4. Demands own decision to be accepted without question
5. One-way communication
6. Insensitive to followers' needs
7. Relies on convenient external moral standards to satisfy self-interests



## Ethical Leader

1. Uses power to serve others
2. Aligns vision with followers' needs and aspirations
3. Considers and learn from criticisms
4. Stimulates followers to think independently and to question the leader's view
5. Open, two-way communication
6. Coaches, develops and supports followers; shares recognition with others
7. Relies on internal moral standards to satisfy organisational and societal interests





# Six key factors to develop Ethical Leaders in an organisation[98]

1. Commitment from all leaders to a clearly stated code of ethical conduct that is continually enforced helps establish acceptable standards or boundaries for employee conduct;
2. Recruiting, selecting, and promoting managers with high moral standards are ways of creating a culture of ethical responsibility;
3. Developing performance standards and rewards that emphasise respect for people as individuals, and ethics as a non-negotiable performance metric;
4. Providing leaders with education and training that teaches them how to integrate diverse points of view. Being able to see the inter-relationships among new perspectives and old, lies at the source of moral development;



99

Ethical Leadership Inspires Trust and Employee Success



# Six key factors to develop ethical Leaders in an organisation[98]

5. Training individuals with the necessary characteristics, social skills, and motivation to acquire ethical leader behaviours.
  - Training in ethical leadership skills must be consistent with the philosophy of leadership at the top of the company and the company culture;
6. Identifying people who exemplify high moral conduct.
  - Such people need to be held as strong examples, by leaders, as essential to the long term success of the organisation

## Who is an Ethical Leader?

A person who has an established reputation of:

- Consistently upholding a set of ethical principles

AND

- Creating the perception in others that ethics & values are important to organisational operations

In conclusion, building internal ethical standards in leaders is a challenging undertaking which requires formal codes of ethical conduct;

# Towards an Ethical Culture [100]

- ✓ Each organisation is responsible for creating and fostering an ethical culture.
- ✓ The organisational level of a company creates a Code of Ethics to support the Company Mission and Vision statements [Management at the highest level creates the company code of ethics].
- ✓ It is then passed down to every level of the organisation to align everyone to the same goals.
- ✓ Team leaders/managers are then responsible for using the Code of Ethics to guide their daily decisions.
- ✓ The leaders, managers, team members are responsible for their own actions and decisions. However, management also plays a big role in helping to foster an ethical environment.
- ✓ The leaders and managers interact with their team on a regular basis and therefore can gauge what ethical culture looks like in their section(s) and it is up to managers to reinforce ethical standards on their team.





# Towards an Ethical Culture [100]

- ✓ The best way for a leader to create an ethical environment is to act ethically themselves, to lead by example. That is the number one responsibility of leaders.
- ✓ When a leader is acting ethically, they become a role model for other employees and in addition, it gives them credibility and makes them more approachable.
- ✓ If someone witnesses an ethics violation by a team member, they are more likely to report it to their leader/manager if the leader/manager follows ethical guidelines.
- ✓ It is then up to the manager to continue up the chain of command to report ethical concerns.
- ✓ If a report of an ethics violation is swept under the carpet or ignored, more than likely, the unethical behaviour will continue and possibly worsen. Leaders are responsible for being across the ethical behaviour of others on their team.



103

Creating an Ethical workplace



104

# Towards an Ethical Culture [100]

- ✓ It is up to the management team to follow all policies and procedures in place to handle ethical concerns.
- ✓ There need to be clear repercussions in place for unethical behaviour.
- ✓ On the other hand, it is wise for management teams to reward ethical behaviour. This can help to create a positive incentive for acting ethically.
- ✓ It is also important to note that even one leader/manager or employee has the ability to damage a organisation's reputation.
- ✓ Consistency in how ethics violations are handled is key to developing a strong ethical culture.
- ✓ If some ethical concerns are addressed while others are not, it creates inconsistencies that may suggest that unethical behaviour is sometimes tolerated.
- ✓ Unethical behaviour should never be tolerated. It is up to the management team, on every level, to enforce each component of the code of ethics and lead their team to do the same.

## **Building an Ethical Culture!**



# Summary: Essential steps for creating an ethical organisation [105]

- 1. Clear Expectations for What is OK and Not OK** [Clear expectations for behaviour among all members of an organisation is the first step towards a more ethical organisational culture, while also ensuring that the biases, safety and accommodation of different demographics (gender, culture etc are taken into consideration)]
- 2. Modelling Desired Behaviour** [Thus, organisational leaders must practice what they preach and be sure that they model for others the desired behaviours that they wish to nurture within their organisations. How they behave inside and outside of the workplace matters in setting this behaviour.]
- 3. Reinforce the Behaviour You Want, and Don't Reinforce the Behaviour That You Don't Want** [Ethical behaviour must be clearly reinforced so that it will continue to occur inside and outside of the workplace. Problematic unethical behaviour should not be reinforced or rewarded (even being 'rewarded' by silence) in any way, if the organisation wishes to extinguish these undesirable behaviours]
- 4. Focus on Skill Building and Problem Solving** [Institutions must help with step by step strategies for developing effective ethical decision making and behaviour skills and strategies for resolving ethical dilemmas or troubles, noting that this is a constant learning exercise]
- 5. Provide the Tools People Need to Act Ethically** [If an organisation wants to create a culture of ethics they must be sure that members have the tools that they need to do so. These include adequate and appropriate training, consultation, modelling, and supervision]
- 6. Provide Corrective Feedback** [Unless organisations offer timely and thoughtful corrective feedback regarding behaviour they will unlikely create a culture of ethics]

## Creating an Ethical Culture

A strong culture with high risk tolerance, low-to-moderate aggressiveness and focus on means, as well as, outcomes, is most likely to shape high ethical standards.

- Managers must be visible role models
- Communicate ethical expectations
- Provide ethical training
- Visibly reward ethical acts and punish unethical ones
- Provide protective mechanisms

106



# Multiple – Choice and Short Answer Questions

## MCQ

The following are the characteristics of an ethical leader (Select all that apply):

- |                            |                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Integrity               | 2. Justice            |
| 3. Accountability          | 4. Leading by example |
| 5. Respect for others      | 6. Team building      |
| 7. Censures critical views | 8. All of the above   |

## Discussion Question

Bill has been a close friend and colleague since you both joined the organisation 10 years ago. Your families are close and regularly socialise. Three years ago, you were promoted into a very responsible managerial role, still within the Division where you and Bill work. As a result of changes that will take place at the organisation in 6 months, you learn that the group that Bill is in will be downsized and his position eliminated; there is no plan to keep him with the organisation. You discuss this with your boss and she indicates that this information cannot be disclosed; a formal announcement will be made in several months.

1. How do you handle your interactions with Bill prior to the announcement?
2. What will be your response to Bill when he asks you if you knew about this change prior to the downsizing announcement?
3. How will this affect your friendship? If you were Bill, how would you respond to this situation and what would you have expected from your friend?



# Multiple – Choice and Short Answer Questions

## MCQ

Which of the following is NOT an example of a key role upper management plays in promoting ethical culture (select one only)?

1. They develop a code of ethics to align with company values and principle
2. They lead by example
3. They conceal ethical issues from the public in order to protect company reputation
4. They are responsible for enforcing the code of ethics by addressing ethics violation concerns

## Discussion Question

Unprofessional conduct or unethical behaviour in the performance of professional duties and responsibilities for engineers occurs despite continued discussion and reports of these issues. Numerous reasons have been given for such behaviour, including (i) career pressure, (ii) the ability to get away with wrongdoing with no consequences, (iii) cultural differences regarding the importance of ethical behaviour, (iv) the inability to differentiate between ethical and unethical behaviour, and (v) the feeling that I will be at a disadvantage if I behave ethically because others violate ethics.

1. Rank these possible excuses from most important [1] to least important [5] and explain why you ranked them as you did.
2. What other reasons/factors can you offer that could account for unprofessional or unethical behaviour? Do you feel that any of your additions are more important than the five listed above? Explain.

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