

Principle-Based Ethics: Character-Builder or Career-ENDER

Reputation is human collateral
Kouzes and Posner (1993)

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Thoughts to Start With

- The U.S. General public consistently ranks engineering “very high” or “high” with respect to honesty and ethics
Gallup 2001
- Long-term success = f (ethics, competence)
Maxwell (2003a), Pfatteicher



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Definitions

- **Engineering ethics** — the study of moral issues and decisions confronting individuals and organizations involved in engineering. (www.NSPE.org)
- **Code of Ethics** — Rules or standards that guide individuals or groups to do the moral or right thing. (Adapted from [Center for Army Leadership](#))
- **Moral** — Making right decisions by distinguishing between right or wrong in accordance with the principles of right or wrong. ([Webster's Dictionary](#))
- **Principles** — The laws of the universe that pertain to human relationships and human organizations. ([Covey \(1992\)](#))
 - “Deep fundamental, classic truths.... Generic common denominators.” [Hackman and Johnson](#)
 - “...Never a weather vane ...a compass forever fixed and forever true.” [Maxwell \(2003a\)](#)
 - “A fundamental truth.” [Webster's Dictionary](#)

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Ethics Are Principle-Based!

Therefore: **Professional = Personal**

- “What is ethical behavior in one kind of organization or situation is ethical behavior in another.” [Drucker \(1999\)](#)
- “... engineering ethics should be viewed as largely an extension of personal ethics.” [Goldberg](#)
- “**There is no such thing as business ethics — there's only ethics.**” [Maxwell \(2003a\)](#)

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Ethics vs. Law

- “I have lived my life in a society where there was no rule of law. And that was a terrible existence. But a society where the rule of law is the only standard of ethical behavior is equally bad.” [Solehenitsyn in Maxwell \(2003a\)](#)
- “We are not always required by law to do what is right and proper. Decency, for instance, carries no legal mandate.” [Huntsman \(2005\)](#)

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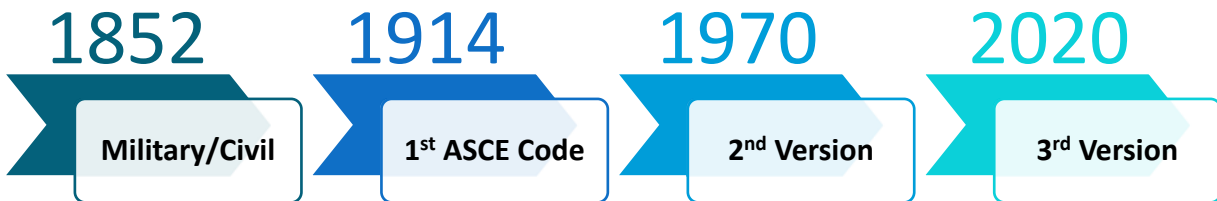
Ethics vs. Law

- **Code of Ethics:** A code of conduct to which a person voluntarily adheres because it reflects his or her values and is believed to be beneficial to society. A guide that, with rare exceptions, does not provide specific instruction. **You ask — Is it the right thing to do?**
- **Law:** Laws are intended to achieve specific behaviors without the application of either judgment or conscience. Provide specific instructions with specific punishments. **You may ask – What is the chance I will get caught?**
- **Stay within your inner circle.**



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ASCE Code of Ethics



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The Code

- Preamble
- 5 Stakeholders



See www.ASCE.org or Official Register

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Preamble – Fundamental Principles

- Create safe, resilient, and sustainable infrastructure
- Treat all persons with respect, dignity, and fairness in a manner that fosters equitable participation without regard to personal identity
- Consider the current and anticipated needs of society
- Utilize their knowledge and skills to enhance the quality of life for humanity

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Code of Ethics – 5 Stakeholders

1. SOCIETY

2. NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

3. PROFESSION

4. CLIENTS AND EMPLOYERS

5. PEERS

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Society

- a. First and foremost, protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public
- b. Enhance the quality of life for humanity
- c. Express professional opinions truthfully and only when founded on adequate knowledge and honest conviction
- d. Have zero tolerance for bribery, fraud, and corruption in all forms, and report violations to the proper authorities
- e. Endeavor to be of service in civic affairs
- f. Treat all persons with respect, dignity, and fairness, and reject all forms of discrimination and harassment
- g. Acknowledge the diverse historical, social, and cultural needs of the community, and incorporate these considerations in their work
- h. Consider the capabilities, limitations, and implications of current and emerging technologies when part of their work
- i. Report misconduct to the appropriate authorities where necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public

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Natural and Built Environment

- a. Adhere to the principles of sustainable development
- b. Consider and balance societal, environmental, and economic impacts, along with opportunities for improvement, in their work
- c. Mitigate adverse societal, environmental, and economic effects
- d. Resources wisely while minimizing resource depletion

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Profession

- a. Uphold the honor, integrity, and dignity of the profession
- b. Practice engineering in compliance with all legal requirements in the jurisdiction of practice
- c. Represent their professional qualifications and experience truthfully
- d. Reject practices of unfair competition
- e. Promote mentorship and knowledge-sharing equitably with current and future engineers
- f. Educate the public on the role of civil engineering in society
- g. Continue professional development to enhance their technical and non-technical competencies

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Clients and Employers

- a. Act as faithful agents of their clients and employers with integrity and professionalism
- b. Make clear to clients and employers any real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest
- c. Communicate in a timely manner to clients and employers any risks and limitations related to their work
- d. Present clearly and promptly the consequences to clients and employers if their engineering judgment is overruled where health, safety, and welfare of the public may be endangered
- e. Keep clients' and employers' identified proprietary information confidential;
- f. Perform services only in areas of their competence
- g. Approve, sign, or seal only work products that have been prepared or reviewed by them or under their responsible charge

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Peers

- a. Only take credit for professional work they have personally completed
- b. Provide attribution for the work of others
- c. Foster health and safety in the workplace
- d. Promote and exhibit inclusive, equitable, and ethical behavior in all engagements with colleagues
- e. Act with honesty and fairness on collaborative work efforts
- f. Encourage and enable the education and development of other engineers and prospective members of the profession
- g. Supervise equitably and respectfully
- h. Comment only in a professional manner on the work, professional reputation, and personal character of other engineers
- i. Report violations of the Code of Ethics to the American Society of Civil Engineers

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Thoughts from others

- “Ethics is a highfalutin word, ...for the study of right and wrong ...twists and turns of sophisticated intellectual debate obscure a much simpler truth.”
[Goldberg](#)
- “Have we (engineers) ...made the concept of ethical behavior so complex and confusing that we fail to act in ways consistent with moral principles when faced with an ethical dilemma?” [Veach](#)



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The ASCE Code

Applicability

All Society members must subscribe...

Duty

A Society member shall report promptly to the Committee on Professional Conduct any observed violation of the Code

ASCE Official Register

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Ethical Dilemma

- "...an undesirable or unpleasant choice relating to a moral principle or practice." Maxwell (2003a)
- They are rare
 - "Upon rare occasion we come to a difficult ethical dilemma ...; however, the more usual case is that we are faced with a situation where there is no dilemma, not a single question, yet we fail to do the right thing." Goldberg, ASCE (2009)
 - "Ethics is all about how we meet the challenge of doing the right thing when that act will cost more than we want to pay." Josephson in Maxwell (2003a)
- **"Don't confuse rationalization with an ethical dilemma." (Rationalize "to devise a self satisfying but incorrect reason for one's behavior." {Webster})**

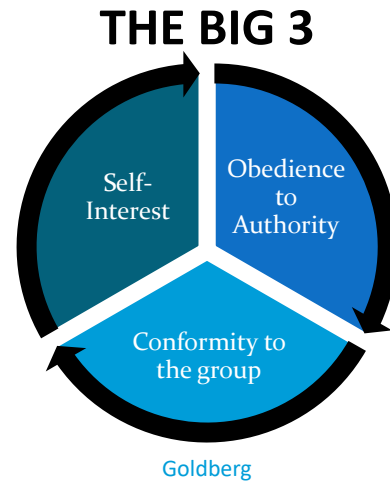
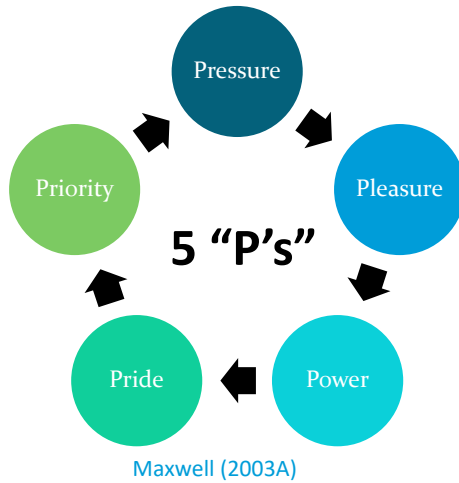
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Compromised Ethics



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Guidelines for Civil Engineers (PLUS)

- **P = Policies** Does the action serve the best interests of the public and client? Is the action consistent with ASCE's Code of Ethics and your employer's policies, procedures, and guidelines?
- **L = Legal** Is the action compliant with the spirit and the letter of applicable laws and regulations?
- **U = Universal** Does it conform to the universal principles and values that the profession and your employer have adopted?
- **S = Self** Does it satisfy your own personal definition of right, good, and just?

ASCE (2008)

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Global Ethics

See ASCE (July 2009) for a more detailed discussion

- “One thing that strengthened my advocacy for a single world-wide standard of ethics is the global nature of business today. Your company's reputation for integrity, or lack there of, travels with you wherever you do business.” [George \(2003\)](#)
- “Responding quickly and correctly to ethical conundrums has become even more important ...as engineering and construction firms have found themselves involved in more businesses overseas, where ethical practices can vary widely. Charles Harrison (CEO of Parsons) says his firm's ethics policies are "universal" ...do not change on basis of location.” [Shuster](#)

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Global Ethics

The problem:

- World construction — \$5T
- > 10% (>\$500B) lost to bribery and corruption
- Developing countries (see Appendix E)

[Sanio](#)

See Appendix F for ASCE Policy Statements and recent changes to Canon 6

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Your Role

“When asked (in a large survey) **what contributes most to the ethical behavior in your organization**, the most frequent response from employees (at all levels) is “the behavior of my boss.” When asked what contributes most to unethical behavior...the response was identical – “the behavior of my boss.” Kouzes and Posner (2006)

YOU Must:

- **Establish** the organization's **ethical climate**
- **Define** the organization's **core values** – *the ethical compass*
- **Communicate**, live by, and exhibit the compass
- Demand your people **abide by the compass** in all activities
- **Recognize and reward** those who abide by the compass
- Establish and **enforce** penalties for not abiding by the compass

In other words, you must preach, preach, preach ethics – and sometimes you even have to speak.

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Your Role

- “Leaders stand up for their beliefs, so they had better have some...” Kouzes and Posner (1997)
- “The **spirit** of the organization is **created from the top**...it is character that sets the example and is imitated.” Drucker (2002)
- “...a leader who is seen to **condone** or encourage **unethical behavior** will almost certainly **get unethical behavior** in his ranks.” Offermann
- “Values are set by leaders...values are not set the way goals are... you proclaim a goal — it is real...**Values become real only when you demonstrate them**...and the way you insist others behave.” Blanchard and Bowles

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Your Role

- “Companies that enjoy enduring success have a core purpose and core values ...that remain fixed while their business strategies and practices adapt to a changing world.” [Collins and Porras in HBR \(1998a\)](#)
- “Each of us has a conscience...We know when we have done the right thing...” [Hinckley](#)
- “bottom line on leadership...fundamentally a matter of character.” [Bennis in George \(2009\)](#)
- “Go with your conscience, heart and mind.” [Interview with former NY City Mayor Rudy Giuliani on how he made post 9/11 decisions](#)
- “Character is not something one can fool people about...people with whom a person works ...may forgive a person for a great deal...but will **not** forgive a lack of integrity...” [Drucker \(2004\)](#)

Before you make a decision ask: “Is it right?”

[Covey \(1998\)](#)

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Where to Get Help

- ASCE Guidelines for Professional Conduct
- Guidelines to practice
- Your organization's leadership
- State registration boards
- ASCE Ethics Hotline -703.295.6061 | 800.548.ASCE, X6061
- Other
 - National Society of Professional Engineers: www.nspe.org
 - National Institute for Engineering Ethics: www.niee.org

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2019 Corruption Ratings

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. New Zealand (87) | 172. Guinea Bissau (18) |
| 1. Denmark (87) | 172. Haiti (18) |
| 3. Finland (86) | 172. Libya (18) |
| 4. Sweden (85) | 175. North Korea (17) |
| 4. Singapore (85) | 176. Afghanistan (16) |
| 4. Switzerland (85) | 176. Equatorial Guinea (16) |
| 7. Norway (84) | 176. Sudan (16) |
| 8. Netherlands (82) | 176. Venezuela (16) |
| 9. Germany (80) | 180. Yemen (15) |
| 9. Luxembourg (80) | 181. Syria (123) |
| | 182. South Sudan (12) |
| | 183. Somalia (9) |

27. USA (69)

See more details and other countries at

www.transparency.org

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ASCE Policy Statement 510 – Combating Corruption

The ASCE supports a zero tolerance policy toward bribery, fraud, and corruption in engineering and construction. ASCE further actively supports the global effort to stem corruption in the procurement and execution of engineering services and construction projects. ASCE openly seeks cooperation with others in a domestic and international effort to empower individual engineers in the fight against corruption through education, awareness, and the adoption and enforcement of the Principles and Guidelines for Professional Conduct.

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