BEYOND THE POTTER BOX:
A DECISION MODEL BASED ON MORAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY

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ABSTRACT: This essay proposes a detailed justification model that includes decision criteria beyond those of the widely used Potter Box. The model's steps, which correspond to Kohlberg's stages of moral development, encourage journalists to examine the relative morality of their decisions on multiple levels. These rationales include: 1) avoiding punishment and evaluating potential personal rewards, 2) identifying stakeholders, loyalties, and fair exchange, 3) weighing interpersonal expectations, 4) evaluating organizational policy, precedent and values, 5) conducting a cost-benefit analysis to determine the greatest good for the greatest number, and most importantly, 6) universalizing the decision through a caring response and just distribution of resources.

Every day, journalists are confronted with dilemmas, often finding themselves in situations where they need to weigh ethical principles and possible consequences before following a course of action. Many journalists, however, are reluctant to invest the time required to use a decision-making system to resolve those problems.

In analyzing motives for ethical decision-making among journalists and journalism students, Singletary and colleagues (1990) found that many mass media practitioners do not use, and may actually avoid, making decisions based on moral philosophy or systematic analysis of a dilemma. Q-factor analysis of 77 motive statements, based on Lawrence Kohlberg's (1976) stages of moral development, indicated that many respondents were willing to punish people with their news work and were mildly unconcerned about their knowledge of ethics. A similar attitude was also reflected in a national survey of television news and newspaper editors for the Society of Professional Journalists (Black, 1992). When faced with a dilemma, many managers said they

usually only discuss the problem with the affected employee and with their superiors. In the Black survey, a few media managers indicated that they occasionally refer to a professional or in-house code of ethics. Codes of ethics, which are specific, written guidelines for occupational behavior, can identify key organizational values for employees. However, when managers merely crystallize their values on paper to produce a "this-is-what-we-believe" policy, employees' attitudes and values do not necessarily change accordingly. The codes are not likely to stimulate real, day-to-day changes in behavior because they cannot serve as a systematic tool for reasoned decision making.

Defensible decisions, by definition, must be rational, fair, and consistent. Thus, mere discussions of views or feelings about the moral status of a problem typically do not adequately define right and wrong. A more systematic approach to decision making can be achieved by applying moral philosophy.

A justification model, defined as an ethics formula or decision-making matrix that is followed to its logical conclusion, can offer a practical, step-by-step method of making consistent and ethical decisions. Unlike other ethics models, a justification model does not explain the psychological foundations of the decision process, describe decision-making styles, or merely show how ethical philosophies are subdivided. An effective justification model is flexible enough to be applied broadly and typically is grounded in classical moral theory developed by Kant, Ross, Mill, or other philosophers. Using critical review of moral philosophy, case studies, surveys, and content analyses of news coverage, scholars in mass media ethics have developed several justification models that journalists could apply to daily, professional dilemmas.

One well-known justification model, Sissela Bok's (1978) three-stage deception model, is designed for use by a person under pressure to deceive someone else. The person is challenged to answer three questions: (1) Are there alternative forms of action that will resolve the difficulty, without the use of a lie? (2) What might be the moral reasons brought forward to excuse the lie, and what reasons can be raised as counter-arguments? (3) What might a public of reasonable persons say about such lies?

Bovee's (1991) justification model, based on Kant's categorical imperative and Bok's deception model, was designed to help a decision-maker avoid moral laxity and false scrupulosity. It leads a the decision-maker through six basic questions: (1) Are the means really bad or morally evil? (2) Is the end really good? (3) Is it probable that the means will achieve the end? (4) Is the same good possible using other means? (5) Is the good end clearly and overwhelmingly greater than the bad means that will be used to attain it? (6) Will employing bad means to achieve a good end withstand the test of publicity?

Childers (1988) developed a three-question justification model for the ethical coverage of AIDS. Based on the hypothesis that elite agenda setters do not offer complete or unbiased coverage of AIDS, a content analysis of AIDS coverage in elite newspapers and newsweeklies found the stories were relatively objective and unbiased but failed to cover groups in a manner that was ethically complete. Based on these findings, Childers proposed three questions to shape and justify news coverage of controversial issues such as AIDS: (1) Is the language – particularly in the story leads – biased or overextended? (2) Is the extent of coverage adequate? (3) Do stories involve an invasion of privacy?

In a survey of 1,037 journalists and in-depth interviews with 22 others, Voakes (2000) found evidence for a responsibility model, in which law is considered as one of several considerations in an ethical decision-making in problematic situations.

Bovee (1991) proposed six questions for journalists to use when addressing the question of whether the end justifies the means. His model design was based on three case studies: the New York Times' use of stolen information in the Pentagon Papers case, the Chicago Sun-Times' use of lying to illegally obtain medical records to expose abortion profiteers, and the Milwaukee Journal's use of masquerading to expose a telemarketing scam. In all three cases, journalists used a deceptive or otherwise unethical shortcut to achieve a worthy goal, but did not attempt other means first or justify their use of the means.

The most comprehensive justification model cited in mass media ethics literature, a decision model designed by Harvard philosopher Ralph Potter (1972), originally was used to describe Christian responses to the U.S. nuclear arms debate. Known as the Potter Box, the four-quadrant model contains a series of logical steps a journalist should take to resolve an ethical dilemma. The quadrants contain the following steps: (1) define the situation, (2) identify the values, the beliefs that you and your organization stand for, (3) identify the principles based on moral philosophy rather than moralizing, and (4) choose your loyalties to determine who benefits and who might get hurt.

A review of justification models developed for mass media indicates that a model is needed that is more comprehensive and can be applied more broadly. The Potter Box, the most widely used model, does not take several critical factors into account. For instance, it does not

offer a way of resolving cases where there is a conflict of duties or challenge the decision-maker to explore possibilities of punishment or other consequences. Although it encourages a decision-maker to choose his or her loyalties, it does not include a utilitarian system that weighs the needs, interests, and rights of the stakeholders or that evaluates possible outcomes. While the Potter Box does challenge a decision-maker to rely on moral philosophy, it suggests that individuals who make the most ethical choices tend to follow only one principle, which may not be realistic in light of the complexity of many dilemmas. In addition, the model does not integrate any two or more principles.

Numerous integrated models can be found in the business ethics literature, including those developed by Ferrell and Hunt (1989), Hunt and Vitell (1986), Ferrell and Gresham (1985), Stead et al. (1990), and Wotruba (1990). Similarly, the integration of various moral philosophies can be useful to an open-minded journalist because it uses a variety of concepts and perspectives as criteria for decision making. This approach could be more effective than a model that forces the decision-maker to rely on the limited premises of only one philosophical perspective.

A Comprehensive Justification Model for Journalists

The integrated decision-making model proposed in this essay is based on moral development theory, moral philosophy, and concepts found in a cross-disciplinary review of ethical decision-making models. The proposed model is designed to help a decision-maker more thoroughly justify a rationale for a particular course of action and identify the goodness, obligation, responsibility, or justice of each possible alternative. This synthesis of philosophical concepts includes utilitarianism, loyalty, reciprocity, punishment, individual autonomy, values,

prima facie duties, justice, and compassion.

The series of decision-making questions, corresponding to these philosophical concepts, is organized according to the stages of moral development developed by Harvard psychologists Lawrence Kohlberg (1976) and Carol Gilligan (1982). This theory posits that a person's level of moral development depends on the pattern of thought he or she uses to resolve a dilemma. Kohlberg and Gilligan organized the thought processes of ethical reasoning into six stages. Behaviors produced by higher-stage decisions, based on personal commitment and principles, tend to be sounder, independent, and more consistent. They also tend to transcend traditional rules, legalistic arguments, and even internalized rules because individuals following moral philosophy are assumed to think for themselves in both critical and general terms.

The proposed seven-step justification model could help a journalist justify decisions, by answering a series of questions based on motivations corresponding to each of the six stages of moral development. Although the descriptive model is lengthy, it can enable a journalist or manager to evaluate alternatives using a range of ideas and philosophies. Application of the descriptive model could be especially useful for a journalist who is attempting to resolve an especially difficult dilemma or a situation where the stakes are high. Another advantage of the model is its objective approach. Rather than having a journalist evaluate the morality of his or her own decisions, the model poses objective questions to help the decision-maker evaluate the morality of all known alternatives.

Although the individual is prompted to systematically select a course of action, the best alternative is not necessarily the one that passes the greatest number of moral tests. Rather, the

preferred alternative is the one that best satisfies higher-stage criterion. The model helps the decision-maker determine whether the highest moral action should require a sacrifice, uphold organizational standards or expectations, maintain reciprocal relationships, or follow a collective social duty. In addition, a number of simplified tests, corresponding to several stages of moral development, allow a journalist to quickly focus on one particular aspect of the decision-making process when faced with a simple or everyday decision. Exit questions in the descriptive model offer broad checklists for smaller dilemmas.

The descriptive decision model is presented in Figure 1. The following discussion highlights the rationale behind each step and stage of the comprehensive justification model.

Step 1: Define the dilemma - Kohlberg contends that a dilemma arises when multiple stakeholders, values, and interests are in conflict or when the law is unclear. The proposed model encourages a decision-maker to define the dilemma and its origins before thinking about the alternatives.

Step 2: Identify the stakeholders - An attempt to understand the interests of stakeholders has been an important concept in ethical decision making in many professions. John Rawls developed a test that decision-makers can use to put aside their own identity and adopt the viewpoints and interests of others involved. Although it has not been incorporated into a justification model for journalists, it can easily be applied to journalistic dilemmas. Rawls proposes a three-stage model, in which the decision-maker first makes a list of all people who will be affected by this decision. Next, the decision-maker is asked to put himself behind a "veil of ignorance," in order to give up his identity and assume the identities of the other people affected by the decision. Finally, the

decision-maker assumes a discussion, taking place among the various stakeholders, in which none know for sure what their ultimate identities will turn out to be when the "veils of ignorance" are removed. The optimal decision is the one that all involved could agree upon.

Step 3: Develop an accountability system - Individuals tend to operate from their own bottom line when confronted with difficult decisions. Not only should the interests of stakeholders be considered, their viewpoints, insights, and criticisms ought to be included in the decision-making process.

Step 4: Apply moral development theory - The proposed model leads the decision-maker through criteria corresponding to Kohlberg's six stages of moral development.

Stage 1: Avoid punishment. The First Amendment, when applied to lawsuits against the media, has led the Supreme Court to impose few legal restraints on the media. While this high degree of freedom imposes a heavy burden of social responsibility on the media, it also opens the door for a multitude of unpunishable ethical violations against society. While media organizations seldom are punished by law, individual journalists sometimes are punished for ethical violations. At Kohlberg's pre-conventional level, an individual is mainly concerned with rewards and punishments, his or her own immediate interests, and obedience. This person is motivated to seek pleasure and avoid the pain of punishment. Mere compliance with the law is not an indication of morality because the law permits many types of immoral behavior. While acting only to avoid punishment is considered an ethically primitive response, a higher-stage decision based on personal conviction could potentially lead one to break the law, lose his or her job, or cause the organization to suffer economic consequences.

Stage 2: Determine loyalty and fair exchange. According to Kohlberg, stage 2 individuals try to do what authority says is right in order to gain approval and avoid disapproval. Both the Potter Box and the proposed model recommend that mass media practitioners choose and weigh their loyalties before trying to resolve an ethical dilemma. Loyalty can be defined in terms of subordination to authority, written or informal contracts with others, and self-imposed expressions of character or virtue. The proposed four-step test could help a journalist evaluate the interests of stakeholders and loyalties whenever a comprehensive decision model is not necessary: (1) What do you owe each stakeholder? (2) Which stakeholders are more important? (3) How could you achieve a fair compromise between conflicting stakeholders? (4) If there is a conflict of interest, should you honor your highest loyalties or try to achieve a fair compromise?

Stage 3: Weigh interpersonal expectations. According to Kohlberg, decisions at the conventional level are motivated by the need to be part of a group. Right and wrong are defined according to expectations of the group. Rawls' "veil of ignorance" test is incorporated into the proposed model to help decision-makers evaluate interpersonal expectations. The proposed four-step test can help a journalist weigh interpersonal expectations when other factors are not relevant: (1) What are your inner motives for taking this course of action? (2) What are each stakeholder's probable desires and views of the situation? (3) Could this action hurt a reciprocal relationship between you and another stakeholder? (4) Would the action foster trust between you and all other stakeholders?

Stage 4: Evaluate organizational conformity, precedent, and values. A person whose decision making reflects Kohlberg's stage 4 often feels an obligation to promote the welfare of the

organization by upholding its policies, rules, and practices. Most professional organizations develop and enforce rules and policies, and managers are expected to encourage behavior that conforms to these conservative standards. Although a journalist should not obey rules as an unthinking robot, an open-minded "team player" can be invaluable in making ethical decisions that avoid tearing the fabric of an organization's culture.

Using instrumental and terminal values inventories developed by Milton Rokeach (1973), a journalist or manager can rank and compare personal and organizational values in a dilemma to help define his or her conscience. These values can be self-centered or social, moral or competence-oriented.

The proposed four-step test could be used to help evaluate the organizational conformity of a decision: (1) What is the precedent – the written or unwritten organizational policies, practices, or standards related to this problem? (2) What were previous consequences of this or a similar action? (3) Do your personal values conflict with or support those of the other stakeholders? (4) Could the action violate any of your professional duties or prior agreements?

Stage 5: Rights and cost-benefit analysis. Decision-making categorized at Kohlberg's Stage 5 operate on a principled level and attempt to promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Laws, duties, and obligations are based on a rational calculation of overall utility, while societal standards and laws take precedence over organizational policies and standards.

John Stuart Mill's (1859) utilitarian formula for calculating the greatest good for the greatest number is incorporated into the proposed model. Utilitarianism is divided into three

categories: rule, general, and act utilitarianism. Rule utilitarianism uses rules to determine the greatest good, while general utilitarianism holds that a rule should be followed only if another person could morally apply it in a similar situation. The act utilitarian believes that rules, precedence, and principles serve only as guidelines, and that alternatives must be weighed in order to maximize the greatest good.

The proposed justification model incorporates a series of questions based on act utilitarianism, including a four-step test for weighing organizational interests against individual autonomy: (1) Could the civil rights of any stakeholder be violated? (2) Could the action diminish the individual autonomy of any stakeholder? (3) If any rights conflict, whose have priority? (4) Would the action balance organizational interests with individual autonomy?

Stage 6: Universalize and develop a caring response. At the highest stage of moral reasoning, an individual makes an altruistic or universal decision, relying on self-chosen convictions and the need to honor and protect the rights of others. Moral development theory asserts that reasons based compassion and justice are superior to all other kinds of reasons because they transcend self-interest.

Besides justice, another characteristic of higher-level reasoning is the Judeo-Christian ethic of compassion. Gilligan (1982) challenged Kohlberg's argument that distributive justice reflects the highest level of moral reasoning, on grounds that his research subjects were exclusively male. After conducting similar research with women, Gilligan concluded that Kohlberg's higher stages of moral development exclude caring women because his model characterizes their motivations as conventional and based on mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships, and interpersonal

conformity. She argued that Kohlberg's logic-based model does not include the female decision-making component of felt relationships. Finally, Gilligan proposed a relationship-oriented model asserting that since human relationships are grounded in response to others on their terms, the morality of an action should be determined according to whether relationships are maintained or restored. She suggested that her "morality of care" ethic and Kohlberg's "morality of justice" together could characterize a morally mature individual. Based on Gilligan's suggestion, the proposed model incorporates Gilligan's morality of care within the highest stage of moral reasoning.

Immanuel Kant's (1785) categorical imperative offers two criteria for higher-stage decision making: never make a rule that you are not willing to universalize, and respect humanity in every person by treating people as ends in themselves. His theory is based on the assumption that the fabric of society should be strengthened and preserved and upholds the concept that people are individual moral agents who must be free to choose their own paths. Kant asserts that the function of the human will is to select one course of action from among several possible alternatives. Ideally, the will is influenced by rational considerations about what is necessary to do, rather than subjective considerations such as emotions. The guiding principles should be imperatives dictating a particular action, but the principle(s) cannot solely address the possible consequences of an action because appeals to consequences often center on emotional considerations. Ultimately, the only principle that can fulfill Kant's requirements is the one that can be universalized.

Kohlberg developed a hierarchy of 10 virtues which most moral societies use to establish

their priorities. Placing life above liberties could imply that journalists ought to be human beings first, and journalists second. For instance, saving or protecting a human life is more important than the public's right to know. Higher-stage reasoning includes an evaluation of two kinds of duties: the morally obligatory duty, and the duty that should be chosen when no conflicting act carries a greater duty.

Step 5: Compare the alternatives - While the proposed model is designed to help a decision-maker resolve a conflict between two or more principles, ultimately it is based on the deontological assumption that a chosen alternative is moral if it is applied consistently and reflects good will.

Sir David Ross (1930) recommends that decision-makers identify and weigh all duties that apply to a particular dilemma. A list of Ross' prima facie duties is included in the proposed model. Higher-stage duties include beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, fidelity, and reparation, while gratitude and self-improvement could be considered less society-oriented. One aspect of fidelity is the promise to tell the truth. For the journalist, this means informing the public accurately, fully, and without bias.

The following four-step test could help a journalist or manager universalize a decision: (1) Would justice be served if everyone in a similar situation took this action? (2) Would you take this action if you were the only person affected by it? (3) Is the action grounded in care, compassion, and an effort to minimize harm for everyone? (4) Could the action prevent you or your organization from fulfilling any moral duty, such as avoiding harm, beneficence, fidelity, gratitude, justice, reparation, or self-improvement?

After testing each alternative, a journalist or manager can determine which alternatives are best. The ideal alternative is one that demonstrates justice and compassion to the stakeholders, satisfies the greatest number of stakeholders, best balances stakeholder interests both inside and outside the media organization. If possible, it also should comply with the media organization's values, duties, interests, and policies and uphold the journalist's personal values, duties, interests, rights, and convictions. In addition, the best alternative is one that could be effectively applied in similar future dilemmas. The journalist or manager would compare and weigh alternatives that possess these benefits and then allow each member of an accountability team to cast a vote.

Step 6: Implement the decision - Once an alternative has been selected, the journalist and/or accountability team develops a strategic plan for implementing the decision by listing specific steps that likely would achieve the desired results and by determining which stakeholders are responsible for the implementation. Before implementing a decision, the decision-makers should troubleshoot the plan by listing ways it could go wrong, preventive measures, and possible remedies.

Step 7: Develop a policy - As soon as a decision has been implemented, the decision-makers should monitor and record the consequences of the decision. They also should assess the effectiveness of the decision by getting feedback from as many stakeholders as possible. To develop a systematic evaluation of the consequences, the decision-makers should list the factors that brought the dilemma to the forefront in the first place. These factors might include lack of resources or time, changes in law or technology, a broader definition of rights, intensified media scrutiny, a new or untested opportunity, officials withholding information, or economic pressures.

Finally, the decision-makers should develop a written policy for the media organization, based on the evaluation of the outcomes. The policy should be written so that it can be broadly applied to similar ethical dilemmas in the future.

Discussion

The detailed justification model presented in this essay can be distilled into a simpler, six-step decision model that includes two criteria beyond those contained in the Potter Box:

1. Avoid punishment and evaluate potential personal rewards.
2. Determine loyalties and fair exchange.
3. Weigh interpersonal expectations.
4. Evaluate organizational policies, precedent, and values.
5. Cost-benefit analysis (determine the greatest good for the greatest number).
6. Universalize (determine the most caring response and just distribution of resources).

The model presented in this essay may serve primarily as a starting point for further discussion and model construction. No justification model can ever achieve completeness or perfection. As Kohlberg (1984) observed, "Scientific theory is a leaky boat you patch in one place and then stand on in another place while you patch or revise elsewhere." Until a better "boat" comes along, he argued, scholars interested in morality need to "get on with the hard work of studying the enduring problems of moral development with the tools available" (p. 424). For instance, future research might identify specific journalism-related concepts that lie in the intermediate zone between the abstract schemas of moral development theory and concrete codes of professional ethics.

Journalists should analyze the strategies they use to deal with ethical dilemmas, assess the general effectiveness of these strategies, and determine whether a more systematic approach might be needed. Many journalists tend to use informal one-on-one discussions between employer and employee, punitive measures for employees who infringe an unwritten code, or a professional code of ethics that only offers the highest and often unattainable normative standards of moral conduct.

A justification model is a more systematic, consistent, and defensible method of resolving moral dilemmas and can produce long-term benefits for a media organization. Proper use of a justification model also could promote better morale in the organization. Systematic reasoning, an accountability system, and clear-cut policy development could produce an atmosphere of fairness, empowerment, trust, and consistency, rather than an atmosphere of punitiveness or inconsistency. Newsroom employees could gain a better understanding of the standards held by their colleagues, managers, and other mass media practitioners in the field.

Developing a systematic decision process for particular newsrooms, based on the model or specific tests provided in this essay, might help journalists evaluate their ethical decision making patterns and develop strategies for dealing with future problems specific to their line of work. Over time, consistency in dealing with ethical problems can help journalists establish better media credibility with their audience and clarify the public's need to know in various situations.

If journalists applied systematic reasoning to daily dilemmas, this mindset might influence the ethical nature and tone of news coverage, which could help transform community culture and help remedy faulty systems in society. By applying a comprehensive decision model, media

practitioners can bypass their own value biases, untested ethical premises, and usual rule-based responses. Ultimately, this approach could promote freedom, justice, human rights. These concepts, after all, are the ideal foundations of the mass media enterprise.

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FIGURE 1: An Integrated Justification Model

STEP 1: DEFINE THE DILEMMA

1. State the problem or dilemma.

2. Determine whether action is necessary:

    a. Is someone else better suited to handle the decision than you? If yes, defer the decision to someone else or obtain the authority needed to make the decision yourself.
    b. Do you lack the freedom to apply ethical criteria in making the decision? If yes, defer the decision or obtain the authority needed to make the decision yourself.
    c. Do you have too little information about the problem to make an informed decision? If yes, determine what information is needed and gather it.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE STAKEHOLDERS

List all parties involved in the situation, those who might be affected by the decision or decision-making process. These individuals might include: sources, story subjects, community groups, readers/audience, reporters and other colleagues, editors, advertisers/shareholders, society at large, your organization, your family/friends, yourself, and others.

STEP 3: DEVELOP AN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

1. Estimate the level of review required, based on the amount of risk involved.

2. List all stakeholders who possess the necessary information, capacity, and desire to participate.

3. Determine which stakeholders should participate in the decision-making process.
    - How would you justify excluding any stakeholder?
    - What level of involvement and amount of participation should each stakeholder have in the decision-making process?
    - Which stakeholders will have the final authority to decide which alternative to implement?

4. Advise each stakeholder on the decision-making team of his or her role in the decision process. Ask each to suggest possible alternatives, and to evaluate those alternatives using this model.

STEP 4: APPLY MORAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY

LEVEL I: PRE-CONVENTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Stage 1: Identify Potential Personal Rewards and Avoid Punishment

1. Perceived reward is based on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, which are rooted in personal values. To help identify your personal values, rank order the terminal values that you personally hold in this situation. These might include: a world at peace, an exciting life, comfort/prosperity, equality, family security, freedom/free choice, happiness, inner harmony, mature love/intimacy, self-respect, sense of accomplishment, social recognition, true friendship, and wisdom.

2. Rank order the instrumental values that you personally hold in this situation. These might include: ambitious, broadminded, capable, courageous, forgiving, helpful, honest, imaginative/daring, independent, intellectual, logical, loving, obedient, polite, responsible/dependable, and self-controlled.

3. Based on your self-identified values, list all tangible rewards you might receive from any possible outcome of your decision. Be sure to evaluate the potential outcomes of every known alternative.

4. Identify the potential harms that you or your organization might suffer. These risks might include economic loss, loss of job security, criminal allegations, or a lawsuit. Based on your list of possible risks or harms, ask yourself the applicable questions:
   - Which is more important: protecting economic interests or risking financial loss to better serve the public interest?
   - Which is more important: protecting your career or taking a stand for justice?
   - Which is more important to you: legal obedience or civil disobedience that better serves society?

EXIT: If you or your organization runs the risk of punishment or loss, should the favored alternative be implemented anyway? If yes, proceed to Stage 2 analysis. If not, skip to Step 5 analysis (Compare the Alternatives). If the alternative poses no risk of punishment or damage, proceed to Stage 2 analysis.

Stage 2: Determine Loyalty and Fair Exchange

1. Rank order all known stakeholders (determined through Step 2), according to their relative importance and your degree of loyalty to each.

2. Determine what you or your organization owes each stakeholder, in terms of fair compensation, favors, political exchange, promises, or expectations.

3. Are there any conflicts between the interests of two or more stakeholders? If so, to what extent can you fulfill your obligations to each stakeholder involved? How could you achieve a fair or reciprocal compromise?

4. If there is a conflict of interests, which of the following is more important to you: honoring your highest loyalties or achieving a fair compromise? How many stakeholders would likely perceive your choice as fair?

EXIT: Could this alternative cause harm to any of your loyalties? If so, should it be implemented anyway? If so, proceed to Stage 3 analysis. If not, skip to Step 5 analysis (Compare the Alternatives). If this alternative would satisfy all loyalties, proceed to Stage 3.

LEVEL II: CONVENTIONAL CRITERION

Stage 3: Weigh Interpersonal Expectations

1. List your intentions or inner motives for taking this course of action.

2. Now, assume the identity of each stakeholder, using available information. What are each stakeholder's probable desires and views of the situation?

3. Could this course of action hurt a reciprocal relationship with any other stakeholder? Would it foster trust between you and the other stakeholders?

4. Would the proposed action fulfill your work obligations or conflict with them?

5. Would the proposed action "do unto others as you would have them do unto you?"

EXIT: Could the alternative violate an organizational policy, depart from precedent, or damage a personal relationship? If so, should it be implemented anyway? If so, proceed to Stage 4 analysis. If not, skip to Step 5 analysis (Compare the Alternatives). If the alternative does not violate an organizational policy, depart from precedent, or damage a personal relationship, proceed to Stage 4 analysis.

Stage 4: Evaluate Organizational Conformity, Precedent, and Values

1. What unwritten organizational policies (informal, verbal, or unspoken), practices, or standards of conduct apply to this situation? What are the usual consequences of violating these policies, practices, or standards?

2. Has anyone in your organization been confronted with a similar dilemma? What were the positive and negative consequences? How was the decision perceived by those affected?

3. To what extent is the proposed alternative compatible with your values?

4. Which terminal and instrumental values would your organization hold under the circumstances? To what extent is the proposed alternative compatible with organizational values?

5. What values would each of the other stakeholders deem most important? To what extent do your personal values and organizational values conflict with or support the values of the other stakeholders?

6. Would the proposed action comply with any duties or rules that you have agreed to uphold?

EXIT: Does the alternative uphold your personal values and duties, but deviate from organizational values or duties? Does the alternative uphold the organization's values and duties but violate yours? If you answered "yes" to either question, should the alternative be implemented anyway? If so, proceed to Stage 5 analysis. If not, skip to Step 5 analysis (Compare the Alternatives). If you answered "no" to both questions, proceed to Stage 5.

Stage 5: Cost-Benefit Analysis

1. List the basic civil rights and contractual rights that each stakeholder is entitled to. These rights might include freedom of speech, privacy, autonomy, well being, ownership, or right to know.

2. Evaluate the impact of the proposed alternative on the rights of the stakeholders:
   a. Could the proposed action violate the rights of any stakeholder?
   b. Could it diminish the individual autonomy of any stakeholder? If so, how could you protect the rights of these stakeholders?
   c. If any rights conflict, whose rights have priority?

3. Would the action promote the greatest good for the greatest number of stakeholders? To determine this, conduct a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis:

   a. List all possible consequences -- both benefits and losses -- that might result for each stakeholder. These might include (1) short-term, ongoing, and long-term consequences, including possible impact on future policy and practice, or (2) psychological, social, and economic consequences.

   b. On a scale of 1 to 10, what is the probability that each consequence will occur to each stakeholder?

   c. On a scale of 1 to 10, what is the desirability of each consequence for each stakeholder?

   d. To what extent would the proposed action prevent evil and harm, remove evil or harm, and promote good? Do the possible good effects outweigh and justify the bad effects?

4. Using the results of the rights analysis (#1 and #2) and cost-benefit analysis (#3), compare the needs, rights, and interests of all stakeholders.

5. Does the proposed action balance organizational interests with individual autonomy? If not, what reasons would justify choosing this alternative?

EXIT: Does the alternative abrogate your personal interests or rights, but honor the rights and interests of the greatest number of stakeholders? Does the greatest good conflict with the interests of your organization? If you answered "yes" to either question, should the alternative be implemented anyway? If so, proceed to Stage 6 analysis. If not, skip to Step 5 (Compare the Alternatives). If you answered "no" to both questions, proceed to Stage 6.

Stage 6: Universalize and Develop a Caring Response

1. List the virtues at stake in the situation, and rank order them. These virtues might include affiliation, authority, character, contract, law, liberties, life, property, punishment, and truth.

2. Rank order your moral responsibilities in the situation, everything else being equal, from the following list of prima facie duties: beneficence, fidelity, gratitude, justice, nonmaleficence, reparation, and self-improvement.

3. Could the proposed action violate or neglect one of these duties? If so, what moral reasons could excuse this? What counter-arguments could be raised? What are the possible consequences of violating or neglecting one or more duties?

4. Universalize the proposed action:
   a. Would justice be served if everyone in a similar situation took this action?
   b. Would you choose this alternative if you were the only person affected by it, or if your brother or best friend were the only person affected by it?
   c. Would this alternative ensure a just distribution of resources among the stakeholders?

5. Apply principles of compassion:
   a. Would the action show respect for the dignity of human beings as individuals?
   b. Is the proposed action grounded in self-sacrifice, care, and unselfish compassion for all stakeholders? Does it respect your own needs as well?
   c. Would the proposed alternative promote non-violence and minimize harm for everyone?

STEP 5. COMPARE THE ALTERNATIVES

1. After testing each alternative using Steps 1-4, determine which alternatives:

    a. Would satisfy the greatest number of stakeholders
    b. Best balance stakeholder interests both inside and outside the organization
    c. Comply with your organization's values, duties, interests, and policies
    d. Uphold your own values, duties, interests, rights, and convictions
    e. Could be effectively applied in similar future dilemmas
    f. Demonstrate care and compassion to the stakeholders

2. Decide which alternative will be implemented.

STEP 6. IMPLEMENT THE DECISION

1. Develop a strategic plan for implementing the decision. List specific steps that likely would achieve the desired results, and determine which stakeholders are responsible for the implementation.

2. Troubleshoot the plan. List ways it could go wrong, preventive measures, and remedies.

3. Implement the decision.

STEP 7: DEVELOP A POLICY

1. Monitor and record all known consequences of the decision.

2. Assess the effectiveness and impact of the decision by getting feedback from as many stakeholders as possible.

3. List all factors that brought this dilemma to the forefront. These factors might include: a broader definition of rights, a change in the law, a new/untested opportunity, change in technology, economic pressures, intensified media scrutiny, lack of resources or time, or officials withholding information.

4. Develop a written policy for your organization, based on a systematic evaluation of the outcomes, which can be broadly applied to similar ethical dilemmas in the future.