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Pioneers in business ethics: Patricia Werhane

Patricia Werhane (pwerhane@gmail.com), PhD, is Adjunct Professor of Business Administration at the University of Illinois and Ruffin Professor Emerita at the Darden School of Business, University of Virginia. Previously, she was Wicklander Chair of Business Ethics in the Kellstadt School of Management at DePaul University, while also acting as Managing Director for the Institute for Business and Professional Ethics. Werhane was interviewed by **Joan Dubinsky, JD**.

A note on this series: In the last 40 years or so, an entirely new academic and occupational niche for practicing ethics in business has emerged. Many of the original academic business ethicists came to the field through philosophy, then brought their thinking and research into business schools. Many of the original practitioners came to the field through the law and remain close to the practice of law.

In an effort to preserve and share this knowledge and practical experience, the Center for Professional Responsibility in Business and Society at the University of Illinois Gies College of Business has filmed and transcribed the oral histories of these pioneers and early adopters. To date, almost 50 academics and practitioners have been interviewed, each with 25 years or more of experience in the field of business ethics. This series aims to provide a better understanding of how the business ethics field and profession have evolved over the decades, through the interviewees' own experiences. For more details on the series, contact Gretchen Winter (gwinter@illinois.edu), JD, the Center's Executive Director. This interview was condensed for clarity and brevity.

JD: How did business ethics get started?

PW: We began to realize in the 1960s that all the business scandals couldn't be ignored. Many people thought that was "just business," so we would just have to put up with it. And then we began to say that we didn't have to make excuses for business scandals, and business didn't have to put up with scandals, either. We can make lots of money *and* be ethical. There are many companies that make plenty of money and are as ethical as they can be. So, I think the field of business ethics got started when we applied the teaching of ethics to business scandals and failures—particularly those we learned about in the early 1970s.

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