

Ethikos Volume 38, Number 2. April 01, 2024 Pioneers in business ethics: Daryl Koehn

by Daryl Koehn, Olivia Duggins and Gretchen Winter

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This interview was edited by Olivia Duggins and Gretchen Winter and is based on a video interview originally conducted by **Summer Brown**, an associate of Professor Koehn at DePaul University, and is part of a video history called Business Ethics Pioneers.* Questions for the Business Ethics Pioneers series were developed by Patricia H. Werhane and Gretchen Winter. Patricia H. Werhane is a Faculty Fellow at the Center for Professional Responsibility in Business and Society at the Gies College of Business, University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign and Professor Emerita at the University of Virginia.

*More on the Business Ethics Pioneer 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. This interview was condensed for clarity and brevity.

Q: Can you introduce yourself and tell me a little bit about your position and your institution?

DK: My name is Daryl Koehn. I'm the Wicklander Chair of Business Ethics in the philosophy department at DePaul University in Chicago. I'm also the Managing Director of the Institute for Business and Professional Ethics here at DePaul. I'm pleased to be interviewed by the Executive Director of the Institute, Ms. Summer Brown.

Q: What brought you to applied ethics and your specific discipline?

DK: There's a short answer and a long answer. The short answer is that, when I was looking for a job, there were many positions available in applied ethics. Because of my rather circuitous route in getting my PhD, I had qualifications for that type of position. So, what initially brought me to applied ethics is that there were jobs

available. The long answer is that, as of 1983, I had completed all my coursework for my PhD at the University of Chicago. People tend to forget that 1983 was the worst recession since the great depression. If you Google “1983,” you’ll find that it was a horrible year for people coming onto the job market.

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