# Developing ethics training for employees: What you need to know

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Ethics has been defined as a "science of conduct." It includes the basic ground rules by which we should live our lives. It is also defined as "the attempt to arrive at an understanding of the nature of human values, of how we ought to live, and of what constitutes right conduct."[1] Merriam-Webster defines ethics as "a theory or system of moral values."[2] On the other hand, morality is defined as "a doctrine or system of moral conduct" and being moral as "relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior." Morality is also understood as a set of beliefs and values developed over time. In a nutshell, ethics simply means "to do what is right" or "to do what is good."

Doing what is right or good, therefore, means you must have the knowledge of what is good and right. It follows that for you to have that knowledge, you need to have acquired it from somewhere. This is where ethics training comes in.

Ethics is evolving with global changes. However, according to Peter F. Drucker, ethics is nonnegotiable, and there is one ethics.[3] With increasing commercial activities, the need for ethics is increasing. Organizations have realized the need for more guidance and to ensure their activities support the common good and do not harm others. And the number of ethically inclined stakeholders is increasing. Examples of stakeholders include:

- Local communities
- Employees and managers
- Investors
- Customers
- Government and civil society
- Media
- Competitors
- Trade bodies

## What is ethics training and its preconditions?

Ethics training is the process of imparting skills, knowledge, and experience to teach participants how to conduct themselves ethically, develop their moral limitations, make ethical decisions, and handle unethical situations they encounter daily.

Ethics training has gone through phases. As early as the 19th century, ethics was a part of business education.

However, many years later in the 1980s, amid various corporate scandals, business schools rediscovered the importance of training ethical leaders. Organizations followed suit and incorporated ethics training for their employees.

The study of ethics generally consists of examining questions about right and wrong, virtue, duty, justice, fairness, and responsibility toward others. Furthermore, there is an increasing need for businesses to conduct themselves ethically and address ethical issues in different industries. This implies an increase in demand for ethics training.

The ethics program is essentially useless unless all staff members are trained about what it is, how it works, and their roles in it. Therefore, all staff must be aware of and act in full accordance with policies and procedures (this is true whether policies and procedures are for ethics programs or personnel management). This full accordance requires training about policies and procedures.[4]

Ethics training does not happen in a vacuum. It is a process whose success is determined by fulfilling two vital preconditions: senior management support and a clear code of conduct/ethics. Senior management should express their sincere support through clear messaging on their commitment to the training program and the ethical vision for the organization. The code should be written in a language that all employees easily understand. A specific expression of the organization's commitment to the ethical behavior of its employees should be included in the code.

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