

Developing and Using Business Ethics Scenarios



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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for their invaluable insights into how scenarios are used in training: Lindsey Appleton, AWE; Kathleen Edmond, Best Buy; Kathy Ciambone and Sue Bradshaw, GSK; Timothy F Schultz and Ewen Macdonald, Raytheon; Duncan Robinson, RWE npower; Robert Smith, Serco; Sandra Franklin, Stryker.

We are grateful to the following for their helpful and insightful comments on earlier drafts: Ruth Steinholtz, AreteWork LLP; Vanessa Clothier, BAE Systems; Jane Mitchell, JL&M Ltd; UK Ethics Team, National Grid; Courtney Wallize, Northrop Grumman Corporation; Peter Massey-Cook, Orient Express.

The author would like to thank Dr Nicole Dando for her wisdom and support and Dr Andrea Werner and Sabrina Basran for research assistance.

Use of scenarios in this Good Practice Guide

The IBE scenarios in this Good Practice Guide may be used for training and in ethics programmes with due acknowledgement.

Should you require customised scenarios for your organisation, please contact info@ibe.org.uk

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Price £20 ISBN 978-1-908534-03-3

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First published November 2012

by the Institute of Business Ethics
24 Greencoat Place
London SW1P 1BE

Registered Charity No. 1084014.

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Introduction

Training is an essential element of a corporate ethics programme. Failing to train staff in the importance of ethical values and how to use them leaves companies open to integrity risk and reputational damage. Yet, IBE research has found that only 62% of British employees report receiving any training on standards of ethical conduct,¹ even though businesses that train their staff to understand and implement codes of ethics have been found over the long term to outperform financially those that do not.²

New legislation, such as the UK Bribery Act 2010, makes the pursuit of an ethical culture all the more important. The Act essentially requires that companies take steps to prevent bribery by having 'Adequate Procedures' in place. In practice, this means not just giving employees a copy of the code of ethics (or anti-bribery policy), but training them in its relevance and application as well.

The goal of an ethics programme is to embed ethical values into company culture so that they are reflected in the way that business is actually done. This requires more than just imparting knowledge – the challenge is to communicate the relevance and importance of high ethical standards at all levels and locations.

This Good Practice Guide shows how to meet this challenge through the use of scenarios to sensitise staff to the ethical dilemmas they may face in their day-to-day work and by giving them the confidence to deal with those dilemmas in a manner consistent with the organisation's ethical values.

Staff receive different forms of corporate communications every day - from their manager, from the CEO, from HQ, from different departments - and ensuring that messages about ethics reach and engage them is a particular challenge. Messages about ethical behaviour will not be taken seriously if 'the tone at the top' (or just above) contradicts them. Ethical leadership is, by far, the most powerful tool in developing and sustaining a culture where 'doing the right thing' is part of doing business. Scenarios will help sensitise senior staff to the issues affecting their employees, sector and company. Developing ethical acumen, by practising how to deal with these issues, will help ensure they lead by example.

¹ Basran S and Webley S (forthcoming 2012) *Employee Views of Ethics at Work: the 2012 British survey*, IBE.

² Ugoji K, Dando N & Moir L (2007) *Does Business Ethics Pay? – Revisited*, IBE.

What do we mean by a scenario?

In this Good Practice Guide we will use the term ‘scenario’ to encompass case studies, vignettes and dilemmas, both real and fictionalised. Scenarios may be delivered in a number of ways: electronically or face-to-face; formally and informally; for targeted training on specific issues or as part of a broad programme for embedding an ethics policy.

Scenarios can be journalistic accounts of real events in an organisation or industry that have involved ethical matters or, at the other end of the spectrum, be fictional stories which nonetheless reflect typical problems.

Scenarios used in business ethics training typically present an ethical dilemma and encourage trainees to look at issues from different ethical perspectives. Some may also raise awareness of company policies, codes, rules and procedures.

About this Good Practice Guide

This Guide provides practical guidance on how organisations can use scenarios as part of an effective ethics programme. It looks at how scenarios can be used in different situations and how to facilitate scenario-based training. As well as providing example scenarios with questions to prompt discussion, it will assist organisations in the development of their own scenarios.

Part 1 examines why scenarios are a useful training tool, the different types of scenarios and issues they can cover and in what situations they can be used.

Part 2 outlines what to consider when developing and choosing scenarios, and

Part 3 looks at how to use and facilitate scenario based training. **Part 4** gives some examples of IBE scenarios developed for training on issues which affect different stakeholder groups.

There are three appendices: **Appendix 1** provides a brief checklist summarising the key points in this Guide; **Appendix 2** provides two sample scripts of scenarios for video; and **Appendix 3** provides other sources of scenarios.

This Guide will be of value to ethics practitioners as well as other managers looking to enhance the ethical competence and capability of their team. It will also be useful for those new to the area of business ethics, and those with a responsibility for corporate communications and learning and development.