

Professional Ethics

Guiding Principals for Workplace Decisions

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Attendees



Consider this...





What would
you do?



**What would
you do?**

2
3



What Would
You do?

Morality

Morality is a **system of principles** concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad in human conduct, often involving societal norms, cultural values, and individual beliefs.

Consequentialist reasoning

- locates morality in the consequences of an act

Categorical reasoning

- locates morality in certain duties and rights



Moral Principles

Moral principles are **fundamental beliefs or values** about what is right and wrong that **guide an individual's** decisions and actions, serving as a framework for ethical behavior and decision-making in complex situations.

- **Non-maleficence** – “do no harm”
- **Beneficence** – “do good”
- **Respect for Autonomy** – “freedom”
- **Justice** – “impartiality”
- **Fairness** – “Equitability”



Ethics

A **set of rules** or a system of principles established by an **external source**, such as a professional organization, a religion, or a society.

- Integrity
- Confidentiality
- Objectivity
- Respect
- Professional Competence
- Accountability



Professional Ethics

Professional ethics are the **moral principles that govern behavior** within a particular **profession**. These principles guide professionals in making decisions that are:

Fair

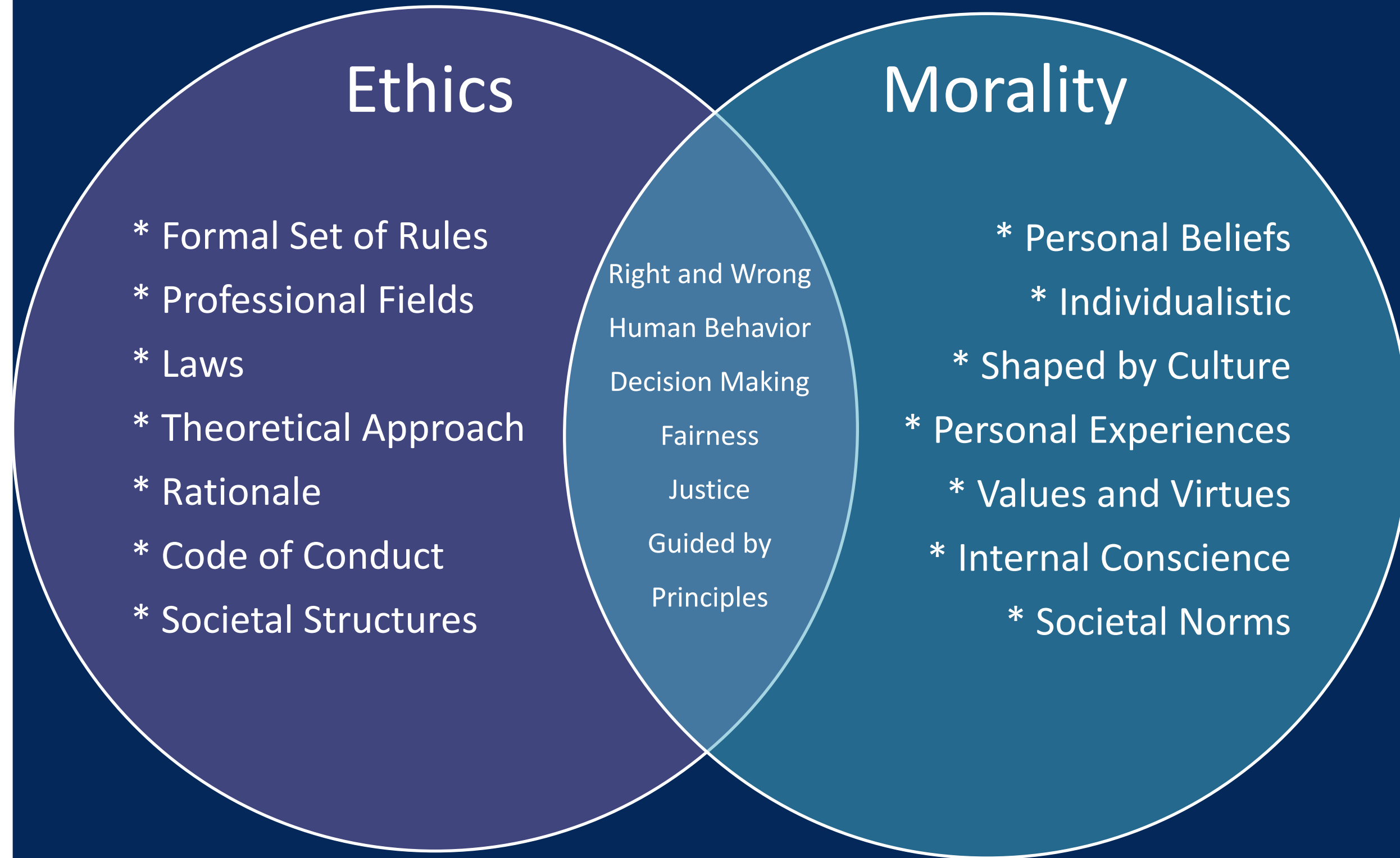
Honest

Responsible

They establish a standard of conduct expected of individuals in their respective fields.



Ethics v. Morality



Let's Be Honest...



Ethical Dilemma



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Takeaways?



Ethical Crossroads

Ethical Dilemmas in the Workplace



Scenario: Your agency's new processing method is anticipated to launch next week and could bring huge profits, but preliminary testing shows potential safety concerns that aren't legally required to disclose.

Option A: Move forward with launch. Address issues only if problems arise.

Consequence: Maximum profit, potential harm, possible future liability

Option B: Delay launch to conduct additional testing and make improvements.

Consequence: Short-term financial hit, better product, protected reputation

Common Ethical Dilemmas



Conflicts of interest

When personal gain conflicts with professional obligations



Misuse of company resources

Using company assets for personal benefit



Inappropriate relationships

Romantic or financial entanglements that compromise objectivity



Confidentiality Breaches

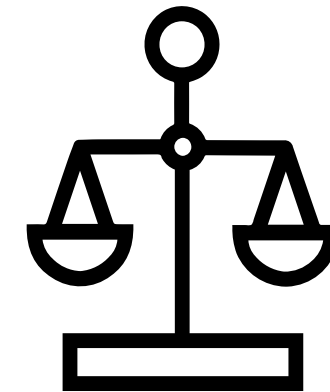
Sharing protected information inappropriately

Why Ethics Matter in the Workplace

Professional ethics are crucial for a healthy workplace culture.



**Builds
Trust**



**Promotes
Fairness**



**Enhances
Reputation**



The Slippery Slope

STARTS WITH A SMALL ACTION: "JUST THIS ONCE"

Upholding truthfulness
fosters trust and strong
relationships among
colleagues.

NORMALIZATION

The exception becomes
routine and justifiable

ESCALATES OVER TIME

The exceptions spread
across work environment.

FULL COMPROMISE

Values completely
abandoned;
rationalization complete

The Gray Areas



NOT ALL DECISIONS ARE BLACK AND WHITE

Upholding truthfulness fosters trust and strong relationships among colleagues.

SITUATIONAL ETHICS AND COMPETING VALUES

Treating everyone equally and respectfully promotes a positive work environment.

WHEN VALUES CLASH

- Honesty vs. kindness
- Loyalty vs. integrity
- Personal benefit vs. collective good
- Short-term gains vs. long-term consequences



Group Activity: Stand-to-Sit

Everyone starts by standing.



Remain standing

if the statement
does not apply to
you



Sit down

if the statement
applies to you

The Cost of Unethical Behavior



Reputational Damage

Takes years to build, seconds to destroy. Social media amplifies ethical failures.



Job Loss

58% of employees fired for ethical violations struggle to find equivalent employment.

The Cost of Unethical Behavior



Legal Consequences

Fines, sanctions, and potential criminal charges for serious violations.



Lost Trust

Customers, employees, and stakeholders all withdraw support when trust is broken.

The Role of Leadership in Ethics

Leaders set the ethical temperature of an organization through their actions, not just their words.



MODELING

Leaders must demonstrate ethical behavior in all decisions, especially when difficult



Accountability

Consistent enforcement of standards regardless of position or performance



Transparency

Open communication about ethical standards and consequences

Ethics and Company Policy



Code of Conduct

The formal ethical framework that defines acceptable behavior

- Clearly written guidelines
- Regularly updated
- Easily accessible



Conflict of interest disclosures

Proactive identification of potential ethical issues

- Annual declarations
- Situational reporting
- Transparent review process



Ethics Infrastructure

Systems that support ethical behavior

- Regular training
- Ethics committees
- Clear investigation procedures

Tools for Ethical Decision-Making

JUST
ASK

Is it legal? — Does this violate any laws, regulations,
or company policies?

Is it fair? — Would this decision be considered
equitable by those affected?

Would I be
proud? — How would I feel if this decision was
published on the front page?





Encouraging a Speak-Up Culture

- Psychological safety
- Response to Speaking Up
- Anonymous Options
- Question Culture



The Silence Tax: Organizations where employees don't speak up pay a heavy price in missed opportunities, unaddressed problems, and ethical failures.

How to Handle an Ethical Breach

-  Report it through proper channels
-  Protect yourself from retaliation
-  Document the issue
-  Follow up with HR or compliance



Important: If you witness illegal activity or imminent harm, additional reporting to authorities may be necessary.



Summary

**Ethics are
everyone's
responsibility**

Not just leaders or
HR—every employee
shapes the ethical
culture



**Be proactive, not
reactive**

Address potential
issues before they
become actual
problems

**Know policies and
values**

Understand both
the rules and the
principles behind
them



**Small actions
define trust**

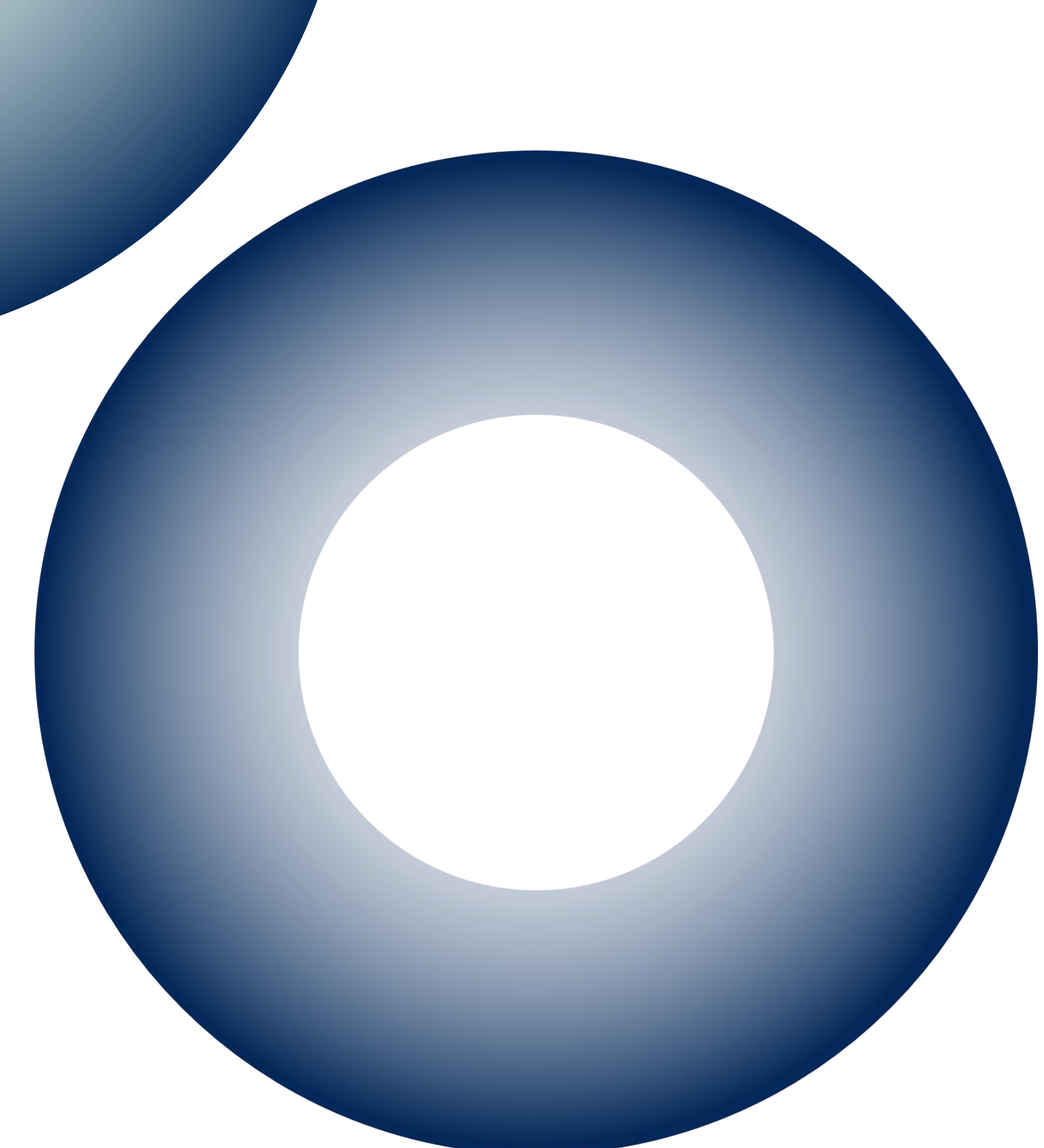
Everyday
decisions build or
erode your ethical
reputation



Reflection Question

“When was the last time you were at an ethical fork in the road? What did you choose — and why?”

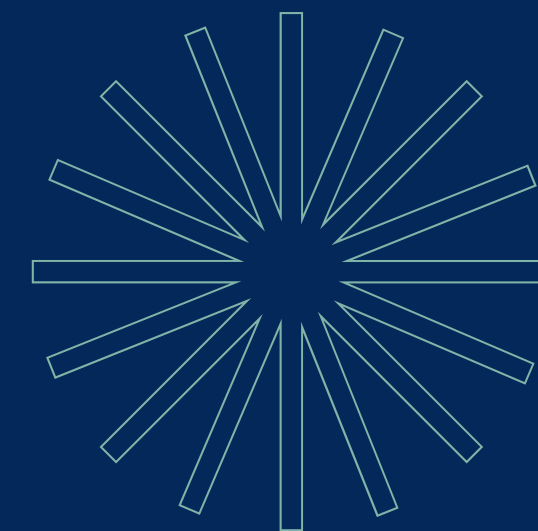


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**“It takes 20 years to
build a reputation and
five minutes to ruin it.
If you think about that,
you’ll do things
differently.”**

~ Warren Buffett

THANK YOU



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