

## THE DECISIONAL MOMENT AND ETHICS

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### Abstract

*The aim of this article is to analyze the ethical decisions taken by organizations both in everyday life as well as in exceptional circumstances. For this purpose, we thought it would be important to bring into account the ethical issues within organizations, such as: responsibility, morals or trust capital. In this context, we have raised the problem of unethical behaviour, given that knowing the causes of unethical behaviour can help prevent it.*

*Throughout this paper we shall also highlight the aspects related to organizational communication, since the decision making process also involves communicating with the employees or business partners.*

**Key words:** *Ethics, organizational communication, social marketing, ethical decisions, organizational culture.*

Ethical decisions are not simple choices between fair and unfair, right and wrong, good or evil; they are complex judgments regarding the balance to be achieved between the economic and social performances. In order to reach the balance, economic, social, legal and ethical analyses are conducted.

The answers to the ethical problems can be found in the common morality and the standards of the community we live in, without wondering why it is best to act in a certain way. It is an automatism related to the standards of the society: if a person approaches the ethical norms of a community, he or she will enjoy appreciation and trust, and if things are otherwise, the person will face constraints, isolation, marginalization and even exclusion.

It is obvious that, for social responsibility to be respected, managerial decisions should take into consideration both the economic and organizational factors, as well as the social ones; thus, the specific actions of the organization can be analyzed on the basis of economic, legal and social standards. That is to say that these decisions are taken based on a complex of multidimensional factors.

The choice regarding a specific ethical behaviour is influenced not only by the known ethical systems, but also by the factors that influence the managerial behaviour: the person, the organization and the external environment. Those who do not have a strong set of personal ethical values are likely to change their decisions from one situation to another, being less consistent in what they do. Regarding the personality, the following question can also be raised: are there people who are inclined to *unethical decisions*? Indubitably, those who have a need for more power, who are strongly oriented towards economic values, are more prone to seeking their self-interest and taking unethical decisions for the entire organization. Unethical behaviour is frequently adopted in business. Knowing the causes of the unethical behaviour can help prevent it.

Among the causes of unethical behaviour there are:

1. *Gain* (desire to obtain maximum profit) - leads to many temptations, especially when anticipating a substantial gain;

2. *Conflict of roles*. Many ethical dilemmas that arise within organizations are, in fact, forms of conflicts of roles, which come to be solved unethically. A widespread form of conflict of roles that generates unethical behaviours occurs when the "bureaucratic role" of the employee in an organization comes into conflict with the role of "member of a professional body". For example, the agents and brokers in insurance brokerage agencies often say that their employers put pressure on them to promote products that do not serve the best interests of the customers.

3. *Strong competition* for scarce resources can stimulate an unethical behaviour, both by stimulating the business game as well as by real illegal acts that show evidence of commercial malpractice such as, for example, price fixing and violation of monopoly rules. And even if there is no strong competition, there is still a great temptation for unethical decisions, because the temptation to score big gains is huge.

4. *Personality*. The persons who are strongly oriented towards economic values are more likely to behave unethically than the others. Moreover, people have different views when addressing moral issues. Under normal circumstances, it is reasonable to expect that people who are more aware of the moral issues should be tempted to avoid unethical decisions, and those with great personal power (Machiavellian) will be more inclined to take unethical decisions, using their power in order to promote their personal self-interest rather than for the good of the whole organization (Abrudan M.M., 2005).

The factors that influence unethical behaviour (Ionescu, Gh. Gh., 1997), resulting from studies conducted within large corporations, are considered to be:

- Stating objectives, assessment systems and an organizational climate that support the profit as the only goal of the organization;
- The management accepting the law as the only standard for the policies and actions of the organization;
- Inadequate management, so that the managers at the bottom of the hierarchy may violate the standards in their pursuit of higher sales and profits for their personal gain;
- The management's failure to understand the ethical interests of the public, caused by isolation and lack of effective communication.

It is also assumed that the existence of formal codes of ethics is not sufficient. The managers themselves must be models of ethical behaviour.

In mathematics or physics, there are "right" and safe answers; unfortunately, this does not apply to management, which regards actions that involve various factors.

If we look at the managerial decision in terms of a mathematical model, we shall see that the result is dependent on many variables: people change, competition increases, products change, circumstances, financial situations, etc. Therefore, the results are also uncertain.

The inability or lack of political will in taking responsibility generates multiple effects that make the situation business ethics critical. A hostile business environment will grow atypical behaviours, affecting the ethical value system. Bureaucracy, corruption, excessive taxation, the lack of incentive policies and so on, are enemies of the free economy and the social relations in various communities.

Here is an example of unethical behaviour, which seriously affects the organization and the society as a whole, leading to the emergence of disasters created by the modern life (crime, abuses, discrimination, drug dealing, traffic of influence, corruption, etc.), aggression against the body (suffering, diseases, etc.), impairment of the human condition (material and spiritual misery), etc.

Social marketing campaigns were initiated in order to change behaviours, especially at work. All the persons within the organization who are directly or indirectly involved in a social issue must be included (Perez Romero, 2004, pp.34-57). Organizations want to change people's behaviour in order to obtain benefits for the society; from this point of view, social marketing campaigns seek to solve certain problems that may affect the trust capital of the organizations.

Given that those who benefit from the services want to obtain maximum satisfaction, behavioural change is essential. When applying social marketing, one should take into account: market segmentation, communication and changing the idea of utility for that of satisfaction.

In fact, reality proves that the objectives of the institutions can generate positive or negative, favourable or unfavourable reactions from the consumers. In this situation, social marketing is fundamental because it seeks a change in the attitude of the partners involved, in order to ensure a better quality of life (Giuliani, A.C., Monteiro, T.A., Zambon M.S., Betanho, C., Lima Faria, L. H., 2012). Ethics plays an extremely important role within social marketing because the moral norms determine the finality of the actions (Umansky, S.N., 2008). In addition, creating a solid trust capital entails the conformation to the 4 E -netics, efficiency, effectiveness and economy (Trifu, A., Terec-Vlad, L., 2013), given that in a knowledge society the customer's satisfaction does not only depend on the usefulness of the product purchased.

Nowadays, due to the financial crisis, companies increasingly tend to opt for operations that bring short-term benefits, ignoring certain ethical issues. For this reason, we believe that a strong organizational culture, which integrates the aspects regarding ethics, behaviour and action, can make the difference between short term and long term gains. We are making this statement because nowadays we are facing different situations where businessmen and important people in this area are punished by the rigor of the law due to the lack of ethical considerations, Tatiana Agheorghiesei believes that business ethics helps clarify and define the real goals (Agheorghiesei, T., 2011), and organizational ethics regards the implementation and evaluation of the organization's values and moral positioning (Agheorghiesei, T., 2011). In order to provide the business partners with stability and trust in the organization, we must first integrate ethics into the organizational culture, and change the old values with new ones which would support the moral as well as the legal behaviour.

As discussed previously, unethical behaviour may entail negative consequences both for the organization as a whole, as well as its managers: on the one hand, it is about losing both the trust of the business partners as well as the trust of the employees, and losing the company's reputation and image as well

as the most important partners and, on the other hand, spending huge amounts of money on lawyers, lawsuits, litigation, decreased sales (Agheorghiesei, T., 2011).

Because the organizational culture of a company or firm is quite difficult to change due to its components, one most often resorts to the organizational diagnosis for providing information about the current state of the organization. This can be done through questionnaires, interviews and organizational diagnostic models and complementary investigations. Beer and Spector believe that the benefits are the following:

- Providing information in order to increase the efficiency (Beer, M., Spector, B., 1993)
- The organization's permanent involvement in continuous improvement (Beer, M., Spector, B., 1993)
- The systematic interpretation of the data (Beer, M., Spector, B., 1993)
- The development of strategies for organizational change (Beer, M., Spector, B., 1993).

The organizational diagnosis should provide answers to questions such as: which are the real results of the organization? (Thibaut, JP, 1989), which are the organization's goals? (Thibaut, JP, 1989) and which are the actions that should be taken on medium and long term? (Thibaut, J.P., 1989).

A particularly important aspect regarding the research of organizational culture is that no method of change can be imposed, since in terms of beliefs there is no recipe or manual that corresponds to each organization in particular and each situation it faces (Perez Maldonado, I., Perez Maldonado, M., 2006). For the beginning, the change must take place by creating an affective climate, which would facilitate the professional development process (Perez Maldonado, I., Perez Maldonado, M., 2006). In this context we may believe that the organizations that have integrated ethics into their organizational structure are those that can provide their business partners with trust capital and, moreover, they will benefit from recognition and long-term benefits. Therefore, an organization based on integrity focuses on ethical behaviour, preventing damage and, at the same time, determining the implantation of stimuli in order to ensure the commitment of responsible, moral attitudes (Terec-Vlad, L., Terec-Vlad, D., 2013).

Another important aspect in organizations is related to communication; as part of the organizational culture, communication takes on a multitude of nuances and meanings, underlying the exchange of messages for achieving the individual and collective goals (Nicholas, T., Gheorghe, D., 2006); it involves the following aspects:

- The communication systems are constantly evaluated in order to become efficient (Beciu, C., 2011)
- Communication is considered a value (Beciu, C., 2011)
- Communication generates markets and professional fields (Beciu, C., 2011).

Each type of organizational communication has a greater or minor influence on the organizational culture. In this context, one may notice the complexity of the communication issue, since we ought to take into consideration the fact that the organization's efficiency requires the adaptation to an increasingly competitive business environment. Regarding communication strategies, they boil down to four actions:

- Information (Pop, C., 2006)
- Motivation (Pop, C., 2006)
- Control (Pop, C., 2006)
- Compensation (Pop, C., 2006).

The communication strategy pursued by the organization's manager must aim at increasing performance and creating a positive image through an optimal climate. The efficiency of communication mostly depends on how the structures and responsibilities are designed. If the communication structures are generated spontaneously within the daily activities, communication must become an important management tool as the organization develops. Thus, an optimal information flow can be ensured, while avoiding blocking or distorting the messages. Given that organizational ethics and organizational communication are closely related, even interconnected, in order to ensure the proper understanding of communication one must keep sight of several rules regarding ethics:

- Listening to the interlocutor until he or she completes the communication
- Choosing a proper moment to address a certain issue or topic
- The available dedicated time for communication
- The tone of communication
- The interlocutor's interference in the communication.

We can say that the term "managerial communication" is equivalent to that of organizational communication (Burciu, A., 2008); therefore, when delivering the message, one should not use manipulation and propaganda strategies, since the morality of the communication act is built on values such as honesty, trust, honour, respect for the organizational values and the values of the society (Bowen, S.A., 2007).

The issue of ethics does not only refer to the aspects discussed in this paper; a clear distinction must be made between professionalism and ethics because a false statement that occurs accidentally may not violate the ethics code, but can yet be considered unprofessional. However, when we talk about message distortion for the aim of personal benefits, then the issue of ethics is indeed raised. The critical issues regarding the truth in the communication process appeals to ethical issues such as freedom, self-determination, autonomy or

responsibility. For this reason, all the aspects of organizational culture must relate to ethics, as it is the only basis underlying the company's activity and its life expectancy.

#### Conclusions

In a society where individuals live together and socialize, their level of satisfaction regarding a product or service is essential. For this reason, we thought it would be important to address issues such as ethical behaviour in organizations, including unethical behaviour, the causes that lead to such an attitude, moral responsibility towards business partners and capital trust.

The decisions taken within a firm, company, organization widely reflect the personality of the decision-makers; thus, they are strongly impregnated with ethical or unethical issues regarding the problems and situations that need to be solved.

Given that the decision is a subjective action, even if it is based on various arguments, situations and data with an objective character, it can also influence the chosen course of action through the moral issues relating to the situations considered.

In this paper we have also presented the aspects related to communication within organizations. Since decision making, organizational communication and ethics are interconnected, we believed it would be important to emphasize that good communication is based mainly on the ethical issues, since message distortion, such as trying to mislead the business partners in order to gain unfair advantage, is extremely serious.

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