Annotated Bibliography for Ethics and Character Formation

In Business

By

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Books


The focus of this text is on understanding business practices and actions in terms of human values. It attempts to view corporate profits not as an end themselves but in respect to what basic human good that can stem from them. Ethical theories are covered in the material and case studies and articles are provided which provide opportunities to apply those theories and concepts to issues currently faced in the business world. First published in 1979, the book is widely used as an ethics textbook. I have been using the fifth edition which was published in 1996 but a later edition is available. The basic difference is the cases and articles are more current.

The book covers various theoretical perspectives that serve as the foundation for the study of business ethics. While many of these have been studied for centuries they remain relevant in today’s world. However, the text also covers current issues facing the business community that may fall outside of the time honored perspectives. Issues relative to copyright law or the use of “sweat shops” by companies within the apparel industry are examples of recent situations that are covered in the text.
This is a good text to use to introduce ethical theories to students and provides opportunities to apply those theories via the cases and articles provided. The chapters dealing with truthfulness, social responsibility and diversity are particularly relevant to the values reflected in the Wendt Initiative.


I discovered this book in my search for information regarding incorporating the development of a personal mission into the Principles of Management class I teach. Instead of taking the approach that doing things more efficiently is the primary means to increase control over our lives, Steven Covey suggests that a principle centered approach which defines where we are headed rather than how fast we are going will increase the quality of life we seek.

The book is organized into four sections with the first concentrating on analyzing the gap between how we spend our time and what’s really important to us. This material attempts to assist us in aligning our lives with those basic things that we truly need to achieve a quality life.

The second section focuses on a process which can assist in shifting our emphasis from a time management approach to our lives to one which directs our attention towards those important things identified in the first section. Section three turns attention towards our interactions with others. Empowerment is discussed in light of how it can be used as a means to transform relationships with family and work groups. The last section of the
book focuses on the principles of peace and how they can influence the quality of our lives and the nature of what we do. It also looks at how to avoid obstacles that will surface which may block the way.

This book asks the reader to think carefully about how their life is being lived and to contrast that with how they would like to live if those things that are identified as being truly important become the center of their life.


This text concentrates on the role a mission statement can play in the achievement of goals. Ms. Jones suggests that a focused statement of purpose can be used to initiate, evaluate and refine all of life’s activities. Further, both individuals and companies have learned that people or groups with carefully defined missions lead and surpass those who have none.

Ms. Jones provides a step by step approach to creating a mission statement which can serve the reader well and not take a huge investment of time devoted to its preparation. I am using portions of this approach with my students as they prepare their own personal mission statement.


The author contrasts what he terms the Personality Ethic view of success to that of the Character Ethic measurement of success. Personality Ethic suggests success is more a function of personality, image, attitudes, behaviors, skills and techniques. Character
Ethic is a focus on things like integrity, humility, the Golden Rule, fairness and courage. The author states that in the last fifty years or so society has conditioned us to view success from the Personality Ethic perspective. Prior to that time success was determined to a much greater extent from a Character Ethic perspective. This has led us from viewing people in terms of their own uniqueness towards the way we have been conditioned to view them – how they stack up against those measures of success valued by the Personality Ethic perspective. He further suggests that these perceptions are not a true reflection of what we are - they reflect more of what we say or do.

Mr. Covey suggests that the Character Ethic is based on the fundamental idea that there are basic principles that govern human effectiveness which are unchangeable over time and truly reflect who we really are. These principles involve concepts such as fairness, integrity, honesty, dignity, service, excellence and patience. The text relates these principles to how they influence who we truly are.


This book involves the application of Christian ethics to the business world. The authors relate recent ethical lapses which have occurred in business to the reality that a solid moral foundation is necessary to the well being of individuals and a society as a whole. He relates how these high profile incidences have opened up the discussion for the need for this foundation but at the same time forces such as short-term performance expectations, global competition and new technologies and their impact on the speed with which business is conducted have made it more challenging to operate in this environment.
The authors relate the story of Malden Mills and the actions taken by the owner to rebuild a burned out factory in an attempt to save jobs and keep the town it was located in from economic collapse only to see the company file for bankruptcy. After a reorganization the company did survive but at huge costs. The authors illustrates that ethics and social responsibility are far more complex than merely “doing the right thing” or “it all comes down to character”. The fundamental message of the book is that ethics based on Christian teachings often influences and guides business executives in their decision making.


The basic premise of the book is that ethical behavior is related to self esteem. If a person has high self esteem they have a better chance of withstanding the pressure to do what is right rather than what is expedient, popular or lucrative. The authors suggest that a strong code of morality is the first step toward achieving success in business.

Tools are suggested to assist people in determining whether something is ethical or not. Much of the text is devoted to introducing Five P’s of Ethical Power. These are viewed from an individual as well as organizations’ perspective.

This is a text I wanted to make sure I include on my “to read” list. David Shapiro stated “Through moving stories and insightful analysis, Damon reminds us that, in the end, the only way we can really do well is by doing good”. Recent events paint the picture that many in business use unethical, if not illegal, means in their pursuit of success. However, as these situations are revealed and allowed to run their course, it appears efforts such as these result in short term achievements that won’t endure the test of time.

The author portrays morality not just as a force which tends to constrain what we should and should not do, but as the source of ideas that inform, inspire and motivate employees and firms. Through interviews with executives throughout business, ways in which morality serves as a primary contributor to success are set forth.
Journal Articles


This article suggests that when teaching ethics one should not only focus on the principles but should also teach students about character. One should help students consider their values and how to apply them in practice. Aristotle suggests that ethics is about virtue, which involves having good moral values. The author suggests that one’s values must be understood and you must be able to identify the issues related to those values in situations that are faced. This plays a key role in determining character according to Hartman. He further states that the culture of an organization may support or undermine this process. One way to protect one’s character is to choose a workplace that does not undermine it. Case studies are suggested as an effective means to help students in developing good character by applying what they learn in complex situations.


This article provides a very insightful look at how values-based ethics programs can be useful to employees. The author uses the WorldCom fraud case to suggest that many of the managers involved in this incident were not bad people who purposely set out to defraud the various stakeholders involved but were good people who went bad. He portrays the situation in terms that many of us, if we are truly honest with ourselves, may not have raised the red flag of caution when we should have. He suggests that “Today’s white-collar criminals are more likely to be those among us who are unable to withstand the blistering pressures placed on managers to meet higher and tougher goals”.

Mr. Gebler suggests that an organization intent on reducing the threat of misconduct within its ranks must focus attention toward building a culture supportive of this initiative rather than simply building a compliance infrastructure or developing a Code of Ethics. A Culture Risk Assessment model is presented as a tool for measuring cultures by assigning values to one of seven categories. Those categories are as follows:

1. **Financial Stability** – A primary concern in developing a culture.
2. **Communication** – relationships with employees, customers & suppliers
3. **Systems & Processes** - focus on quality, productivity and efficiency
4. **Accountability** – employees and managers take responsibility for their own actions
5. **Alignment** – developing a shared vision of the future and a set of shared values
6. **Social Responsibility** – is organization able to use its relationships with stakeholders to sustain itself through crises and change
7. **Sustainability** – embracing highest ethical standards in their relationships with stakeholders.

The author then sets forth how leaders can move their organizations towards creating this culture.

This is a two page article that provides a simple checklist of activities which can help one determine if they exhibit the attributes of an effective, or ineffective, boss. Many of those attributes involve the virtues of honesty, truthfulness, fairness and the Golden Rule that are expressed in the Wendt Initiative. A good tool to use in teaching prospective managers what subordinates value in a leader.


This is a review of over 150 studies which shows that there is a clear consistency between spiritual values and practices and effective leadership. Values that have long been considered spiritual ideals, such as integrity, honesty, and humility, have been demonstrated to have an effect on leadership success. Practices traditionally associated with spirituality as demonstrated in daily life have also been shown to be connected to leadership effectiveness. The following practices have been emphasized in both spiritual and leadership teachings: showing respect for others, demonstrating fair treatment, expressing caring and concern, listening responsively, recognizing the contributions of others and engaging in reflective practice.

Reaves indicates that research found that the clergy held a view of the modern corporation which reflected a suspicion of selfishness, greed and disgust while recognizing their function was a necessary one. Business leaders on the other hand felt that clergy were out of touch and unrealistic. This article points out that there is a clear consistency between the values and practices emphasized in many different spiritual teachings and the values and practices of effective leaders.

Most articles on mission statements are directed toward a business application but this one is exclusively devoted to the development of a personal mission statement. A step by step approach is provided which recognizes many of us struggle with balancing career and family. The reader is challenged to begin the process by creating a vision of what you want to accomplish. Goals then need to be set for both career and family. The next step is to closely scrutinize one’s major values, competencies and needs. Since this process impacts family members, a consensus must be arrived at by them. The results of all this should be recorded, then implemented and progress monitored.
Internet Sites:

Using a Personal Mission Statement to Chart Your Career Course

Quintessential Careers.Com
by Katharine Hansen

http://www.quintcareers.com/mission_statements.html

Are You Living on Purpose? Personal Mission Statement Exercises

Quintessential Careers.Com