



**OBTC 2015 at University of La Verne
June 17th – 20th, 2015**

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

- * Remove all identifying properties from this document **
- * All files must be saved in PDF format **
- *Please include ALL supplementary text at the end of this document**
- *Only one document should be submitted**

Submission Template for the 2015 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators

1) Title of Proposal:

Does Political Correctness Dictate How We Teach Ethical Decision Making?

2) Abstract:

In my OB class, students are assigned a business leader to study. They are required to research the leader's background, personality, motivation and leadership styles, and finally to discuss any history of ethical problems. When discussing ethical issues, many students concentrate on the leaders' position on such issues as climate change, same-sex marriage, animal rights, and personal lifestyle rather than the traditional ethical decision criteria such as duty, honor, utilitarianism, and justice. In this session we will examine several cases, each of which presents a dilemma that requires participants to weigh what is right against what is popular or politically correct.

3) Keywords:

- Ethics
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Political Correctness
- Moral Reasoning.

4) Format

- Activity or exercise
 Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)
 General discussion session

5) Time Requested:

- 30 Minutes
 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
 90 Minutes

6) Planning Details:

Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?

- A seminar-style room with a "round table" or moveable chairs
- A chalk board or a white board

7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:

What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?

To develop a framework for ethical decision making in the workplace and the community at large. Specifically to consider the following:

- Can we teach ethical reasoning as distinct from popular opinion (the sunshine rule)?
- Are there moral absolutes that should dictate our ethical decision making?
- In a community of learners, should the instructor impose his or her values (progressive or conservative) on the students?

8) Management or Teaching Topics:

Describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Please include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

- Business Ethics
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Business in Society

9) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? What activities will you facilitate, how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session. Include a timeline for your session.

1. I will distribute abstracts from recent papers in which students discuss ethical issues related to business leaders they have studied – including Richard Branson (Virgin Group), Marissa Mayer (Yahoo), Sheryl Sandberg (Facebook), Truett Cathy (Chick-fil-A), and Michael O'Leary (Ryan Air).
2. We will discuss these issues, identifying the ethical reasoning displayed by the students

3. Small groups will analyze three or four cases (one per group) that describe a scenario with conflicting moral and/or controversial dimensions.
4. Reporting back, the roundtable will try to reach a consensus on the conflict between teaching ethical decision making in a society that may dictate alternate actions

10) For Activities and Exercises:

Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions. Evidence for effectiveness may also be included.

- Four short cases are attached:

11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:

What is the contribution of your session?

- It is essential that business students, in fact all students, be exposed to issues that have an ethical dimension. Some programs have a stand-alone business ethics course, while others intertwine a discussion on ethical decision making throughout the curriculum. I prefer the latter whereby students can examine ethical issues in context of their coursework – finance, marketing, management, economics, information systems, etc.
- Instructors not trained in ethics may be tempted to introduce their personal biases in leading class discussions. Also I have encountered many textbooks that advocate the “sunshine rule” for addressing ethical decision making. The sunshine rule asks the question: “If my decision was reported on the front page of tomorrow’s newspaper for all my family and friends to see, would I be embarrassed? If so, then that decision would be unethical.” This descriptive approach to ethical decision making implies that ethical issues should be determined by a Gallup-type poll, or otherwise referred to as situational ethics.
- For teachers, this has significant implications. We are all influenced by popular culture, and are sometime pressured to be “politically correct in our opinions and public statements. I believe it is essential that we consider our alternatives in light of traditional moral reasoning and ethical theory. Each of the cases I will introduce at this session will encourage participants to examine their own biases and cultural values, but also ethical theory.

12) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of Learning in Community?

- In a community of learners, each of us (instructors and students) arrives with certain values and beliefs about what is right and what is wrong. Sometime these values and beliefs may be inconsistent with the prevailing norms of the community. Our intent as instructors should not be to mold everyone's values and beliefs to correspond to the prevailing norms but to encourage participants to contribute their ideas so that they can be examined freely. This will lead to a more diverse and enlightening debate.

13) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?

- No. This is something I have wrestled with in in recent years while reading student papers and would value input from colleagues on this issue.

14) References and/or Additional Materials:

- Four case scenerios are attached:
 - Case #1 – Animal Rights
 - Case #2 – Foreign Aid
 - Case #3 – Women's Health
 - Case "4 – Rewards & Punishment

Case #1 – Animal Rights

Suzanne has two part-time jobs:

1. She sells advertising for local weekly newspaper where she is paid a base salary plus a commission based on the dollar value of the advertising revenue she generates. Most weeks the newspaper “breaks even” with advertising revenue and sales covering the costs of producing the paper. The bulk of its profits are made during holiday seasons (Presidents’ Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) when more ad space is sold.
2. Her other job is at an animal shelter where she cares for neglected animals and seeks to place them with loving families. She is passionate about animal rights – rescuing abandoned and abused animals, lobbying against the use of animals in product testing, and promoting a vegetarian lifestyle.

Yesterday a major retail store contacted her about placing a two-page color advertisement in three issues prior to Christmas. She was ecstatic until she learned that the store will be featuring fur coats and leather accessories in their advertisements.

Case #2 – Foreign Aid

Mikel does not consider himself to be “religious” but he is proud of his Jewish heritage. As a senior in high school he traveled to Israel on the Birthright program. In college and in law school he was active in Hillel. Now four years out of law school he is an associate with a Washington DC law firm. His law firm specialized in government affairs, representing many foreign nations which are seeking trade concessions, military assistance, and foreign aid from the federal government.

Today Mikel’s supervising partner informed him that the firm has received a proposal from a possible client to lobby the State Department for increased foreign aid. The client is a nation that has a history of anti-Semitism, and whose President has declared that Israel should be bombed off the face of the earth. If the firm contracts with this client, this partner will be the primary attorney assigned to the contract.

Case #3 – Women’s Health

Abigail graduated from college with a marketing degree and is employed at a public relations firm. Over the past twelve years, she has successfully developed PR campaigns for a variety of national clients, for example companies with crisis management problems, and politicians seeking to promote a favorable image prior to seeking national office.

Abigail has a genuine religious commitment and expresses this by contributing significantly to pro-life organizations and as a volunteer counselor at the local crisis pregnancy center.

Yesterday she was given a new assignment – to prepare a PR campaign for a statewide women’s health organization. Abigail’s research indicates that over 80% of the organization’s revenue comes from abortion-related services, with the balance from the sale of contraceptives and sex-education materials supplied to school districts.

Case #4 – Rewards & Punishment

William is the manager of a group of financial advisors at a mutual fund company based in New York. His staff does a lot of its work out in the field, meeting directly with customers to develop appropriate investment plans for achieving their financial goals. The relationship between the financial advisor and the client is critical for the long-term success and profitability of the firm. This relationship must be based on mutual trust and respect.

The financial advisors receive a base salary but a major portion of their overall compensation comes from sales commissions. For his financial advisors, William sets specific sales targets that they are expected to meet. Failure to do so on a consistent basis leads to disciplinary action or termination.

The environment of the firm clearly stresses the importance of prospecting customers and selling as a core activity. Recently, it has come to William’s attention that some of his advisors have been using high-pressure sales tactics on retired individuals in order to get them to invest in high-risk mutual funds that generate large commissions for themselves. The problem here is that the very aggressive and volatile high-risk mutual funds are generally not a good investment option for retired people.