\

OBTC

Teaching Conference for
Management Educators

SUBMISSION: **Teaching Business Ethics: Making it Personal**

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

Teaching Business Ethics: Making it Personal

The students of today have witnessed a cascade of unethical and unlawful business behavior, ranging from insider trading to credit card meltdown and governance misbehavior. While students indicate that ethical training is essential and should be expected as part of a complete education, there is much debate as to how ethics should be taught. In this workshop we introduce the Reflective Ethics in Action portfolio project as a vehicle to engage students in exploration and reflection concerning their personal ethical values and how they relate to ethical behavior in the professional arena.

Keywords: ethics, ethical decision making, business education, reflective learning

2) Format
 _x_ Activity or exercise
 __ Roundtable discussion (60 minute only)
 __ General discussion session

2a) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for
 __ A traditional classroom
 __ An online class
 _x_ Either

2b) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for
 __ Undergraduate students
 __ Graduate students
 _x_ Either

3) Time Requested:
 __ 30 Minutes
 _x_ 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
 __ 90 Minutes

4) Planning Details:
Each room contains a white board with markers, computer (PC) with DVD capability and computer projector. Does your session require any other equipment?
  Flip charts and markers.

5) Teaching Implications:

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business' (AACSB) international accreditation standards have long required that ethics be taught as part of the business degree curricula. Yet, while some schools have innovated with strategies for ethics curricula, the AACSB notes that the time has come for business schools to renew their commitment to the centrality and critical nature of ethics education (AACSB Ethics Education Task Force, 2004). In fact, business ethics (including corporate social responsibility) has seen a 37.5% growth in coverage in business schools in a recent 5 year period from 2008 to 2013 (Davis, 2014).

Ethics is often added as a topic into a rigid curriculum that in and of itself does not naturally cause students to engage in critical self-reflection or to engage in action oriented self-regulation. This is especially disquieting, according to Freeman, Stewart & Moriarty (2009) because the very foundations of business education are often entangled with unacknowledged and, therefore, uncontested assumptions about fundamental human nature and the purpose of business. Furthermore, professors are pressed to teach so many content topics in a limited amount of time, that it is often too difficult to teach ethics in a profoundly meaningful manner.

The Reflective Ethics in Action project was designed with the goal of broadening students' view of ethics through reflection and positive self-regulation. Drawing on the fundamental theories self-regulation (Higgins, 1997) and Kurt Lewin's theory of change (Lewin, 1951), we have designed an assignment that obliges students to engage in deeply reflective learning about their own personal and professional ethics. The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy of learning (Bloom et al 1956) identifies four domains of knowledge: factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive or self-regulated. (Krathwohl, 2002). This self-regulated metacognitive learning is the key to the ethics project developed. The concept of self-regulation comprises the cognitive, emotional, motivational and temperamental processes that are active when an individual works toward achieving a goal, such as acting ethically. While self-regulation may sound like an abstract concept, it is "concretely visible" in the vast differences in the ways people form their viewpoints and work to carry them out in spite of barriers they may encounter along the way (Mischel, Cantor & Feldman, 1996)." This can be seen in ethical controversies such as working conditions in overseas factories, challenges to the use of electronic encryption, and the responsibility of the business community with regard to global climate.

The concept of metacognitive self-regulated learning being achieved through a process of self-awareness has also been discussed in terms of the reflective practitioner or student (Schon, 1983) and reflective executive development (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003; Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Roglio, 2006). What is similar across these approaches in that all involve knowledge in general, followed by knowledge about one's own thinking, and a desire to pursue outcomes in a way that is in accordance with personal preferences, in this case, their own ethical preferences or guides. Positive self-regulation only occurs when one is using a strategy that is true to natural inclination, such as a personal ethical guide, but then adapted to the situation one is experiencing.

To create change, one can increase the forces pushing for change, decrease the forces preventing change, or some combination of both. Lewin (1947; 1951) suggested that modifying the restraining forces produces less tension and resistance than increasing the driving forces. We as educators have spent so much time telling students "why" it is important to be ethical, yet this assignment allows us to recognize that most people want to be good, they just need us to help them learn "how" to get some of the restraining forces out of the way. We give heed to the notion that there are both driving and restraining forces for change, and the unfreezing step is where educators need to create a sense of internal urgency such that we are willing to examine the embedded issues that have made our principles built to last. Research indicates that simply by causing students to consider their ethical stance, we make it more likely that they will act in a manner that is congruent with their ethics in the future (Taylor-Bianco & Deeter-Schmelz, 2007).

In order to guide the reflection, we have students read the book *There's No Such Thing as "Business" Ethics* by John C. Maxwell. As they work through each chapter, students are asked to reflect upon how the topics presented relate to their own lives.* The learning objectives for the Reflective Ethics in Action project include:

- Identifying student's own personal ethical values via reflection
- Evaluating the impact of these personal values when facing an ethical dilemma in a professional setting
- Developing a "professional" individual code of ethics
- Identifying how personal and professional ethics converge

*References available upon request.

6) Session Description and Plan:

Session participants will participate in an abridged version of the exercise. It begins with a mini-case that presents an ethical dilemma. Participants debate whether the decision involves personal or business ethics for the decision maker.

Participants will then read a short chapter of the book "There's No Such Thing as Business Ethics" by John C. Maxwell. They will then take ten minutes to answer a question about the reading, and discuss their answers within their groups.

The remainder of the session will walk the participants through an outline of the rest of the assignment, highlighting reflection points and identifying best practices and potential pitfalls based on the authors' experience with the project.

The last item on the agenda is a wrap up of participant experiences. Having gone through and identified their personal ethical values, they will be asked to reflect on how they express or live these values within their professional lives. As business faculty, we provide the ethical examples for our students in their formative years. Reflection and self-regulation apply to us as well.

7) Application to Conference theme:

Much of the work we do in our classrooms rightly has to do with academic and discipline-based knowledge. The Reflective Ethics in Action project seeks to be a vehicle for personal growth and a catalyst for behavioral change. Business ethics has been recognized as both lacking and sorely needed. Ethics principles and ethical behaviors drive positive outcomes, both for the individual and for the community in which they live.

8) Unique Contribution to OBTC:
This work has not been presented before and is not under review elsewhere.