

Ethics Exercise



Purpose

This is a great management activity designed to stimulate thoughts about what may appear to be the best course of action is not always so. What might appear as an 'open and shut case' can sometimes need more thought given to it prior to making any firm decisions. People need to be aware of the impact of their decisions and whether these decisions are seen as ethical. This activity aims to highlight this principle in a light-hearted manner. The activity is good for management development or courses that cover leadership, negotiations and managing change.

Timings

20 minutes (although this can be increased in necessary).

Instructions

- Do not explain the rationale of this activity until it is finished.
- Split delegates into pairs or groups.
- Print off enough of the ethics exercise handout that follows and give a copy to each pair or group.
- Ask each pair or group to answer each question and be prepared to explain the reasoning.
- Tell them they have 10 minutes to answer both questions.
- After 10 minutes ask for the answers from the groups and generate a discussion about how they arrived at their conclusions.
- If time permits record the common answers on the flipchart.
- Use the discussion points to assist you when discussing the group's answers.
- Finish the activity by giving the answers to the two questions to the whole group – (shown below).



Discussion points

- How difficult was it to answer the questions?
- Did you feel comfortable with your answers?
- Did everyone in the group/pair agree with the choices made? If not why did some group members (or one half of the pair) disagree?
- How did you overcome this difference of opinion?
- Relating this to your own working environment what have you learnt from this activity that can be applied back at work?

Answers (Event Leader only)

- The answer to the abortion question is ... if you had said yes you would have just killed Beethoven
- The answer to question 2
 1. Candidate A is Franklin D Roosevelt
 2. Candidate B is Winston Churchill
 3. Candidate C is Adolph Hitler



Ethics Exercise Handout

Two ethical questions:

Question 1:

If you knew a woman who was pregnant, who had eight children already, three who were deaf, two who were blind, one mentally retarded, and she had syphilis, would you recommend that she have an abortion?

Write down your honest answer explaining your reasons and go to question 2.

Question 2:

It is time to elect the world leader, and yours is the deciding vote. Here are the facts about the three leading candidates:

Candidate A:

He associates with crooked politicians, and consults with astrologers. He's had two mistresses. He also chain smokes and drinks up to ten Martinis a day

Candidate B:

He was ejected from office twice, sleeps until noon, used opium in college and drinks large amounts of whiskey every evening

Candidate C:

He is a decorated war hero. He's a vegetarian, doesn't smoke, drinks an occasional beer and hasn't had any extra-marital affairs

Which of these candidates would be your choice? Write down your choice explaining your reasons for that choice and the reasons for neglecting the other two?