

The Workplace as a Testing Ground for Moral Decision-Making

In my experience, most people do not recognize a moral dilemma if it hits them in the face. However we choose to label them, however, most of us face hard decisions about right and wrong at least several times a day.

Given that we spend about half or more of our waking hours working or thinking about work, it should be no surprise that work is a minefield of hard choices:

- Will you tell your superior that you disagree with him/her, even if it will create job risk for you?
- Should you own up to being late on a project and risk losing trust?
- Will you confront an antagonistic coworker and risk being embroiled in a conflict?
- Should you respond to someone who is slandering your company and risk fanning the flames, or should you let the fire burn out and do nothing?
- Will you let a coworker get away with bending the truth, or will you expose yourself to criticism as a moral puritan for calling him/her out?
- Should you revise your strategy based on new information, even when it will hurt the confidence of your team?
- Will you defer to someone with more experience than you, even when doing so will harm your ego and your esteem in the eyes of others?

You can face all of these decision points in a single day. You have countless opportunities to choose right over wrong. And those choices are significant – they affect not just your livelihood, but the livelihood of everyone in your company and the wellbeing of everyone which your company’s product serves (and could serve).

Don’t pretend that your work is trivial. Don’t pretend like important decisions can only happen to people other than you. The workplace is a moral testing ground like no other. Use the opportunities every day gives you to recognize and make the right choices.