Ethics and Ethical Conduct

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What is Ethics?

- Well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what people should do and guide the choices they make, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues.

- Ethics refers to a person's ethical standards.

- Ethics also means the continuous effort of understanding and testing our own beliefs and conduct and striving to ensure that we, and the institutions we help to shape, live up to standards that are reasonable and solidly-based.

What should Ethics mean to a Project Manager?

- Managing risks and issues associated with behaviours of people

- Considering the consequences of all actions and decisions, to the fullest extent

- Being able to capture the issues and deal with them as they arise

- Providing a working environment with high levels of trust and openness – how willing people are to speak up?

- Recognising when something isn't right, or just doesn't feel right

- Knowing how people should behave and what changes their behaviours

Risk: *An event or series of events, which on occurring would damage a project or business in terms of cost, schedule or performance*

**Issue**: *A fact that represents a problem that needs to be resolved*

What Changes Behaviours?

3 most prevalent factors in compromising ethical standards:

- Pressure to meet unrealistic objectives and/or deadlines
- The desire to succeed and further one's career
- The desire to protect own position and livelihood

Consider these statements and their impacts:

- *We will just have to make do with what we've got*
- *I don't care what it takes, just get it done*
- *If it gets us to where we want to be, just do it*
- *I am fed up with hearing nothing but bad news*
- *You're going to have to convince me that this issue is real and that I should care*
- *Management/the Customer really isn't going to like it, but it's your call*
- *I'm sure we can find a way around this for now, no-one needs to know until after we've fixed it*
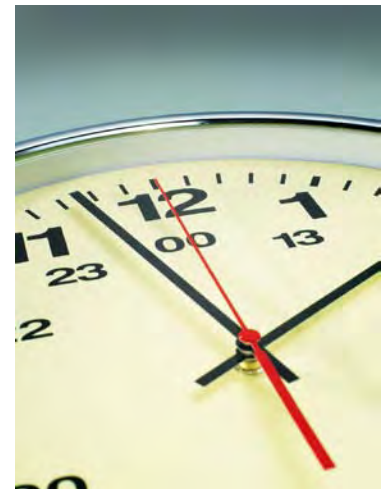
How do Behaviours Change?

- Unnecessary risk-taking, shortcuts and lack of considering the consequences

- Mistakes will be made as people are hurried, hassled and even harassed

- People get "creative" – not all improvements are good ones, no matter the intent

- People will start to rationalise dilemmas based on benefits outweighing harm – but will act inappropriately to realise those benefits, even lie and deny

- Issues go underground as the messengers are being shot for delivering bad news

- Important considerations, such as Conflicts of Interest are overlooked, if recognised

What can the Programme Manager Do?

- Do what you say, say what you do

- Ensure that everyone understands the standards expected

- Set and demonstrate those standards through your own actions

- Provide a number of communication channels for raising concerns and a defined one for escalating issues

- Create an environment of openness, build trust

- Don't lose sight of achievement and successes, no matter how small, amongst the perceived failings

- Know who your "people people" are, and use them

- Test your own logic and reasoning – have others test and challenge it

It can happen to you - Failing is okay, Failure is not

Questions