

Ethics: The Four Views of Ethics (Multinational)

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SUBJECT(S): Management

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, students will address the four viewpoints of ethics. Students will read “Get Me Rewrite: What’s Next for Murdoch’s Media Empire?” then apply these viewpoints to News Corp to analyze the ways in which ethics may be addressed.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Management, V. Ethics And Social Responsibility

≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Volkswagen’s Smog-filled Scandal”](#)
- [“Thinking Ethically and Philosophically About the Decisions Companies Make”](#)
- [“The Secret Life of Internet Trolls”](#)
- [“The Migration Crisis and the Future for the European Union”](#)
- [“Peggy Bishop Lane on Why Accounting Is the Language of Business”](#)
- [“Fighting for Environmental Justice”](#)
- [“Educator Toolkit: Exploring Ethics”](#)
- [“Debate and the Appeal of Opposing Views”](#)
- [“Catching Up with Plastic-Straw Crusader Milo Cress”](#)
- [“Career Spotlight: The Future of Journalism”](#)
- [“Career Insight: Thinking about Business Ethics in a Practical Way”](#)

Objectives/Purposes: The purpose of this lesson is for students to comprehend elements of ethics, specifically in the context of business management/competition at the multinational level. Students will be able to make connections at scale, understanding the organizational dynamics of a multinational operation.

Knowledge@Wharton Article: [“Get Me Rewrite: What’s Next for Murdoch’s Media Empire?”](#)

Other Resources/Materials:

For Teachers:

1. Internet Access-if the teacher has internet and can project the screen to the class, this is fine.

Activity:

Introduction (10 mins): Class discussion opener:

The teacher should introduce the concept of ethics. Ask students for a class definition of ethics. Write the class definition on the board then share with students the following definition of ethics as indicated in the Wharton Global Youth Program standards: **“The rules and principles that define right and wrong conduct.”**

Next discuss the four views of ethics with students so they may be acquainted with their definitions. See below:

1. **Utilitarian View:** Ethical decisions are made solely on the basis of their outcomes or consequences such that the greatest good is provided for the greatest number. This view encourages efficiency and productivity and is consistent with the goal of profit maximization.
2. **Rights View:** Concerned with respecting and protecting individual liberties and privacy. This seeks to protect individual rights of conscience, free speech, life and safety, and due process.
3. **The Theory of Justice:** Organizational rules are enforced fairly and impartially and follow all legal rules and regulations.
4. **Integrative Social Contracts Theory:** Ethical decisions should be based on existing ethical norms in industries and communities in order to determine what constitutes right and wrong.

Write these views on the board and have students take these down in notes.

Next, have students get into groups to list real-life examples of each type of view on ethics. For example, a group may list “rule by the majority” as a utilitarian ethic; a group may list a constitutional “bill of rights” or the United Nation’s “universal declaration of human rights” as exemplary of the rights view; a group may list our access to DNA testing/genetic testing as used in criminal proceedings (justice of the peace) trials as an example of a system that embraces a theory of justice view; or a group may list out examples of cultures that must be judged by their own cultural standards, indicative of the integrative social contracts theory.

Teacher may share these examples with students to help them in their own brainstorming. Once groups are completed, have students share their lists and in-group discussions with the whole class.

Guided Reading (10 mins):

Note: Teacher should project article on projector for students to read.

Now, have students read the K@W article: “[Get Me Rewrite: What’s Next for Murdoch’s Media Empire?](#)”

Class Discussion (5 mins):

As a whole class, answer the following questions based on the article.

1. What ethical violations is News Corps accused of?

Answer: *Allegations that journalists working for Murdoch’s publications illegally hacked into the phones of the British royal family, celebrities and ordinary citizens are driving a series of government inquiries into Murdoch’s business operations and his newspapers’ relations with politicians and police.*

2. What is unethical about these allegations?

Answer: *They obtained private information in illegal ways.*

3. What role did corporate culture have in the current situation at News Corps?

Answer: *“Cappelli points out that journalism, in general, gives individuals more leeway to make judgments about how they do their work than in many other businesses. In an industry without clear written rules and procedures, corporate culture becomes an even more defining factor, according to Cappelli. ‘My sense is that the culture [at News Corp.] is one where, for good or bad, breaking norms is something that was reasonably tolerated and probably even celebrated.’”*

4. How might this ethics scandal affect journalism?

Answer: *journalistic reforms for the industry.*

Exploration Activity (15 mins): Ethics

Have students break into four groups. Each group will be assigned one of the four views of ethics discussed in the beginning of the lesson. Each group will analyze the ethics scandal of News Corps through the lens of their particular ethical view. Then student groups will come together as a whole class to report their findings and engage in a whole class discussion about the view points of ethics.

Group Questions (See [Worksheet I](#)):

1. Using your ethical viewpoint, do you believe that News Corp violated an ethical code? Support your belief with evidence from the article.
2. Under your ethical viewpoint, who is responsible for enforcing ethics violations? (i.e., the people, the government, the company, the individual, etc)
3. Create a plan to ensure that ethics violations of this kind do not happen again, using your ethical lens. Do new rules or norms need to be established? Who will establish these norms or rules? How will these rules and norms be enforced?
4. In the context of a multinational corporation, consider the following: Ethics can differ depending on the country or local context of the situation. What may be ethical in one place or situation might be grossly unethical in another context. Using your ethical view point, how can a company ensure that they are always acting within ethical boundaries as the country and context shift depending on where they are conducting business?

Whole class discussion questions to follow group presentations on ethical views:

1. Why are ethics important?
2. Are there universal ethical standards? If so what are they?
3. After looking at ethics through the different viewpoints, which view point do you ascribe to? Why?
4. What should the role of ethics be in society?

Closing (5 mins):

Use this time to answer questions and clarify points of confusion.

Tying It All Together: This lesson plan can stand alone or the teacher may wish to visit other Wharton Global Youth Program lesson plans that highlight ethics and social responsibility considerations at other levels of organization (i.e., local, national, multinational, etc.).

Ethics and Social Responsibility are subsumed within the greater umbrella of Business Management, including but not limited to:

- Theories of Management
- Five Management Functions
- Business Organization
- Personal Management Skills
- Human Resource Management
- Technology and Information Management
- Financial Decision Making
- Operations Management

Practice Outside of the Classroom: Students may wish to research multinational companies that have had ethical violations and determine how these violations affected the company's bottom line.