

The Five P's Of Ethical Power

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Introduction

In our daily activities particularly in our relationship with others, we are often confronted with making one decision or the other. We may make good decisions, which may bring joy to us, or we may make bad decisions, which may bring sadness and regrets. In order to continuously maintain good moral and ethical standards at all times, we shall now learn the five core principles of ethical decision-making. These principles, otherwise known as the Five P's of Ethical Power are - Purpose, Pride, Patience, Persistence and Perspective.

Purpose:

This means an objective or intention - something towards which one is always striving. Purpose is different from goal. A goal is something tangible, i.e., something definite one can accomplish. It has a beginning and an end. A purpose is on-going. It gives meaning and definition to our lives. For example, living by your word, doing what you say you are going to do or raising responsible children are purpose. In other words, a purpose is a particular road you choose to travel while a goal is one of the places you intend to visit on that road.

One's attitude towards ethics and morality is part of one's purpose. This is because there is greater chance that one will do the morally right thing if being ethical is part of one's purpose - that is if he pictures himself as an ethical person.

One of the best ways to help one stick to his purpose is to use the mirror test. Can you look at yourself in the mirror without guilty? When you do what is right, you can look yourself straight in the eye. But when you disregard your purpose

and do something that you know is wrong, you would not feel good about yourself. No matter how much you rationalize your action, you will feel uncomfortable.

Purpose makes you see yourself as being an ethically sound person, who allow his conscience to guide him.

Pride: This is a sense of satisfaction that one gets from one's accomplishments as well as those of the people he cares about, such as his family or staff.

Pride follows self-esteem. People who have a healthy amount of self-esteem tend to have the strength to do what they know is right even when there are strong pressures to do otherwise.

Self-esteem is the key factor to leading an ethical life.

A sense of inferiority or inadequacy often plays itself out in one or two ways, either of which can impact upon one's ethical behaviour: False pride or self-doubt.

False Pride: This is a negative kind of pride that occurs when people have a distorted image of their own importance. They think that they deserve all the credits, that they are source of all good ideas, that their work is the most important; that they do not need the help of others, etc.

False pride blurs our purpose. What is needed is pride sprinkled with a fair amount of humility. "People with humility do not think less of themselves ... they just think about themselves less".

Self-Doubt: People with self-doubt usually do not like themselves very much and they do not trust their own judgment. As a result, they are driven by a desire to be liked and accepted by others. Such people are not normally morally strong because they have trouble standing up against pressure from others.

Both false pride and self-doubt are the result of feelings of inferiority or lack of self-esteem. Self-doubt comes from lack of self-esteem, but false pride is not necessarily a result of low self-esteem, but an inflated ego.

How one is brought up has a tremendous impact on how one feels about himself. If we grow up in a home where praise, encouragement and caring are the rule,

then we are more likely to learn to appreciate and respect others, and to have confidence in ourselves. Confidence in one's self gives one the strength to make good ethical decisions despite pressures to act otherwise.

What is needed is a strong sense of balance. If we have balance, we will have the self-confidence to be steadfast when confronted by difficult ethical situations.

Patience: With a clear purpose and our ego under control, the third principle necessary for sound ethical behaviour is patience. It is difficult to have patience in today's world of mad rush for gratification. Jumping into conclusion without giving a second thought to what one does is a perfect example of being impatient.

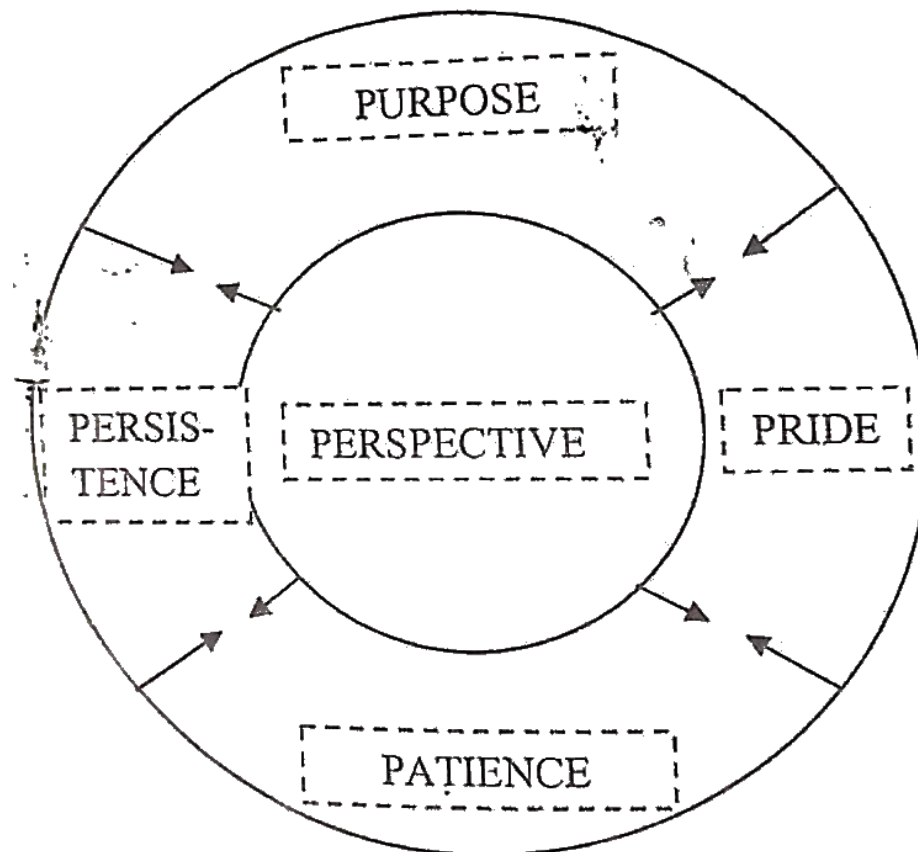
Similarly, the mad rush on our highways and urban roads, our total disregard for traffic rules, our desire to get done today even those things that could have waited for another day, etc. all result to being impatient. These do not accord with ethical rules, which also prescribe self-control as one of the ingredients of good ethical behaviour. Being patient always leads to good decision. Even if it costs one in the short run to be patient, it will pay off in the long run.

Persistence: In the context of ethical behaviour, persistence means sticking to what you believe is right. It is keeping your commitment and making your actions consistent with your guiding principles. Being an ethical person means behaving ethically all the time not when it is convenient. It is especially important to act ethically when it is inconvenient or unpopular to do so. We must be able to distinguish between commitment and interest. When we are interested. But when we are committed to doing something, we accept no excuses - but results. When we are committed, we find ways to suppress our rationalizations. Even when it is inconvenient, we keep our moral commitment. Persistence is an indispensable tool of ethical conduct.

Nothing can take its place. Persistence and determination are omnipotent. Perspective: This is capacity to see what is really important in any given situation. We must live according to our purpose, values and ethical belief.

Time management is essential. Always be thoughtful and do only things that are very relevant. Every problem can be solved if you take some quiet time to reflect, seek guidance and put things into perspective.

The five P s are illustrated in a wheel to show the interrelationship between them. Perspective is the hub around which the other four P's rotate.



The Five Principles of Ethical Power for Individuals

Purpose: You see yourself as being an ethically sound person. You let your conscience be your guide. No matter what happens, you are always able to face the mirror, look yourself straight in the eye, and feel good about yourself.

Pride: You feel good about yourself; you do not need the acceptance of other people to feel important. A balanced self-esteem keeps your ego and your desire to be accepted from influencing your decisions.

Patience: You believe that things will eventually work out well. You do not need everything to happen right now. You are at peace with what comes your way.

Persistence: You stick to your purpose, especially when it seems inconvenient to do so. Your behaviour is consistent with your intentions. As Winston Churchill said, 'Never' 'Never' 'Never'

Perspective: You take time to enter each day quietly in a mood of reflection. This helps to get yourself focused and allows you to listen to your inner self and to see things more clearly. These principles offer all that is needed to build sound

ethical character. Adhering to their tenets shapes one's focus for the better and enhance organizational image.

Every manager can play an important role in helping his or her organization to create the kind of positive and productive environment that fosters sound ethical decision making and behaviour. However, the full benefit from the way both employee and customers are being treated by the organization and its management. Very well-treated employees, who have undergone sound ethical orientation, are usually committed to the purpose of the organization.

Purpose in organisation is the vision of the organization communicated from the top. Conditions in business today require the emergence of a new leadership with high principles. One of the most desirable leadership qualities is integrity.

Pride in organization is a reflection of how people feel about the organization they work for. Thus, peoples' negative feelings about their organization are at the root of unethical behaviour. If people feel appreciated, they are more likely to resist temptation to act unethically. If they are proud of their company and what it represents, people will fight to maintain integrity in the organization. When that occurs, it is proof that the organization's purpose or mission is working on a daily basis.

One of the greatest attributes of an ethical minded person is doing things right all the time, no matter the situation. There must be the ability to resist pressures, particularly when one is being urged to do the wrong thing. Some organizations are set up to accentuate the negative and to catch people doing things wrong rather than right. This is true of most workplaces, and it is not a pleasant or productive way to treat employees. It does not build people's self-esteem or organization pride.

To build pride in organizations, one needs to emphasis what people are doing right. When that is done, the enhanced self-esteem and organizational pride foster sound, ethical decision-making and behaviour.

Furthermore, patience is very important. Patience in organization involves trusting that your values and beliefs are right over the long term. For management, this means focusing on long-term aspects of the business, such as the quality of your product or service and the strength of your relationships with customers, suppliers, and the community in which you conduct business, not just on short-term bottom-line results. For nonmanagement personnel, patience

means being dedicated to doing a good job and knowing that such dedication will ultimately get you to where you want to go in the organization. For all employees, patience means investing energy and adhering to the overall purpose and agreed-upon policies and procedures of the organization.

In analyzing any organization, it is important to separate the result (for example, profits) from the process (that is, how you decide to operate and treat people while attempting to achieve your goals and objectives). Sound ethical practices occur in organizations where the previously agreed-upon decision-making process is not compromised or bypassed to achieve desired results. Managing only for profit is like playing tennis with your eye on the scoreboard and not the ball. Not that if you do not keep your eye on the ball, you may not get much on the scoreboard.

Without reasonable results an organization will collapse. At the same time. While results are essential, they alone are not sufficient. If the established process is not followed because of impatience in achieving results, those results may be short-lived. If you take shortcuts to save money at the expense of producing a quality product, or if you show a lack of concern for the long-term interests of your employees or customers, the shortsightedness will cause the organization to fail. Customers will discover that your product lacks quality and will not buy other products your company makes. Employees may start to engage in dysfunctional behaviour like lying or stealing, thus trying to undermine the company in an effort to 'get even'.

Most ethical deterioration you find in an organization can be traced to impatience in attaining goals and objectives. That impatience compromise customer and employee satisfaction and begins a negative cycle that effects results.

Impatience is the villain that so often drives people off course. What is needed in organization is faith to stick to the values we ultimately believe in and trust that in the long run we will accomplish our objectives.

Persistence in organization involves consistently adhering to the ethical standards and vision that the organization has established. It also means that management who do not persistently uphold established standards of ethical behaviour are not held accountable for their lack of commitment. And without accountability, positive or negative consequences of actions or inactions, any policy or programme is apt to fail.

In organizations that have not established Ethics Code and Standards of Behaviour policy, it is common practice for many employees to accept gifts from individuals they worked with outside the company. But where Ethics Code is in practice, employees do not accept gifts of any kind from customers, visitors, suppliers, contractors, and similar individuals when such gifts could influence a current or future business decision.

Perspective in organisation occurs when key members of the organisation take time to assess and reflect on where the organisation is, where it is going, and how it is going to get there. At an organisational level this means taking adequate time for strategic planning and analysis of past and current performance. By doing this the organisation is deliberately laying the foundation for future success. It is always better to spend more time planning, reflecting and involving people up front before making any final decision.

There must also be balance between planning and implementation and between reflection and action.

Achieving perspective entails making it a priority to set aside time to monitor the organization's well-being. It is like taking the pulse of the organization. It is a matter of avoiding doing things so fast that you not know whether or not you are doing the right thing.

Perspective in companies or departments involves making sure that what you say is in line with what you actually do. If you actually check for such agreement, the organization is more apt to stay on course toward achieving desired goals. In other words, organizational perspective can make a significant and positive difference.

Finally, the Five Principles (P's) of Ethical Power are all there is about Code of Ethics or Standards of Conduct Policy. They should serve as the pedestal upon which ethical practice revolves. Their teachings should be internalized and manifested in our business and corporate practices.

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