



Ethics Live! Roleplay and Practice in Responding to Real Violations

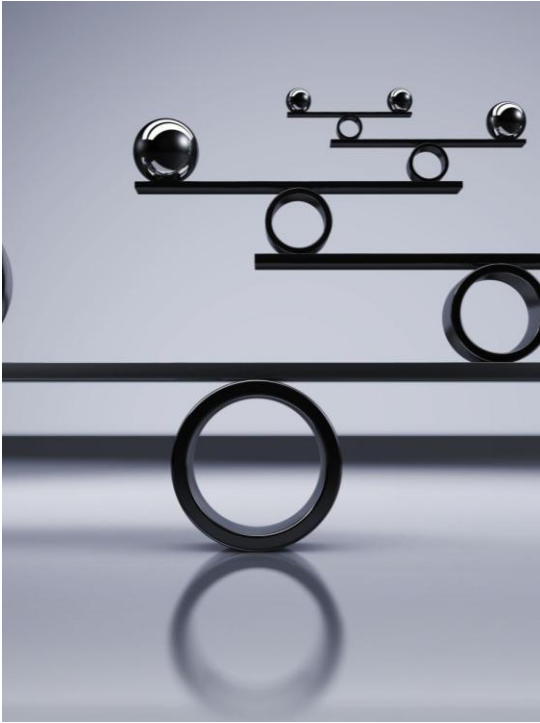
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Learning Objectives

- Analyze reported ethical violations in context with an established decision matrix and code of ethics
- Apply sound ethical principles in the analysis of reported violations
- Critique elements of the process and code of ethics policies used to respond to reported ethical violations

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Morality versus Ethics

- Morality
 - Beliefs about right and wrong conduct
- Ethics
 - Set of established principles or rules of conduct
- Moral awareness
 - Ability to recognize that a situation raises ethical issues

Why talk about ethics?

- Maintain trust
- Prevent misconduct
- Promote accountability
- Enhance professional reputation
- Legal compliance
- Build a positive culture

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ASAE Standards of Conduct

- Respect and uphold public laws that govern one's work
- Champion Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Be honest in conducting the member's business
- Respect the confidentiality of information gained through one's work
- Act fairly
- Foster an ethical culture through one's work
- Take responsibility for one's conduct

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ASAE Aspirational Ethical Concepts

Respect

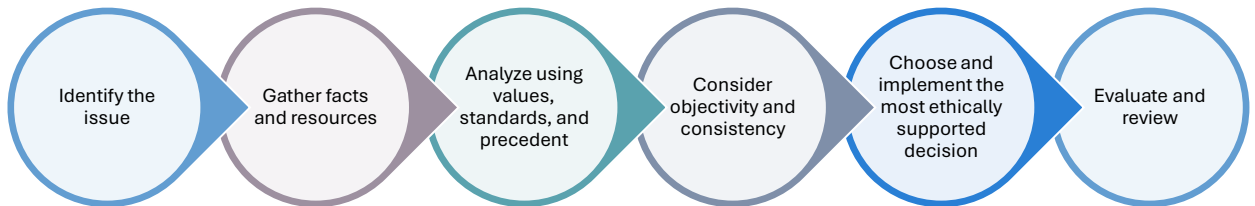
Responsibility

Justice

Honesty

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Ethical Decision-Making Model



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Case Analysis



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Who's involved?

- Executive Director (ED) for 1 year
 - Board Chair and Members
 - ED weekly calls with Board Chair
 - ED monthly calls with Executive Committee (EC)
 - ED is charged with implementing protective policies
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Code of Ethics

- Outlined requirements for leaders when representing the association
- Passed by the Board and sent to leaders in the organization for signatures

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Implementation Challenges

- Majority of association leaders signed the code
- Journal editor expressed concerns
 - ED, Board Chair, and Editor met to discuss
 - Editor refused to sign the policy and asked for revisions

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Decision Point #1

- The best action at this point is to:
 - Make the recommended revisions
 - Take the recommended revisions to the Board for consideration
 - Reject the recommended revisions
 - Consult with the organization's legal counsel

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Board Consideration

- Recommendations were provided to the EC
 - EC did not approve, legal counsel agreed
 - Most of the association's leaders had already signed the original code
 - Recommended revisions were too minor
 - Recommended revisions were too editorial-role specific
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Solutions Presented



- Board Chair offered an addendum to the Code to the editor
 - Addressed role-specific issues
 - Editor refused to sign
 - Board Chair discussed the issue at the next Board meeting
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Consequences

- Majority of the board members agreed that Code should be signed, one abstained
 - 2 Board members not present at the Board meeting later met with the Editor and expressed support of Editor's requests
- After months of no resolution:
 - Editor resigned via email (prominent members copied)
 - Asked members to boycott membership in protest

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Taking it to the Streets

- The resignation letter was posted on social media
- Two board members who aligned with Editor resigned Board positions

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Decision Point #2

- The most appropriate actions at this time include:
 - Engage with a crisis communications firm
 - Withdraw the Code of Ethics and reconvene subcommittee
 - Launch a social media campaign
 - Consult with legal counsel

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Board Action

- Board stayed firm on the Code and convened a Town Hall to address member concerns
- Prior to the scheduled Town Hall, the Board Chair received a cease-and-desist letter, indicating an impending lawsuit
- ED secured a crisis communications firm

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Crisis Communication Advice

- Be cautious about how much is said in the Town Hall
 - Event is recorded for members to view afterward
- Disable participant microphones during Town Hall
 - Limit liability for broadcasting negative comments about the Editor

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After the Town Hall...

- Disabled microphones aggravated the situation
- Large numbers of members refused to renew their membership in protest
- Social media posts called for ED's resignation

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Decision Point #3

- At this time, the most appropriate action is to...
 - Cease all contact with disgruntled members
 - Cease all communication about this issue
 - Create new talking points for members and external audiences
 - Reinforce messaging from town hall in future member communications

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Case Resolution

- Interim editor appointed to serve remainder of Editor's term
- Taskforce appointed to review the situation and provide report to membership
- ED remains in their position at the organization

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Key Points

- Regularly addressing ethics allows for creating a strong foundation for the association and its members
- An established framework is important for developing ethically-supported decisions
- Reflecting on situations involving ethical issues can help develop policies to avoid violations in the future

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Action Items



Download: ASAE's **NEW** Standards and Ethics Toolkit with decision-making framework



Review and Update: Your code of ethics & policies



Read: Why the Association CEO Should Serve as Chief Ethics Officer



Read: Setting Up a Cycle for Updating Your Code of Ethics

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