

Topic Paper #1 – Elevating Ethical Consciousness in an Organizational Context

Lenny Collado

20:831:515:90 ETHICAL CHALLENGES

James Davy

03.25.2024

As a newly appointed Executive Director of a governmental or nonprofit community-based (CBO) organization, cultivation of a strong ethical culture (Johnson 2018) is paramount. (This coming from someone with the purview of & experience of social work for the last ten years.) Several strategies can be taken to elevate ethical consciousness of all employees within an organization. By implementing a leading by example, maintaining & communicating clear expectations, providing ongoing trainings, establishing open communication channels, integrating ethics into performance management, developing an ethical code of conduct, & promotes a culture of transparency, an organization of the one proposed can strengthen its ethical foundation & effectively serve its community.

Importance of ethical consciousness in government & in CBOs.

Ethical consciousness in governmental & in CBOs cannot be overstated (Maak & Pless, as cited in Johnson 2018; Barrett & Fry 2008). Maintaining ethical standards for example helps organizations avoid legal & compliance issues that originate from unethical practices or behaviors (Johnson 2018). Ethical conduct safeguards an organization's reputations from potential damage (Cooper 2012), i.e. financial, moral, etc., crucial for maintaining trust & support. Ethical behavior builds stronger relationships with stakeholders, including clients, partners, & volunteers, enhancing trust & connection (Maak & Pless, as cited in Johnson 2018). An ethical workplace promotes thoughtful & principled decision-making (Johnson 2018; Barrett & Fry 2008), resulting in more informed & responsible choices. Nonprofits that prioritize ethics are more likely to attract & keep financial & other supports in place, as funders want to back organizations that demonstrate ethical conduct. Ethical responsibility reinforces alignment between an organization's action, mission, values, enhancing its credibility & impact in the community (Johnson 2018). An ethical workplace contributes to sustainability of nonprofit, establishing a foundation of trust & credibility supporting an organization's success (Cooper 2012). Ethical consciousness is vital for legal compliance, reputation, stakeholder relationships, decision-making, stakeholder confidence, mission alignment, & sustainability of CBOs (Johnson 2018).

Character of an Executive Director.

Leading by example (Johnson 2018) is crucial in to an ethical culture within an organization. When leaders demonstrate ethical behavior, they set a standard & create an environment where everyone feels valued, respected (Cooper 2012; Barrett & Fry 2008). Ethical leaders inspire their

employees to act honestly, fair, & accountable, & by doing so, they establish an integrity that fills the entire organization (Cooper 2012; Barrett & Fry 2008). This asks that leaders lead with their decisions on others & act in ways that are fair, just (Cooper 2012). By demonstrating ethical standards with high positive regard (Barret & Fry 2008) in their actions & communicating & reinforcing organizational values, they shape collective behavior & attitudes of their employees, promoting integrity & ethical decision-making (Barrett & Fry 2008).

Committing to ethical conduct & its impact on employee behavior.

Demonstrating a personal dedication to ethical behavior significantly influences the conduct of employees within an organization (Cooper 2012). When leaders exhibit a strong commitment to ethical standards, they become role models for their staff, inspiring them to uphold similar principles in their own actions & decisions (Barrett & Fry 2008). This personal commitment creates integrity & accountability, encouraging employees to align behavior with their organization's ethical values & strive for a work environment where honesty, respect, fairness are prioritized. By modeling ethical conduct, leaders positively shape behavior & attitudes of their employees, enabling a more principled & responsible organizational culture (Barrett & Fry 2008).

Communicate Clear Expectations.

Clearly communicating ethical standards & expectations of organization to all employees is essential. By doing so, leaders ensure that every member understands behavioral principles & behaviors required of them. This emphasis on transparency & clarity helps elevate a shared understanding of expectations in terms of ethical conduct, nurturing an environment where integrity & compliance with relevant laws & regulations are prioritized (Cooper 2012).

Emphasize integrity, respect, compliance.

In context of a newly appointed Executive Director, it is vital to underscore significance of upholding integrity, demonstrating respect, & adhering to relevant laws & regulations (Cooper 2012). By emphasizing these principles, an organization standardizes ethical behavior & legal compliance. This illuminates a culture where honesty, fairness, & accountability are valued, & where employees understand importance of respecting both internal policies & external legal requirements (Johnson 2018). It also serves to align an organization's values with legal expectations, promoting a work environment where ethical conduct & legal compliance are mutually reinforcing.

Provide Regular Training.

By providing training & support for ethics & compliance, organizations ensure that employees are consistently equipped with resources needed to make ethical decisions in their roles. These programs reinforce an organization's commitment to ethical conduct & legal compliance, helping employees navigate complex ethical dilemmas & stay updated on relevant regulations & best practices (Cooper 2012). Additionally, ongoing training demonstrates that an organization is dedicated to integrity & accountability, & it empowers employees to make informed & responsible choices in their day-to-day work. Equipping employees with knowledge & resources to make ethical decisions in their roles is the aim.

Keep Open Communication Channels

Creating an environment where employees feel at ease reporting ethical concerns or seeking guidance on potential ethical dilemmas is crucial. This builds transparency & trust within organization, allowing employees to address & discuss ethical issues without fear of reprisal (Cooper 2012). It also enables organization to identify & address ethical concerns promptly, contributing to a more accountable work environment & preventing more potent, potentially damaging reporting of ethical behavior such as in the case of whistleblowing (Cooper 2012). Furthermore, ensuring that employees who report in good faith are protected from any form of retaliation creates a safe & supportive environment for addressing ethical issues, facilitating openness & accountability within organization.

Incorporate ethical behavior in performance evaluations.

This would involve conceptualizing ethical behavior as fundamental to performance. By doing so, organizations emphasize importance of ethical conduct in addition to traditional performance metrics. Mohr & Watkins (2002), for example, regarding appreciative inquiry (AI), suggest that an organization produce “an internal positive change network of people trained in AI basics, ... applying AI to performance management, innovation, safety, office design, knowledge transfer, strategy implementation, & other areas” (Mohr & Watkins 2002). This communicates that ethical behavior is core (part of everyday activities) & that it will be considered in assessing overall performance. It also reinforces an organization's commitment to upholding ethical standards & can motivate employees to prioritize ethical decision-making in their roles.

Recognize & reward ethical conduct!

This reinforces an organization's values & expectations, demonstrating that ethical conduct is not only important but also recognized & valued within a workplace (Barrett & Fry 2008). By doing so, an organization encourages a culture where employees are motivated to uphold ethical standards & where integrity is celebrated. This leads to a more ethical & accountable work environment, ultimately benefiting an organization.

Collaborate with key stakeholders.

Creating an Ethical Code of Conduct involves working with key stakeholders to craft a thorough set of guidelines that outlines an organization's values, principles, expected behaviors (Cooper 2012). This document is a roadmap for decision-making & behavior, ensuring that all employees understand & adhere to an organization's ethical standards. It also provides a framework for addressing ethical dilemmas, conflicts, promoting consistency & accountability across organization.

Distribute code of conduct to all.

Circulating a code of conduct to all employees involves sharing documents with every member of organization, ensuring awareness of & understanding of its contents. This is achieved through email distribution, or through the distribution of physical copies during staff meetings or trainings. By making a code of conduct accessible to all, an organization reinforces its commitment to ethical behavior & ensures that everyone has access to guidelines that govern conduct.

Promote open dialogue, transparency.

Fostering transparency involves encouraging open communication & honesty at every level of organization (Johnson 2018; Cooper 2012). This can be achieved by promoting an environment where employees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts & concerns, & where leaders are forthcoming with information & their decisions -- for example, holding regular town hall meetings to discuss company updates, implementing an open-door policy for employees to voice their opinions, & ensuring that information is shared in a timely & transparent manner. By doing so, organization can build trust, encourage collaboration, create a more positive & productive work environment (Barrett & Fry).

Raise concerns about ethical issues.

Encouraging employees to voice their concerns & participate in constructive conversations about ethical matters is essential. Creating a work environment where individuals feel empowered to

speak up when they encounter ethical dilemmas or observe questionable behavior (Johnson 2018; Cooper 2012). By doing so, an organization addresses potential issues proactively & nurtures continuous improvement (Barrett & Fry 2008). This may include establishing regular forums for discussing ethical concerns, providing training on how to navigate ethical challenges, & recognizing & appreciating employees who contribute to these discussions (Barrett & Fry 2008). This enhances a more ethical, transparent, & accountable organizational culture.

Conclusion

By implementing these measures, organizations can anticipate a positive impact on its reputation, its capacity to serve communities, strengthening public trust, enhancing stakeholder relationships, & ensuring that their actions align with its mission & values. An ethical work environment provides an organization sustainability & its ability to make a positive impact in communities. It falls in line with yet another strategy for elevating ethical consciousness of employees within a sizable organization (Barrett & Fry 2008).

References

Barrett FJ & Fry, R. 2008. Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Organizational Capacity. Taos Institute Publications. 2008 Second Printing. ISBN-13:978-0-7880-2163-3

Cooper, TL. 2012. The Responsible Administrator: An Approach to Ethics for the Administrative Role, 5th edition, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006 ISBN-13:978-0-7879-7651-4

Johnson, CE. 2018. Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership: Casting Light or Shadow 6th Edition. LA, Ca.: Sage Publications ISBN: 978-1-5063-2163-9

Mohr, BJ & Watkins, JM. 2002. The Essentials of Appreciative Inquiry: A Roadmap for Creating Positive Futures. Pegasus Communications, Inc., Retrieved January 24, 2024, from <https://case.edu/weatherhead/fowler/sites/default/files/2022-07/The%20Essentials%20%20Appreciative%20Inquiry.pdf>