

ETHICS CORNER

Do the right thing!

by Donna Davis

Applying ideals in an imperfect world is challenging. Changing business conditions coupled with our emergence in new markets muddy the waters of compliance. Some business/ethics decisions are obvious, like not accepting gifts from suppliers. Others leave a residue of doubt—an uncertainty that causes us to question our actions—such as reading a competitor’s bid inadvertently left in the open, or forwarding an inappropriate email to a colleague.

The *Ethics Quick Test* can facilitate making the right choice when faced with a difficult decision. The test is composed of four basic questions.

The first two questions relate to compliance with established rules of behavior. Since support systems exist within our organization to readily answer questions regarding legality and policy, these questions can be addressed with relative ease.

Questions number three and four center on your personal commitment to ethical standards. Although compliance with the company’s Standards of Business Conduct is clearly expected of all employees, the success of the ethics program and our business ultimately rests with you—the individual. Ethical behavior transcends policy and law.

If you know an action is wrong, do not pursue it! When in doubt about an action, take the *Ethics Quick Test*. If you are still uncertain, consult your manager or contact the Ethics Office for assistance, and keep asking questions until you are satisfied with the response.

Ethics Quick Test

When faced with a difficult business ethics decision, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is the action legal?

No action should violate criminal or civil law—federal, state, local, or international law.

2. Will my action agree with Northrop Grumman policy?

You are a representative of Northrop Grumman; therefore, your actions should reflect organization values manifested in Corporate and Sector policies.

3. Will my action make me feel bad?

Sounds a bit old-fashioned, but the conscience is one of the strongest allies of ethical decision-making.

4. Will my action withstand public scrutiny?

Consider your action appearing in the newspaper and how you and the company could be portrayed, as well as how your family, friends, and co-workers could perceive your action.

Remember Dr. Roche’s thoughts on the subject, shared during recent all employee meetings: *Act ethically at all times, in all things. If we can’t win ethically, it’s not worth the price. When you look in a mirror, you should feel proud of your work.*

Should you have questions or concerns about this or any other ethics issue, call Donna Davis, Director of Ethics, at (410) 765-5546. To report suspected violations of policy or law, contact the Ethics OpenLine at (410) 765-1919.