

Chapter 1

Getting Started: The Framework

Using frameworks, tools, and systems as you manage your organization or group can mean the difference between managing professionally on a performance basis and flying by the seat of your pants. Many frameworks, systems, and tools have been proven successful in managing, add value to an organization, and can be adapted to suit any organization. Over the past 30 years, I have taught hundreds of business students, worked on the firing line as an executive, and consulted with scores of managerial leaders. In my experience, I can resoundingly say that systems, frameworks, and tools—based on sound theory and proven practices—will provide you with a competitive edge.

Managerial leaders have enormous impact on people and, as such, can influence whether organizational behavior is a promoter or detractor of ethics. Management systems, frameworks, and tools can be used to guide and shape behavior of people within an organization, including ethical behavior. Proactively putting ethical behavior on track requires a framework as well as a useful system for managerial leaders to employ when confronted with both anticipated and unexpected ethical dilemmas and situations presenting ethical choices.

I advocate adopting what I call a proactive value-centered ethical leadership system. Although this system is understood within a cognitive social learning theory approach to learning, a discussion of theoretical underpinnings is beyond the scope of this pocket guide. Alternatively, you will be offered a practical depiction of this framework to help you more systematically understand how this proactive value-centered ethical leadership system works. Underlying this system is a straightforward and well-documented A-B-C Model of Behavior, which will be discussed first to provide the backdrop for the proactive system.

The Basic A-B-C Model

Ultimately, ethics is revealed through observable behavior. Based on more than 50 years of research, certain basic tenets about how behavior is shaped and maintained have been established. The basic model of behavior—why people behave in certain ways—is called the “A-B-C Model.” Simply stated, As, or antecedents, cause or trigger Bs, or behaviors, which in turn cause Cs, or consequences. Antecedents are cues or action triggers that prompt certain behavior. The behavior we focus on is observable. Consequences occur as a result of a person’s or group’s behavior. The consequences of one person’s behavior can work to strengthen or weaken future behavior.

This process can become quite complex when you are analyzing triggering events, behavior, and consequences; one person’s behavior can be another’s antecedent, yet that same behavior can also be the consequence of a third person’s behavior. For the time being, let’s focus on what a managerial leader does or does not do (“B” being the managerial leader’s behavior) in response to an ethical lapse (“A” being the ethical lapse), in order to influence future behavior of others in the organization (“C” being a result of the managerial leader’s behavior). Using the A-B-C Model, Table 1-1 shows how ethical organizational behavior can be strengthened or weakened by managerial leaders.

Recognizing that a managerial leader’s behavior or response in any given situation affects future organizational behavior, the question becomes how the managerial leader can shape her own behavior to mold the desired behavior of her people or organization. The professional system on which a managerial leader relies can significantly impact how she will respond outwardly to ethical challenges and can help her make decisions when confronted with ethical situations. We will now look closely at the system that I have found to be useful to professional managerial leaders in this context.

Adding a System to the A-B-C Model

The professional process through which a managerial leader shapes his or her behavioral responses to antecedents spells the difference between the proactive handling of organizational ethics and the

Table I-1: The A-B-C's of Ethical Behavior

Components	A (Antecedent) Ethical Situation/ Dilemma	B (Observable Behavior) Reaction to "A" by Managerial Leader	C (Consequence) What happened as a result of that behavior?
Example 1	Star salesperson cheats on expense report.	Cheating is ignored by manager.	Tendency to cheat is strengthened.
Example 2	Accounting clerk manipulates figures to cover up errors.	Manipulation is confronted by manager, but ineffectively.	Tendency to manipulate numbers is strengthened.
Example 3	One employee bullies a fellow employee on assembly line.	Bullying is effectively confronted by manager.	Tendency to bully others is weakened.

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reactive dealing with ethical dilemmas. Handling organizational ethics on a reactive basis will not produce consistent results—you will end up with “situational” ethics. Simply put, without a proactive system that a managerial leader can espouse and affirm, he would merely be making it up along the way, or responding on a gut level each time. Managerial leadership is a professional endeavor that needs to extend beyond just reacting to ethical challenges on a personal basis. Organizational stakeholders, especially employees, desire to be led ethically by those who have a system for doing that which is rooted in sound theory, easy to understand, and useful.

Installing a system that will dictate how ethical situations are handled provides substance and guidance for the manager's thought process that needs to occur prior to his or her response to the ethical issue. In addition, this systematic provides context for the managerial leader to respond. I have labeled the professional processes that intervene between the “A” and “B” to dictate a manager's behavior the Proactive Professional System (PPS), and the situation where no such system exists a Personal Reaction (PR). The Proactive Professional System (PPS) for ethical managerial leadership that enhances your ethical impact on others includes three major component parts: virtuous values, action roles for the managerial leader, and behavioral standards.

Virtuous Values

Values play an enormous role in influencing attitudes and behavior. *Virtuous values* directly influence ethical behavior. Social scientists have identified several virtuous values that appear to be universally accepted, such as fairness, kindness, and courage. To manage ethical situations professionally, one must adopt and espouse certain virtuous values. Universal virtuous values are discussed in Chapter 4.

Action Roles for Managerial Leaders

In leading effectively, managerial leaders assume various roles as they engage in certain actions. The actions of managerial leaders can be categorized as being included within distinct roles.

Examining the key action roles can help managerial leaders assess their effectiveness and serve as a way to target areas for performance improvement and development. My research over the past 20 years has revealed that as effective managerial leaders strive to achieve results, they pursue four key action roles: Influencer, Director, Focuser, and Linker. These action roles are associated with specific managerial practices that need to be in alignment with a managerial leader's virtuous values. The effective managerial leader will be strong in all four of these roles. The action roles are discussed in detail in Chapters 5 through 8.

Behavioral Standards

In guiding her people to work and behave consistently with the organization's mission and values, a managerial leader can establish certain behavior standards applicable to all employees. Established behavioral standards help highlight those areas that an organizational leader wants to underscore as important in establishing a culture of ethical behavior. These standards may specifically address situations that frequently confront an organization and its managerial leaders, and/or potential ethical dilemmas that because of their impacts need to be addressed on a proactive basis.

Taken together, virtuous values, managerial leadership action roles, and behavioral standards form the backbone of the Proactive Professional System (PPS). Implementation of the PPS will enhance the practice of ethical managerial leadership, which in turn will drive ethical organizational behavior.

Table 1-2 depicts how the PPS, as the intervening system of professional managerial leadership, may influence and expand the basic A-B-C Model.

As we see in Table 1-2, using the PPS, a managerial leader responds to ethical situations within the context of an internalized system of virtuous values, action roles, and behavioral standards. Managerial responses to ethical situations should then be consistent. Consistent value-centered responses can serve to build and sustain ethical organizational behavior. Over time this system serves as a model of

Table I-2: Adding a System to the A-B-C Model

Components	A (Antecedent) Ethical Situation/ Dilemma	PPS Proactive Professional System	B (Observable Behavioral) Reaction to A by Managerial Leader	C (Consequence) What happened as a result of that behavior?
Example 1	Star salesperson cheats on expense report.	Managerial leader relies on internalized sys- tem to proac- tively respond to ethical situa- tion/dilemma. System components: vir- tuous values, four Action roles, behavioral stan- dards.	Behavior of manage- rial leader will be in alignment with PPS system, providing a consistent value-cen- tered response to most ethical situa- tions/ dilemmas.	As instructed by the PPS, consequences administered by managerial leaders serve to build and sustain ethical organiza- tional behavior.
Example 2	Accounting clerk manipulates figures to cover up errors.			
Example 3	One employee bullies a fellow employee on assem- bly line.			

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ethics for an organization at all levels. A key process is alignment. It is critical that the individual managerial leader's response to the "A" is aligned with his or her espoused virtuous values, ethically anchored practices, and ethically oriented behavioral standards. The manager's behavior "B" over time creates a model for others to follow and is reinforced by the delivery of appropriate positive or negative consequences.

Without a PPS, managerial leaders are left to react to ethical challenges on a more personalized basis, yielding a more situational-based response. In the next chapter, we will review various "derailers" that can cause managerial leaders to lose their ethical bearings. After this brief detour, we will point out some good reasons for you to adopt the PPS system and then proceed to cover the nuts and bolts of each of its three components.