

Ethics Training

The multiplicity and varied nature of these organizations has ensured that the trainings—while all focusing on Ethics—are different in the unique context they are located in. To look at an example, the ethical issues that apply to individuals doling out food coupons and shelter materials to refugees in countries overcome by natural disaster or civil conflict are entirely different from the needs of a workforce working on accounting and procurement in world class organizations.

Regardless of the need or context, the following principles about ethics are universal:

- **Ethics is not the same as morals:** The words 'ethics' and 'morals' are frequently used interchangeably. Morals refer to behavior customary in culture or society. Morals may change across geographies. Ethics, however, refers to an individual's personal standards of right and wrong. Ethics do not change as you move from one society to the next.
- **Ethics avoids a right vs. wrong approach:** An approach or argument that relies too much on 'right vs. wrong' tends to veer too much toward moral absolutism ("*I am right and you are wrong and you should do what I say*"). More often than not, ethical decision-making entails a right vs. right approach because there are a multitude of viewpoints, and each one is considered 'right' by the person that holds it.
- **Ethics is not the same as religion:** Although it often involves debates on issues of cloning and abortion—staples of religious debate—ethics is not the same as religion. Religion adopts a '*God's eye view*' of things. Ethics does not adopt a 'preach' standpoint on issues but only guides on what is the most appropriate thing to do in a situation, based on the circumstances, experience and the people who are affected by the issue.
- **Ethical decisions are based on trust relationships:** Trust relationships are the foundations of all ethical decisions. Parents, teachers, supervisors, or colleagues, can also be seen as ethical role models, from whom we learn about what is good and ethical.
- **Ethical decisions need an environment or context:** Ethics can be viewed as a lever that rests on a fulcrum of pre-existing assumptions. The people involved in ethical dilemmatic situations are usually placed there by circumstances, environments,

situations—mostly out of their control. The resolution of the issue, however, is under their control.

From the above, it is obvious that ethical decision-making affects more than our working lives. Ethics, religion and morals do not always concur—and that ethical decision-making can be tricky! The key, experts say, is to listen to one's instincts—and if it feels uncomfortable making the decision on one's own, it is wise to get others involved and use their collective knowledge and experience to make a more considered decision.

Keeping these points in mind, successful eLearning providers have adopted—to teach Ethics—a strategy to term the **DecisionImpact** model.

How Ethical Decisions Impact Consequences

All decisions have outcomes—the implications of an ethical decision are unique because they affect people around us, who can be seen as the 'stakeholders' of the ethical decision-making process. It is crucial that an ethical decision is made with the stakeholders in mind—who has an interest in the situation, who is affected and how. Although sometimes it seems like only a few people are involved in the situation, there are often ripple effects.

Using Scenarios and the DecisionImpact Model

This **DecisionImpact** model is best implemented through a scenario-driven approach. This ensures that the model stays the same, regardless of the context and training need, and scenarios and material keep changing to make it easily customizable for groups of audiences.

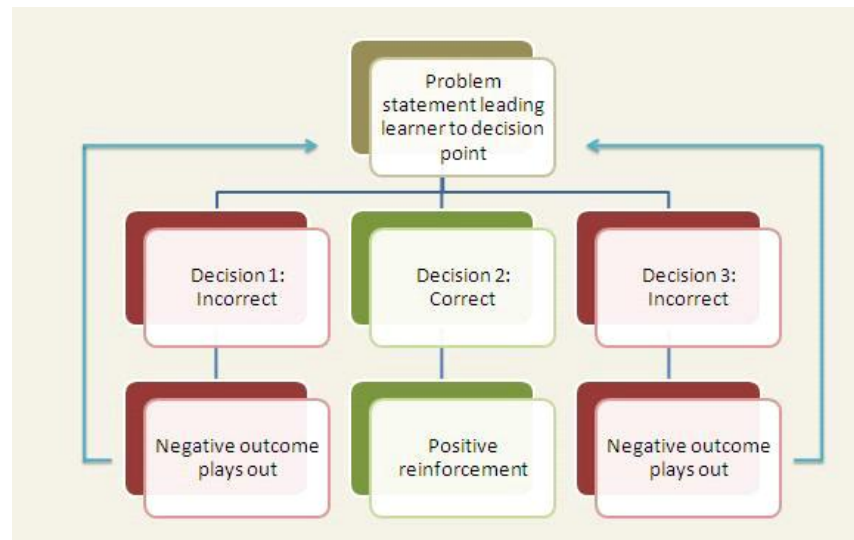
For an adult audience, nothing works better than seeing familiar events from their daily work life in the eLearning courses they enroll for. Modeling scenarios based on real-life situations—such as the learners might encounter in their offices on a daily basis—lends credibility to training and builds identification.

However, whereas staple scenario-based learning provides only the chance for learners to view feedback—sometimes detailed and descriptive—Sify's approach pushes the standard higher, and provides learners the opportunity to view the consequences of their decisions—through animated scenarios. By viewing the outcome of the ethical decision they have made, learners are made aware of how their **decision** has led to an **impact**.

The focus of the training will therefore be to serve as a 'test-bed', of ethical decision-making, and provide learners will the chance of seeing the impact of their decisions in a virtual (*read: safe*) environment.

Anatomy of the DecisionImpact Model


To facilitate understanding of the approach, let's first look at a schematic.



If we think of the diagram above as the ‘anatomy’ of the model, we see that the learner will be presented first with a problem situation, a premise or a scenario that will present a decision-point and require him/her to make a choice between the options provided (*as mentioned previously, ethical dilemmas are brought about through there by circumstances, environments, situations—mostly out of the control of people involved in it. Only the resolution of the dilemma is in control.*)


Only one option is the most appropriate—and on selecting this, learners are provided with positive feedback that reinforces their understanding. However, if they select an incorrect option, the outcome of that decision plays out through animation—this in turn, serves as the feedback for having taken the wrong decision.


Let's now see how this model plays out—this scenario focuses on accepting gifts, awards and other invitations.




You are part of a task force for Grant Thornton reviewing payroll processing software solutions. At a meeting in the facility of a potential vendor EasyPayroll, representatives of EasyPayroll are making a presentation on how they can help make Grant Thornton more efficient and organised with their software. At the end of this meeting, the General Manager of EasyPayroll invites all the participants to dinner at an exclusive restaurant. Should you accept?


Select your response from the options provided.

 I should accept the dinner invitation. My job does not involve approving or negotiating contracts with suppliers. Besides, refusing the invitation may create a bad impression about the organisation.

 I think I should refuse. Dinners are considered to be gifts and we are not permitted to accept any gifts or honours from any outside sources under any circumstances.


 How can one dinner pose any problem? There are no contract negotiations at this time. A new system will probably not be required for at least a year.

Caption: The learner is placed in a situation, and given a decision point. All three options provided in the scenario seem equally plausible—none of them are immediately right or wrong. Next, we will see how each decision leads to an impact.



I can accept the dinner invite. My job does not involve approving or negotiating contracts with suppliers. Besides, refusing the invitation may create a bad impression on Grant Thornton.

Let's see what could have happened if you had accepted the dinner invitation.




Thanks for the lovely dinner.

It was my pleasure. So, do you think we would get the contract?

I'm not sure...you see I don't approve contracts.

I know. But you would have some idea about the parameters and specifications for the system. A little help would mean a lot to us.

Err...



In a tight spot? Why don't you select another response?

Caption: If the learner chooses option 1, this is the DecisionImpact that is displayed.



I think I should refuse. Dinners are considered to be gifts and we are not permitted to accept any gifts or honours from any outside sources under any circumstances.

You thought right. You must decline such invitations as dinners are considered gifts. You may not be responsible for approving contracts or may not even foresee any negotiations currently, but vendors often take this opportunity to take your help in influencing the decision.

Caption: Option 2 is the most appropriate action in this situation. Instead of a negative outcome, the positive choice is reinforced with detailed feedback.



How can one dinner pose any problem? There are no contract negotiations at this time. A new system will probably not be required for at least a year.

Let's see what could have happened if you had taken this action.



It was a great dinner...Thanks!

I'm glad you enjoyed it. By the way, what did you think of our presentation?

err...it was good.

Do you think we'll get the deal?

I wouldn't know about that. It's too early to commit—we won't need a new system until next year.

I understand. But no harm in discussing future business prospects?

umm...



Difficult situation? You should select another response.

Caption: Option 3 leads to a negative impact of another sort. Clearly not the right choice in this situation!

About Sify eLearning

As innovative leaders in new technology and interactive eLearning, we create highly immersive, and engaging learning experiences. With over a decade of experience in generating customized learning solutions for Fortune 500 and Small and Medium-sized companies, sify eLearning is the choice for industry-relevant training projects. Our solutions align with your organization's business and learning goals, to affect change and improve employee performance. Our extensive experiences across industries have allowed us the benefit of acquiring unique perspectives and interpretations, while thinking outside-the-box to create highly customized projects.

Why Sify

- With over 200 employees we have an informed and dedicated team
- Access to Subject Matter Experts (SME) in various industries as well as functional areas
- Experience in working with clients globally with over 5000 learning hours of digital content developed
- Adherence to industry-standard best practices in all phases of development lifecycle, quality assurance and project management

Ability to scale quickly in terms of the resources, both human and infrastructure as and when required for turnkey projects

Sify has developed online training modules on Ethics for several organizations, most notably the United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Program (WFP), and the United Nations Secretariat.

About the Author



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Reshma has fourteen years of experience in the publishing and eLearning industries, encompassing roles as varied as Features Writer, Web journalist, Sub-editor, and Instructional

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Furthermore, she has developed trainings for BFSI customers, including Allianz Insurance, Franklin Templeton Investments, WellPoint Insurance, MassMutual Insurance, Standard Chartered Bank.

She is also a certified online course facilitator from the Arts Institute Online (AIO), conducted by the Socrates Distance Learning Technologies Group, a division of Education Management Corporation (EDMC).

We are here to help. Contact us for a demo or consultation.

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