

Ethical Decision-Making Model

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At General Dynamics, we face business ethics decisions almost every day. Many are straightforward and require little conscious thought to resolve: doing the right thing just comes naturally. Some, however, can be complex and very challenging. While we all know right from wrong, the process of deciding upon--and doing--the right thing is not always obvious. Indeed, ethics decisions are often some of the most difficult we make in business. They also carry some of the most significant consequences.

This Ethical Decision Making Model is provided to help guide you through the more complex ethics decisions where the answer is not always clear. As you will see, the Model breaks down the process into seven distinct question elements. For each element, if your answer is “yes,” you move to the next element. If, however, your answer to any element is “no,” you should stop and reconsider your analysis of that element before moving forward.

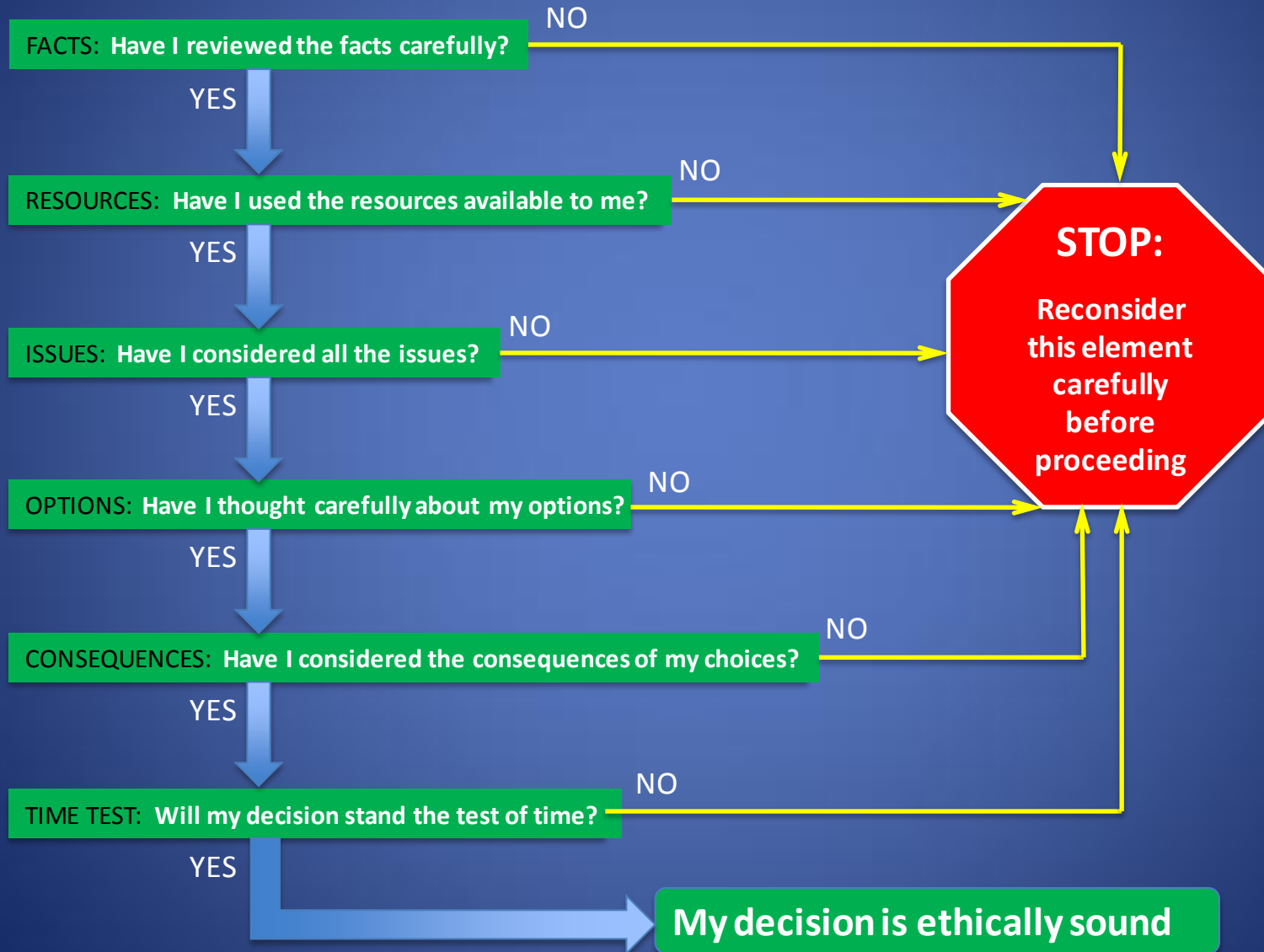
Once you have successfully answered each of the seven elements with a “yes,” you have completed the Model. If you have been thorough and candid in the process, you will have most likely have arrived at a sound ethical decision.

The Model is diagrammed on the attached flow chart. In the pages that follow the chart, each of the seven elements is examined in further detail, with thought questions and advice designed to help you refine your analysis.

This model will not solve your ethical dilemmas for you. It is intended, however, as a tool to allow you to take a disciplined and structured approach and to help guide you in your actions.

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Ethical Decision-Making Model Flow Chart



Ethical Decision-Making Model

FACTS: Have I reviewed the facts carefully?

You cannot make a sound ethical decision without considering all of the facts.

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- Have I gathered all the facts necessary to make a good decision?
 - Am I assuming facts, motivations, or actions for which there is no evidence?
 - Am I giving all parties involved the reasonable benefit of the doubt?
 - Am I giving myself the time to think carefully about the facts, rather than jumping to conclusions?

Sound ethical decisions depend on a thorough examination of all relevant facts.

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RESOURCES: Have I used the resources available to me?

You are not alone in your ethical decision making.

- Have I discussed this issue with my manager?
- Do I need advice from legal, ethics, HR, or other subject matter experts to resolve this issue?
- Have I researched the Blue Book and any relevant policies?
- Have I, if necessary, contacted the Ethics Helpline?

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Use your tools: General Dynamics has many resources available to help you.

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ISSUES: Have I considered all the issues?

Many ethical decisions contain complex issues.

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- Am I confident that I have identified all of the issues that should affect my decision?
- Do I have a complete understanding of all the issues?
- Have I considered the issues from all sides and from the perspectives of all involved?
- Do I need help from a subject matter expert to understand the issues?

Carefully consider all relevant issues before making an ethical decision.

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OPTIONS: Have I thought carefully about my options?

Ethical decisions often have more than one right answer.

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- Have I considered all of the different possible courses of action I might take?
- Have I balanced the need for quick action with the need for thoughtful consideration?
- Am I confident that I am choosing the best course of action from among those available?
- Have I sought help from subject matter experts where necessary?

Ethical decisions rarely lend themselves to a single “right” answer.
Consider all possible options and outcomes before you decide.

Ethical Decision-Making Model

CONSEQUENCES: Have I considered the consequences of my choices?

Ethical decisions always have consequences.

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- Have I thought carefully about the consequences of the action I am planning to take?
- Have I considered how my choices will affect all stakeholders in the decision?
- Have I considered how my actions might appear to others?
- Have I thought about how to address possible unintended consequences?

Ethical decisions are business decisions, and must be approached with the same level of care and planning as other business decisions.

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TIME TEST: Will my decision stand the test of time?

Ethical decisions must stand the test of time.

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- Would I be comfortable explaining my actions if they became public?
- Is my decision “too close to the line” of what is considered ethical?
- Is my decision grounded in a basic sense of fairness to all affected parties?
- Will I look back on my decision in the future and believe that I did the right thing?

Ethical decisions can have long lasting effects. Consider your actions carefully today to avoid regrets tomorrow.