

# Ethics and Professionalism in a Changing World

## No Right Way To Do A Wrong Thing



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There are many sources for this program. Many years ago, the State of Texas sponsored an Ethics in Public Service seminar that I attended. It was taught by Dr. Alec Horniman of the University of Virginia in 1993. The information and references to John Locke were from my Ethics class I took at the FBI National Academy in 1989 as well as my research on the subject while at the DPS Academy from 1981 to 2000. Finally, the subtitle of this topic, “No right way to do a wrong thing” came from a wonderful book written by Drs. Ken Blanchard and Norman Vincent Peale called “The Power of Ethical Management” (1988).  
The longer we live, the more true these things learned so long ago become.

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In addition to his teaching, training and traveling duties, Mark works with the TAC Leadership Foundation and has served as the coordinator of its Leadership class since 2003.

After graduating from St. Edward’s University in 1977, Mark spent 23 years with the Texas Department of Public Safety, retiring in 2000 as the Assistant Commander of the Training Academy in Austin.

## (Lack of) Ethics and its Consequences -

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- “The basis of effective government is public confidence, and that confidence is endangered when ethical standards falter or [even] *appear* to falter”.  
- John F. Kennedy



## Consequences, con't.

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- “While I was not involved in the decision to conduct the (Watergate) break-in, I should have set a higher standard for the people who participated in my campaign and administration. I should have established a moral tone that would have made such actions unthinkable. I did not”.  
- Richard Nixon

This is the closest to a “*mea culpa*” that Richard Nixon ever came. He said this to David Frost in 1977 in a multi-hour broadcast on PBS simply called “The Nixon Interviews”. History continues to paint Richard Nixon as dark, sinister and paranoid. Although the articles of impeachment were drawn and ready, Nixon was never impeached. He resigned in virtual disgrace and will no doubt be remembered as a mean-spirited, untrustworthy crook. In the 2008 movie “Frost/Nixon”, screenwriter (and playwright of the original stage play) Peter Morgan portrays the legendary battle between Richard Nixon, the disgraced president with a legacy to save, and David Frost, a jet-setting television personality with a name to make, in the story of the historic encounter that changed both their lives. For three years after being forced from office, Nixon remained silent. But in summer 1977, the steely, cunning former commander-in-chief agreed to sit for one all-inclusive interview to confront the questions of his time in office and the Watergate scandal that ended his presidency. Nixon surprised everyone in selecting Frost as his televised confessor, intending to easily outfox the breezy British showman and secure a place in the hearts and

minds of Americans (as well as a \$600,000 fee). Likewise, Frost's team harbored doubts about their boss' ability to hold his own. But as cameras rolled, a charged battle of wits resulted.

*What is the difference between doing things right and doing the right thing?*



## Ethics - Basic Definitions

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- Webster's: "relating to what is good or bad, and having to do with moral duty and obligation".
- Derived from the Greek "*ethos*":
  - "Character"
  - "Sentiment of the community"
  - "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power". – Abraham Lincoln
  - "I hope I shall possess *firmness and virtue* enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man." – George Washington

## The Six Pillars of Character

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### ▣ Trustworthiness

- Be honest • Don't deceive, cheat or steal • Be reliable — do what you say you'll do • Have the courage to do the right thing
- Build a good reputation • Be loyal — stand by your family, friends and country

### ▣ Respect

- Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule • Be tolerant of differences • Use good manners, not bad language • Be considerate of the feelings of others • Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone • Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements

### ▣ Responsibility

- Do what you are supposed to do • Persevere: keep on trying!
- Always do your best • Use self-control • Be self-disciplined • Think before you act — consider the consequences • Be accountable for your choices

## The Six Pillars of Character, continued:

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### ▣ Fairness

- Play by the rules • Take turns and share • Be open-minded; listen to others • Don't take advantage of others • Don't blame others carelessly

### ▣ Caring

- Be kind • Be compassionate and show you care • Express gratitude • Forgive others • Help people in need

### ▣ Citizenship

- Do your share to make your school and community better • Cooperate • Get involved in community affairs • Stay informed; vote • Be a good neighbor • Obey laws and rules • Respect authority • Protect the environment
- [www.josephsoninstitute.org](http://www.josephsoninstitute.org)



## The Witch's Hat

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- The Ethical/Moral Desensitization Curves



- From 1950 – 1970, every choice you had was either clearly right or clearly wrong, and the community agreed. It was a wide, strong brim.
- Few, if any decisions or choices, were “moral gray”.
- Most times, you knew 10 reasons why or why not.

## The Crown of the Derby

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- Roughly since 1980, what was seen and agreed as clearly right and clearly wrong began to shrink.
- The moral gray crown increased in width and girth.
- Moral gray became “no big deal”.

## Modern life and C.N.N. have helped us not to feel

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- Social factors have contributed to our ethical/moral desensitization such as:
  - Politics
  - Media
  - Previously unshakable institutions like government, church, education, marriage.
  
- What are some that have affected you?

With the expansion of cable television from three basic channels in the 1960's, to seven, then to eleven, to more than five hundred channel choices today, media had to find programming that could justify this expansion. If television had the ability to broadcast 24 hours a day, (remember when your local channels actually *signed off* at midnight?) programming had to be created to keep up with the expansion. So, we began to view news, then weather, then sports around the clock. Leading the evolution was Cable News Network, founded by Ted Turner, in Atlanta. In 1980, the company, Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. (TBS, Inc.), broke new ground with the launch of CNN, the first 24-hour all-news network, forever changing the way the world saw breaking news. The advent of CNN and all its competitors that followed, made it possible to watch disasters, war, revolution and the bizarre any time we want. The balance between people's *right* to know and their *need* to know was re-set, and the result was that we, the people, began to lose feeling for what was happening. We became desensitized. Desensitization is not always a bad thing: when I have to have a cavity filled at the dentist, I don't want to feel anything. But, when we see human suffering from natural or man-made disaster, we want to care. We want to *feel something* so we can get involved, or help or have the lessons revealed etched in our brain and conscious minds so as to prevent the bad or minimize its effect in the future.

Think about more serious institutions in American culture whose public perception may have changed by 24-hour access and over - abundant choices; politics, media, and historically unshakable institutions like government, the church, public education and marriage are just some examples. What are some of yours?

## John Locke's Five Standards of Conduct in Government Service:

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- ▣ Fair Access
- ▣ Public Trust
- ▣ Balance
- ▣ Teamwork
- ▣ Objectivity

These are modern spins on Locke's core values:

1. As a social resource, public servants must provide **fair access** to their services. This is an absolute regardless of what we think or how we feel about whom and when the call for service goes out.
2. Because citizens voluntarily give up certain rights to the government (such as enforcing the law themselves), they surrender that right in exchange for the **public trust** that guarantees that the rights they surrender will never be abused, violated or exploited.
3. We must constantly maintain **balance** between two goals - accomplishing the goal of, say, law enforcement in a free society, which is to generate voluntary compliance - and maintaining order and security in that free society, which is taking enforcement action and occasionally using consensual force. Question: how many public contacts do you have a year and how many documented, sustained complaints have you had?
4. As referees, government servants are a part of an organization of legislators, elected officials, law enforcers and others (such as whom)? So their conduct must meet the test of **teamwork** - communication, coordination and cooperation.
5. Government service is a social role the often requires us to put personality and personal feeling aside and instead, demonstrate **objectivity**. We must remain open-minded and neutral rather than biased.

## The Four S's of Professionalism

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### □ Sincerity

- Believe in self and believe in cause.
  - Be real
  - Be genuine
  - Be credible
  - Be humble
- How do *you* demonstrate sincerity every day?



## Four S's, con't.

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### □ Strength

- Resist temptations
  - Strength of character
  - Must be able to *represent the Company, as well as the other person*, because others "under the influence" can't.
  - Finish the mission in often deteriorating circumstances.
- How do you demonstrate strength, every day?



## Four S's, con't.

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- **Service** – “Aim for service and success will follow.”  
- Albert Schweitzer
  - Important to remember that we work for them.
    - Thought: “Today’s consumers are smarter than ever before, and they simply will not tolerate unhappiness on the part of those who are serving them, or an arrogant attitude, or an attitude of anything but ‘I want to be helpful’”. -J.W.Marriott
  - “Your profession is not what brings home your paycheck. Your profession is what you were put on this earth to do with *such passion and such intensity that it becomes your calling*”. – Vincent Van Gogh
- Why should we think of those we serve as “customers”?

## Four S's, con't.

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- **Sacrifice**
  - As public servants, we must often put personality and personal feelings aside, and demonstrate objectivity - (from John Locke’s Ethical Standards for Government Service).
  - When meeting our public, we must leave the **person** behind, and the *professional* takes their place.
- How do we demonstrate this kind of “sacrifice”?



## An Ethics review

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- Doing things right vs. doing the right thing? Yes – both!
  - Follow the law, policy and procedure – but don't depend solely upon those to make ethical decisions.
- “The basis of effective government is **public confidence**.”
  - Even smoke (without fire) shakes the foundation and makes people nervous.
- Ethical behavior emanates from character, sentiment of the community and moral duty and obligation.
- No matter how righteous the ethical plank, think first before you act.
- Regardless of one's raising, find a way to care and feel.
- “**Balance**, next to love, is the most important principle in the world.”  
(Coach John Wooden)
- Always let your *professional face*, not your *personal face*, represent how you perform your job.
- Be sincere, stay strong, work like you don't need the money and always serve.
  - Remember :

“Police Officers eat free every Tuesday.”

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- There's no right way to do a wrong thing.