



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

## Workplace Ethics Subject Aid

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### Description

A short guide to some key resources and readings on the topic of workplace ethics.

### Body

Workplace ethics includes ethical issues and questions that professionals, researchers – and anyone working in an organization – may encounter. This includes issues that can arise between supervisors and employees, professionals and clients, and between companies and the public.

## Subject Overviews

**Davis, Michael. 2016. "[Engineering ethics, individuals, and organizations](#)." *Science and Engineering Ethics*. 12 (2): 223-231.**

This article evaluates a family of criticism of how engineering ethics is now generally taught. The short version of the criticism might be put this way: Teachers of engineering ethics devote too much time to individual decisions and not enough time to social context. There are at least six versions of this

criticism, each corresponding to a specific omitted subject. Teachers of engineering ethics do not (it is said) teach enough about: 1) the culture of organizations; 2) the organization of organizations; 3) the legal environment of organizations; 4) the role of professions in organizations; 5) the role of organizations in professions; or 6) the political environment of organizations. The author's conclusion is that, while all six are worthy subjects, there is neither much reason to believe that any of them are now absent from courses in engineering ethics nor an obvious way to decide whether they (individually or in combination) are (or are not) now being given their due. What we have here is a dispute about how much is enough. Such disputes are not to be settled without agreement concerning how we are to tell we have enough of this or that. Right now we seem to lack that agreement—and not to have much reason to expect it any time soon.

**Davis, Michael. 1997. "[Better Communications Between Engineers and Managers: Some Ways to Prevent Ethically Hard Choices](#)", *Science and Engineering Ethics* 3(2): 171-213.**

This article is concerned with ways better communication between engineers and their managers might help prevent engineers being faced with some of the ethical problems that make up the typical course in engineering ethics. Beginning with observations concerning the Challenger disaster, the article moves on to report results of empirical research on the way technical communication breaks down, or doesn't break down, between engineers and managers. The article concludes with nine recommendations for organizational change to help prevent communications breakdown.

**Downey, G.L., J. Lucena, B. Moskal, R. Parkhurst, T. Bigley, C. Hays, B. Jesiek, L. Kelly, J. Miller, and S. Ruff. 2006. "[The Globally Competent Engineer: Working Effectively with People Who Define Problems Differently](#)," *Journal of Engineering Education*. 95(2): 107-122**

This paper addresses the concept of global competency for engineers and shows that key achievement in the often-stated goal of working effectively with different cultures is learning to work effectively with people who define problems differently than oneself. The authors also offers a minimum set of learning criterion for the global competency of engineers and a set of three learning outcomes whose achievement can help engineers fulfil this criterion.

**Gallo, Amy. 2015. "How to Speak Up About Ethical Issues at Work."**

**Harvard Business Review. June 4. Accessed 20 July 2016.**

**<https://hbr.org/2015/06/how-to-speak-up-about-ethical-issues-at-work>.**

Provides a short but illuminating guide for when and how to speak up when you think you see a colleague doing something unethical.

**Meyers, Christopher. 2004. "[Institutional culture and individual behavior: creating an ethical environment](#)." *Science and Engineering Ethics*. 10(2): 269-276.**

The author argues that institutional culture, along with the irresponsible conduct of individuals, contributes to the way in which research is conducted. To help improve institutional ethical culture, it helps to define what viable action options are, what the organization's genuine mission is, and what behaviors will be rewarded or criticized.

**Weil, Vivian and Robert Arzbaecher. 1996. "[Ethics and Relationships in Laboratories and Research Communities](#)." *Business and Professional Ethics Journal*. 4 (3): 83-125.**

An excellent article that discusses many of the ethical questions and issues that can come up in a research environment. Includes case studies and commentaries to illustrate key points.

## **Policy and Guidance**

**Lockheed Martin. 2016. "Setting the Standard: Code of ethics and business conduct." Accessed 13 October 2016.**

**<http://www.lockheedmartin.com/us/who-we-are/ethics/code-of-ethics.html>**

An example of a corporate code of ethics that provides a good overview of how codes of conduct like this help employees address ethical issues that arise in the workplace. You can find many more in the [Ethics Codes Collection](#), maintained by the Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

# Bibliography

**Online Ethics Center for Engineering and Science. 2016. "Engineers in the Workplace Bibliography." In Online Ethics Center for Engineering and Science. <https://onlineethics.org/cases/engineers-workplace-bibliography>**

Discusses issues in workplaces of different types – corporate, research, not-for-profit, governmental – and some of the issues that can arise in all of these situations, including relationships between employees and employers, organizations and clients, bribery, and organizations and community relations.

## Notes

Reviewed by Michael Davis, October 12, 2016.

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## Resource Type

Bibliography

## Parent Collection

OEC Subject Aids

## Topics

Bidding Process

Bribery and Extortion

Community Relations

Employer/Employee Relationships

Engineer/Client Relationships

Workplace Ethics

## Discipline(s)

Engineering

Research Ethics

Authoring Institution

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