Navigating Thorny Ethical Dilemmas

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We live in an increasingly complex and challenging world in which we frequently face difficult ethical dilemmas in the process of running a business. These choices frequently put the interests of different stakeholders at odds. Should we lay employees off during difficult economic times? How much information should we disclose to investors about customers' negative reactions to our latest product? You discover your best sales person has been over-promising customers and selling features that are not yet even in development -- what do you do? Your IT manager informs you of a potential data breach, but it is unclear yet if any customer data were compromised -- do you inform your customers immediately or wait? These are all tough ethical dilemmas.

The Business Ethics Resource Center at the University of St. Thomas has created an ethical decision-making tool designed to help you break down difficult issues and think them through. This tool will enhance your decision-making by allowing you to see an ethical situation from different perspectives. It includes several steps that help you add information about your issue, answer questions, review reports, and make a decision. These steps include describing the issue, thinking through who is affected by this issue (stakeholders), developing options and exploring ways of thinking about the issue.

So the next time you are faced with a difficult ethical decision, such as how to handle a potential data breach or discovering unethical practices by one of your employees, this tool can help structure your problem and figure the best solution.

Explore the "Empowering Ethics" tool here (https://www.empoweringethics.org)