



# Towards Ethical Practice

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Just like the Wizard couldn't turn the Cowardly Lion into a Brave Lion, I can't turn you into an ethical person



- You can't just pin on a medal, and call yourself ethical
- My goal is to teach you strategies for acting ethically



**You can't step in the same river twice**

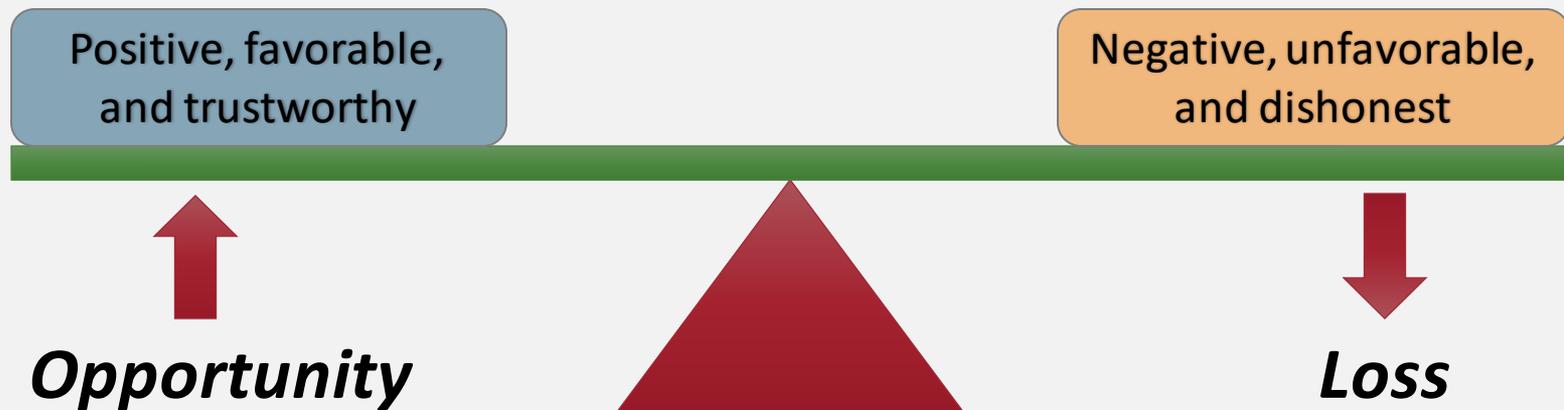


**You can ask the right questions**



# A reasonable goal

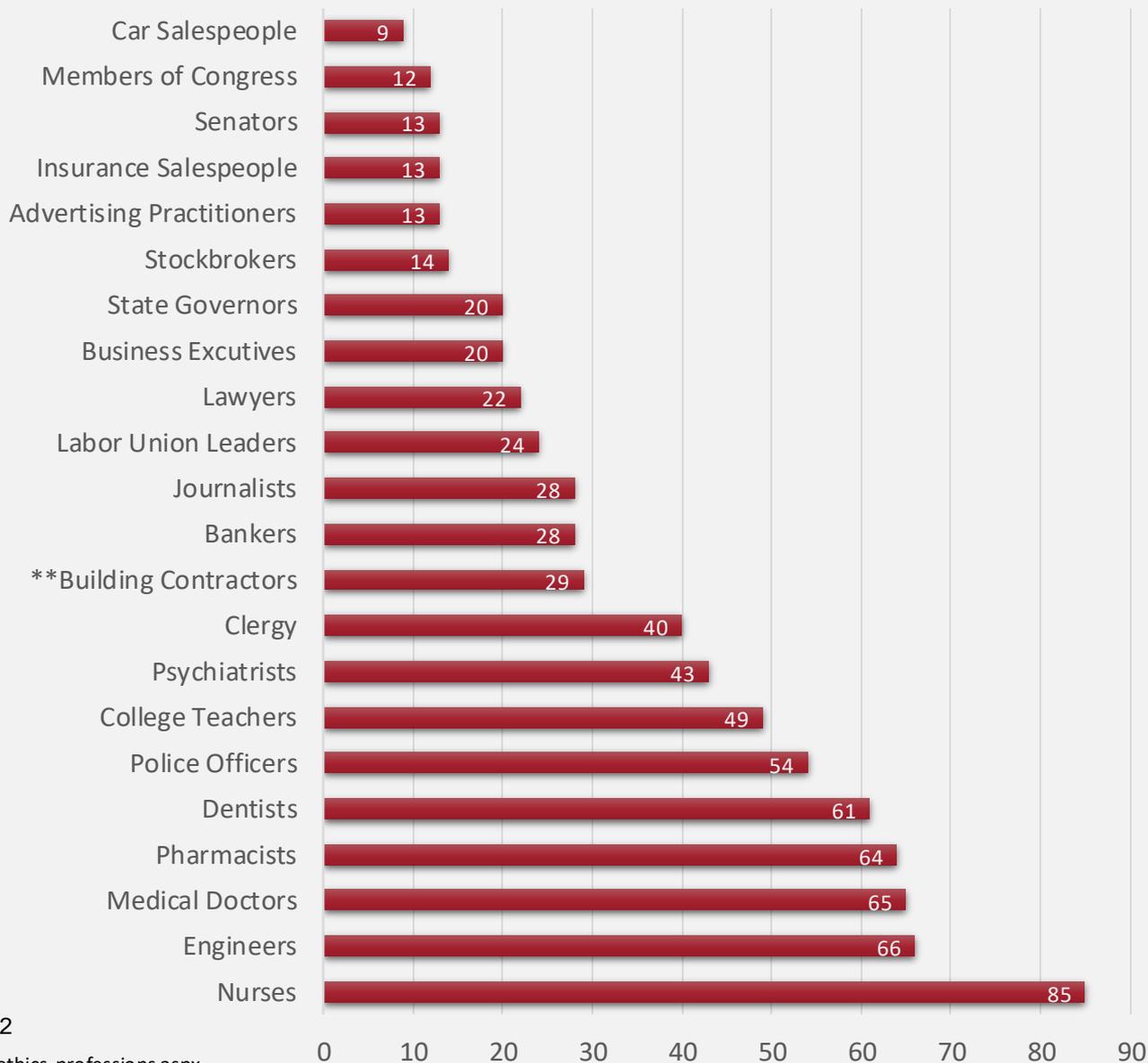
- We will never be perfect, but...
- We can think about what it means to behave ethically
- We can commit to acting ethically
- Committing now makes it easier to choose ethical option later



# Percent Very High/High (Dec 2-15, 2019)

## GALLUP® POLL Honestly/Ethics in Professions

*“Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields -- very high, high, average, low or very low?”*



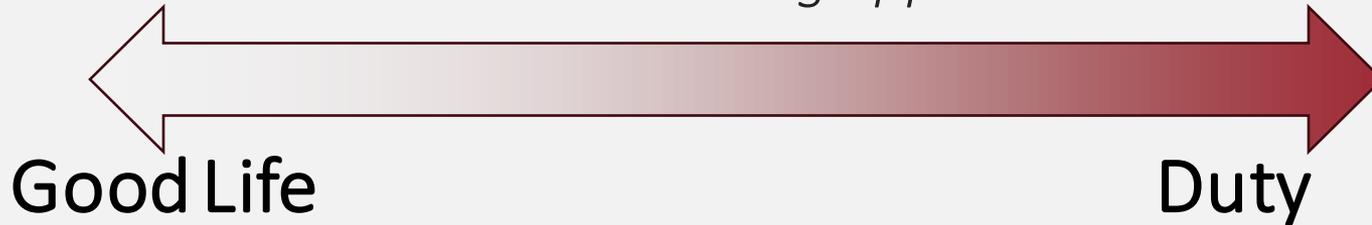
\*\*Building contractor data from 2018 Dec 3-12

Source: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1654/honesty-ethics-professions.aspx>



# Spectrum of Morality

*Two contrasting approaches*



- “What is the best life for a human being?”
- Individualistic perspective
- Asks...
  - What do humans care about?
  - Is a “happy life” equivalent to the “good life”?

- A binding requirement, regardless of circumstance
- Responsibility to the greater community
- Asks...
  - What behavior is always unacceptable?
  - What does sacrifice look like?

[Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy - Good Life](#)

[Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy - Duty](#)

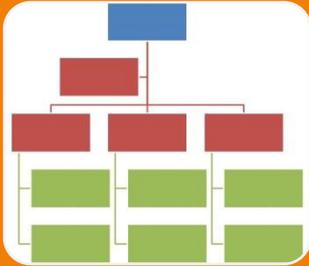


# COMPARING MORALITY & PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

	MORALS	ETHICS
MEANING	Interpersonal compass for behavior	Guidelines for behavior (societal norms, religions, etc.)
BASED ON	Values, beliefs, and principles that govern an individual sense of right and wrong	Professional or philosophical systems of thought
CONSISTENCY	Vary from person to person	Vary from one culture to another, but somewhat uniform within a culture
WHAT THEY TELL US	The ethically correct choice from an individual's perspective	The ethically correct choice from an industry and/or set of professional guidelines

Source: Smith, John. (2022, Oct 23) [Moral vs. Ethical: 3 Differences Between Ethics and Morals-2023](#). Masterclass.





Organization



Ethic of Professional Service



Body of Knowledge



# Ethics Stakeholders



<https://www.asce.org/publications-and-news/civil-engineering-source/article/2020/11/10/asce-installs-new-code-of-ethics>



# Ethics: A Practical Perspective

Ethics involves doing the right thing even when it costs more than you want to pay. It is what we should do.



# When we think of unethical behavior...

Lying

Fraud

Bid rigging

Conflict of  
interest

Sexual  
harassment

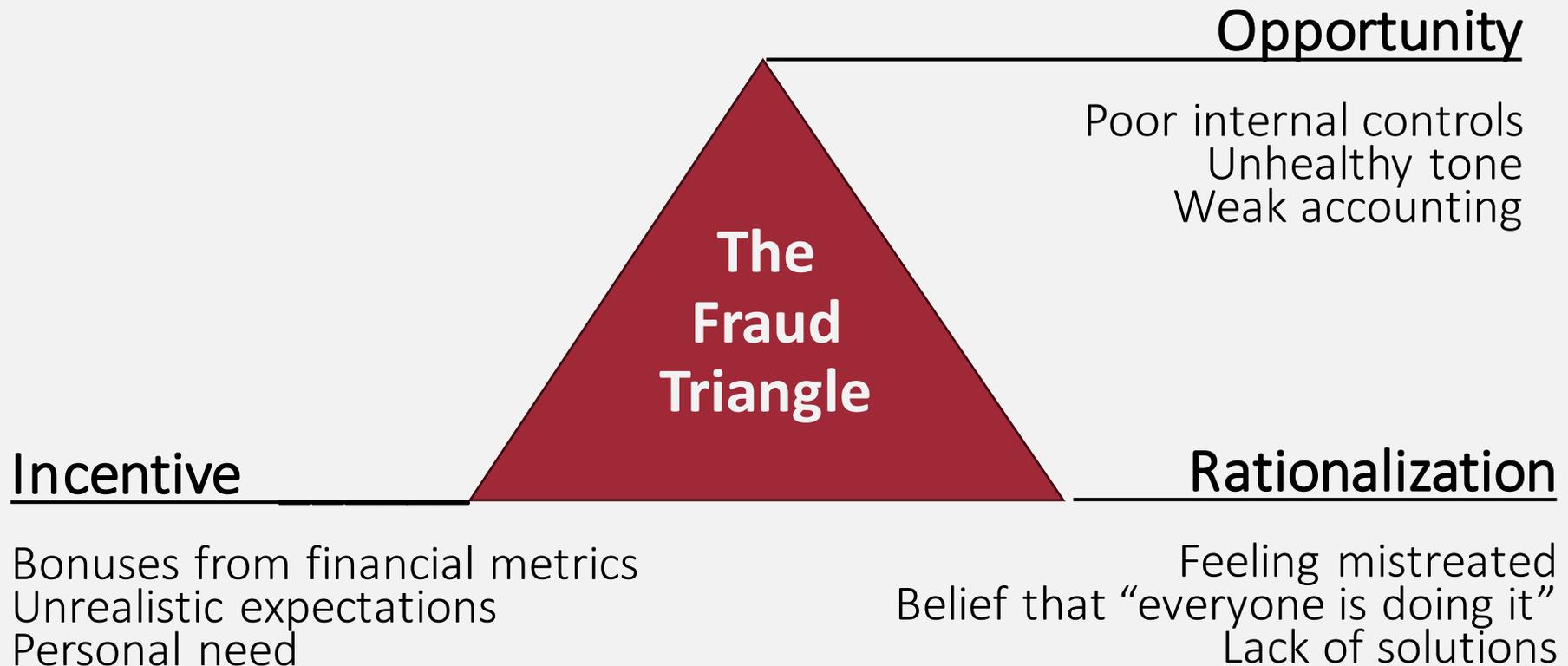
Discrimination

Bribery

Ignoring public  
safety



# The Psychology of Fraud



Source: <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/accounting/fraud-triangle/>



## SAFETY MOMENT: UNSAFE ACTS

Instead of looking for “things” to blame after an accident occurs, prevent accidents from happening by avoiding the following:

- Taking shortcuts
- Being over-confident
- Starting a task with incomplete instructions
- Poor housekeeping
- Ignoring safety procedures
- Mental distractions from work
- Failure to pre-plan the work



**UNSAFE ACTS** cause

**4 TIMES**

as many accidents  
and injuries as

**UNSAFE  
CONDITIONS**



# When we think of ethical behavior...



# Most people behave ethically

- Studies emphasize the prevalence of unethical behavior, showing some people make bad choices
- Buried in research is the fact that **the majority of people behave ethically**



# Ethics and Poor Judgment

- Right vs. Wrong

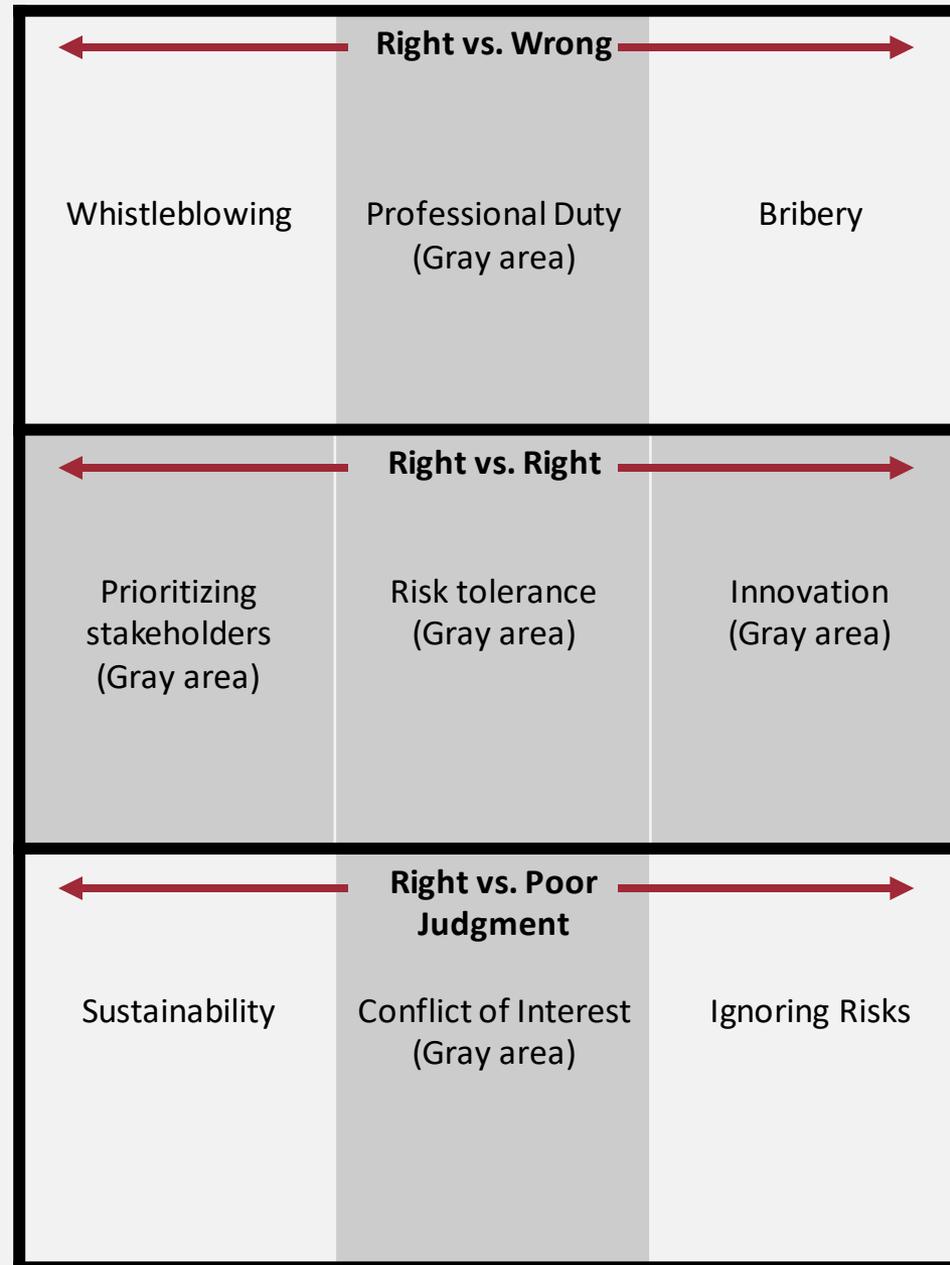
- Agreed upon standard of conduct
- Behaviors judged against normative standard
- Either below or above standard

- Right vs. Right

- Moral gray area
- Requires us to evaluate secondary effects
- Groupthink vs individual

- Right vs. Poor Judgement

- Not considering all the risks
- Related to experience, intuition, and competence
- Time pressure constrains decision making



## Ethical Tensions

Trust versus loyalty

Individual versus community

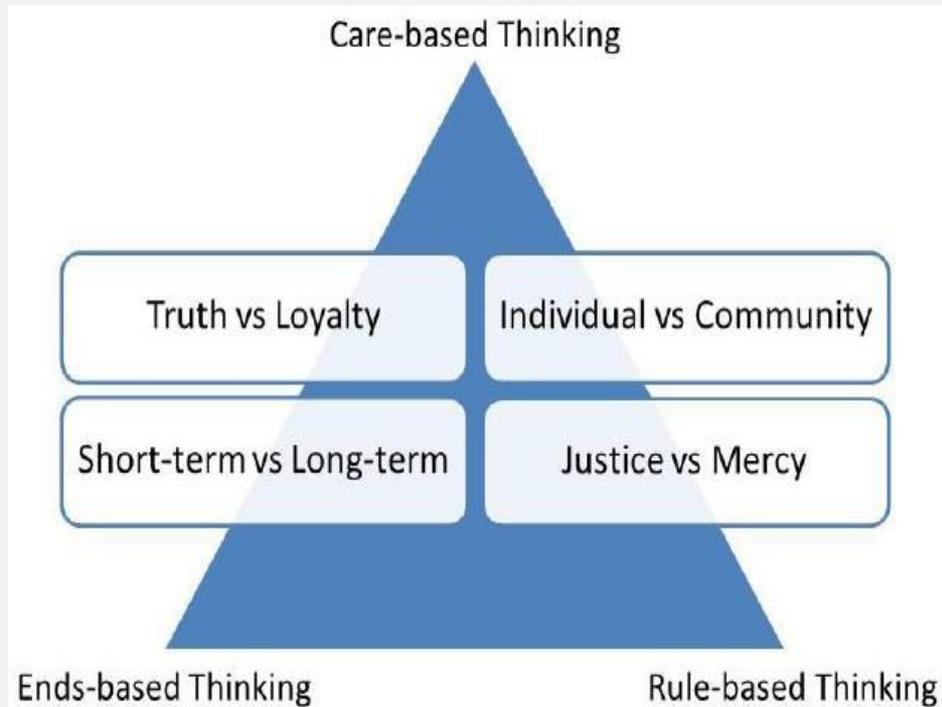
Short-term versus long-term

Justice versus mercy



# Moral Courage... Decision Principles

Rushworth M. Kidder

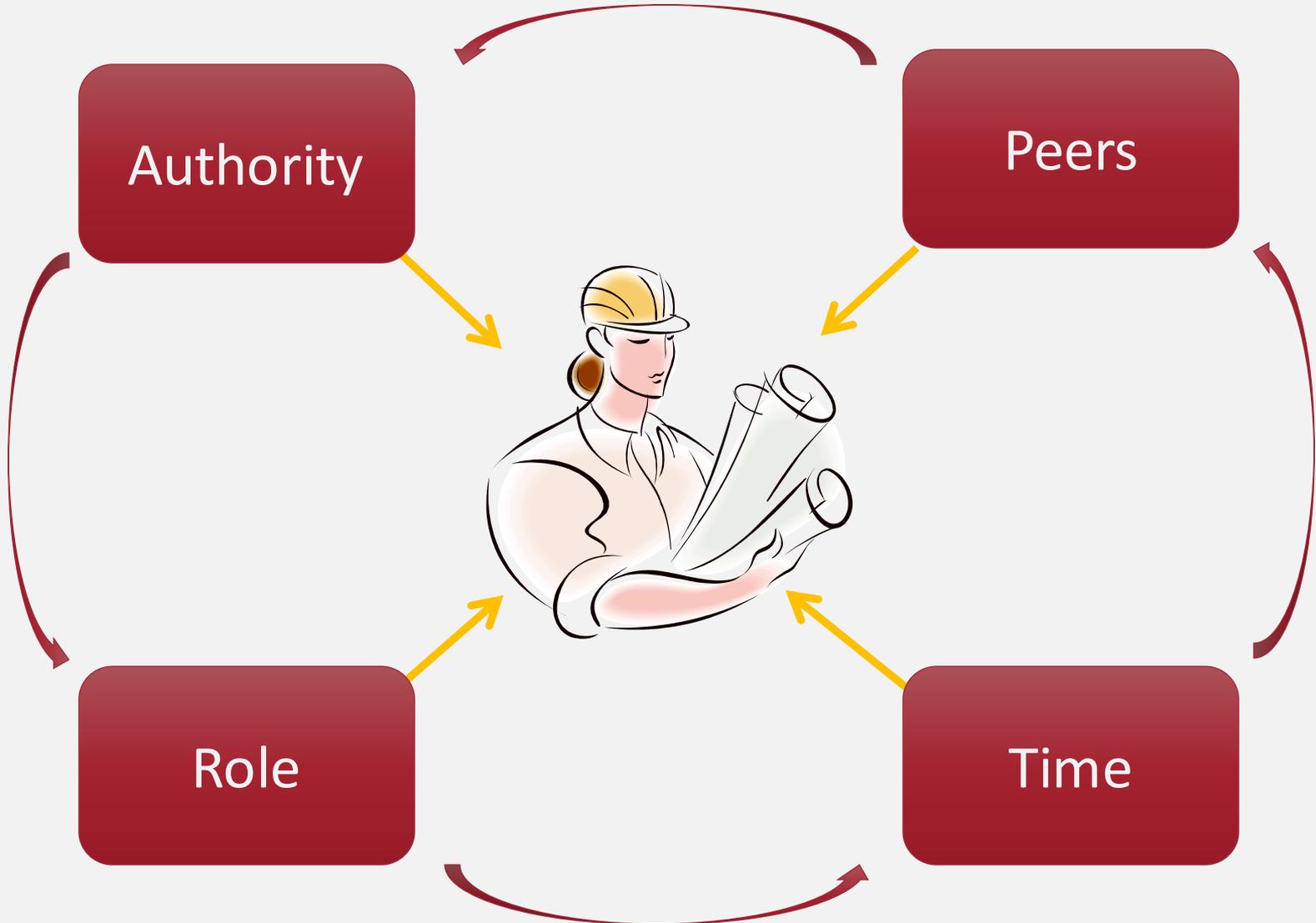


**Why do people make  
unethical decisions and  
engage in unethical  
behaviors?**

**PRESSURE**



# Pressures and Decision-Making



# Pressures by Intensity



**What can we do about it?**

**Practical advice for  
promoting and engaging in  
ethical behavior**

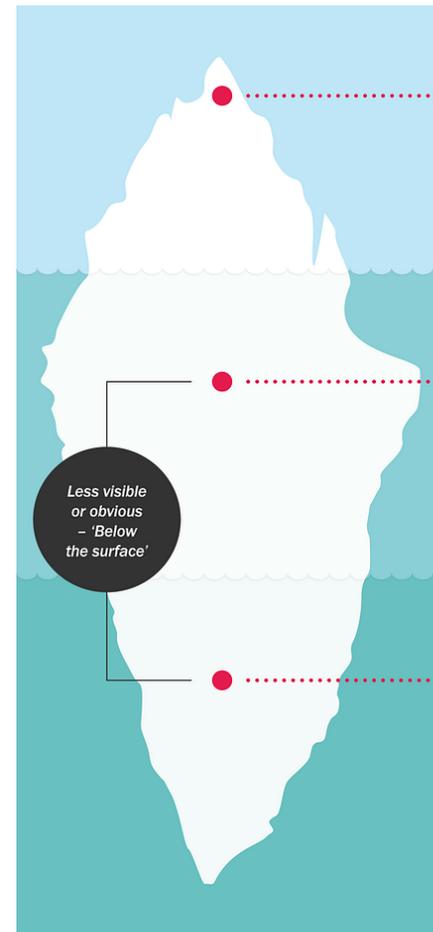


# How Culture Can Be Observed

- We think about culture as the combination of collective beliefs, values and norms which shape how people think, feel and act.
- Leading culture academic Edgar Schein describes culture as ‘the sum total of everything an organization has learned in its history in dealing with the external problems — which would be goals, strategy, how we do things — and how it organizes itself internally.’

## How culture can be observed

MARTIN JENKINS



### Visible or tangible things which reinforce culture

*The things you can see and touch.*

For example, if you walk into an organisation with a collaborative culture, you might see shared spaces, you'll hear people talking and planning together, and if you stick around long enough, you might find there are awards for those people who are the most effective connectors and team players.

### Espoused values

*What people say is important and what is understood to be valued.*

For example, seeing the organisational values posters on walls, or hearing leaders talk about how 'customer needs come first'. These can sometimes represent the 'public relations face' of the organisation, rather than the reality.

### Underlying beliefs and assumptions

*Our core beliefs - what people think and feel to be true.*

These assumptions might not be conscious, but they can heavily influence how people act and interact. For example, an organisation may say it values innovation, but staff members have seen leaders punish ideas that fail. In that situation, people will quickly learn that it's safer to keep their heads down and toe the corporate line, and that will shape their behaviour from then on.



Source: [www.MartinJenkins.co.nz](http://www.MartinJenkins.co.nz), adapted from Edgar Schein's Culture Iceberg Model

Source: <https://medium.com/from-the-exosphere/whats-for-breakfast-shaping-culture-and-behaviour-to-create-better-places-to-work-bf774e63fef6>

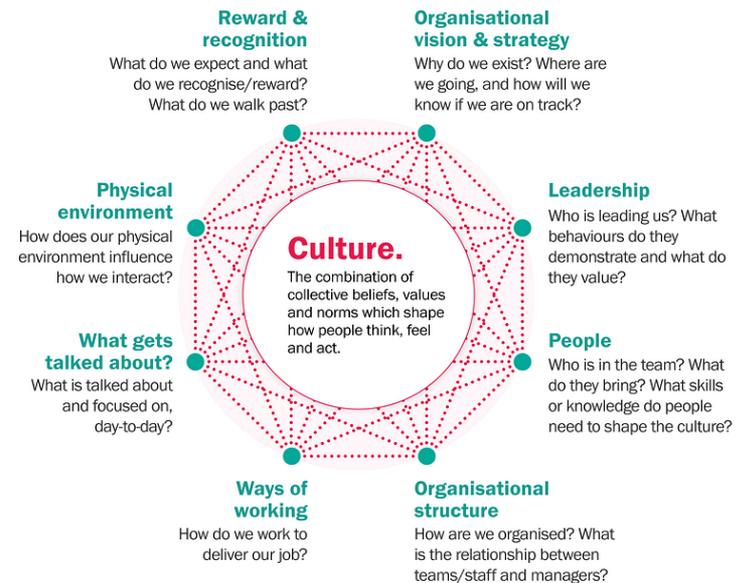


# Factors Which Shape Organizational Culture

- Each of these factors presents a point of leverage, and their impact on culture is often not recognized or understood.
- For example, if your organization wants to see more collaboration and innovation but people are rewarded based on individual metrics, there's a gap between what's expected and what's valued.

Source: <https://medium.com/from-the-exosphere/whats-for-breakfast-shaping-culture-and-behaviour-to-create-better-places-to-work-bf774e63fef6>

## Factors which shape organisational culture



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MARTIN JENKINS

# Five Barriers to an Ethical Organizations

	ILL-CONCEIVED GOALS	MOTIVATED BLINDNESS	INDIRECT BLINDNESS	THE SLIPPERY SLOPE	OVERVALUING OUTCOMES
DESCRIPTION	We set goals and incentives to promote a desired behavior, but they encourage a negative one.	We overlook the unethical behavior of others when it's in our interest to remain ignorant.	We hold others less accountable for unethical behavior when it's carried out through third parties.	We are less able to see others' unethical behavior when it develops gradually.	We give a pass to unethical behavior if the outcome is good.
EXAMPLE	The pressure to maximize billable hours in accounting, consulting, and law firms leads to unconscious padding.	Baseball officials failed to notice they'd created conditions that encouraged steroid use.	A drug company deflects attention from a price increase by selling rights to another company, which imposes the increase.	Auditors may be more likely to accept a client firm's questionable financial statements if infractions have accrued over time.	A researcher whose fraudulent clinical trial saves lives is considered more ethical than one whose fraudulent trial leads to deaths.
REMEDIES	Brainstorm unintended consequences when devising goals and incentives. Consider alternative goals that may be more important to reward.	Root out conflicts of interest. Simply being aware of them doesn't necessarily reduce their negative effect on decision making.	When handing off or outsourcing work, ask whether the assignment might invite unethical behavior and take ownership of the implications.	Be alert for even trivial ethical infractions and address them immediately. Investigate whether a change in behavior has occurred.	Examine both "good" and "bad" decisions for their ethical implications. Reward solid decision processes, not just good outcomes.



# How Do We Maintain an Ethical Culture?

- Ethical **congruence** is when values, behaviors, and perceptions of an organization are aligned.
- To improve ethical culture, it is vital that individuals are **aligned** with its expected practices.
- **Leaders** should increase ethical congruence and project their behavior that follows the organization's ethical practices.
- However, in a strong culture it can also restrict **new mindsets and behaviors** that may contribute to success in a changing environment.



# Practical Applications

- People tend to trust people they know, and who are generally concerned with their well-being.
- Trust cannot grow in an organization in which people are disengaged.
- An ethical culture is difficult to maintain when employees are burned out, dispirited, and disengaged. Employees are more likely to ignore bad behavior and lower standards when it comes to their own behaviors.
- When mistakes and ethical missteps occur, if and how we address them says a lot about the organizational culture and what we really value and care about.
- Leaders are powerful forces for increasing ethical effectiveness and congruence in their workplace. Leaders need to be conscious of their role and behaviors and how it projects across the organization.



# Practical Applications

*When a bomb ripped through the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, killing 168 people, the employees in The Boldt Company office 7 miles away heard the blast and wondered how they could help. They contacted fire department personnel, who asked them to bring key staff and every piece of construction equipment available to the site as soon as possible. For the next three weeks, Boldt dedicated all of its local resources, including more than 120 employees who frequently risked their own lives, toward assisting the rescue and recovery efforts. Boldt staff logged some-2,600 hours at the site but refused to accept payment for their services.*

Col. Otis Williams, Commander of the Tulsa District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the time, whom I served with in Thailand and in Washington, verified this story.

Col. (Ret.) Clifford J. Schexnayder



# Practical Questions to Ponder

- Is the **culture** the one that emphasizes doing “the right thing in the right way”?
- Is **leadership** clear about creating a culture of ethics and the corresponding expected behaviors?
- If the **expected behaviors are not met**, is the employee dealt with a punitive or restorative manner?
- Leaders make decisions and do not always experience their consequences directly. Are their **feedback loops** to help the organization function effectively?

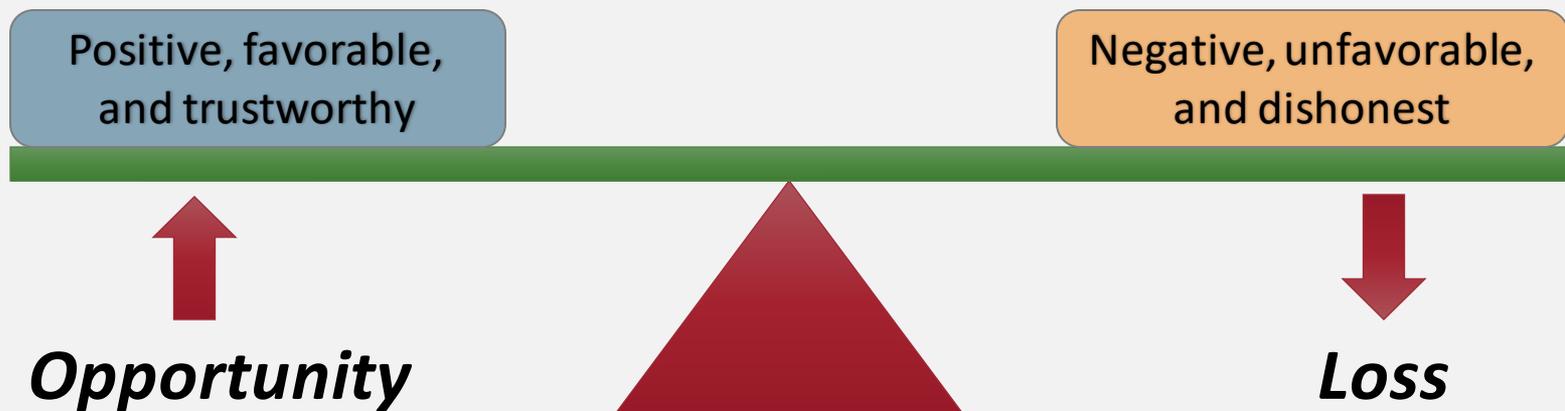


# Leadership and Ethical Behavior



# A Reasonable Goal

- We'll never be perfect.
- But we can think about what it means to behave ethically.
- And we can commit to acting ethically.
- Making this commitment ahead of time makes it easier to make the right choice.



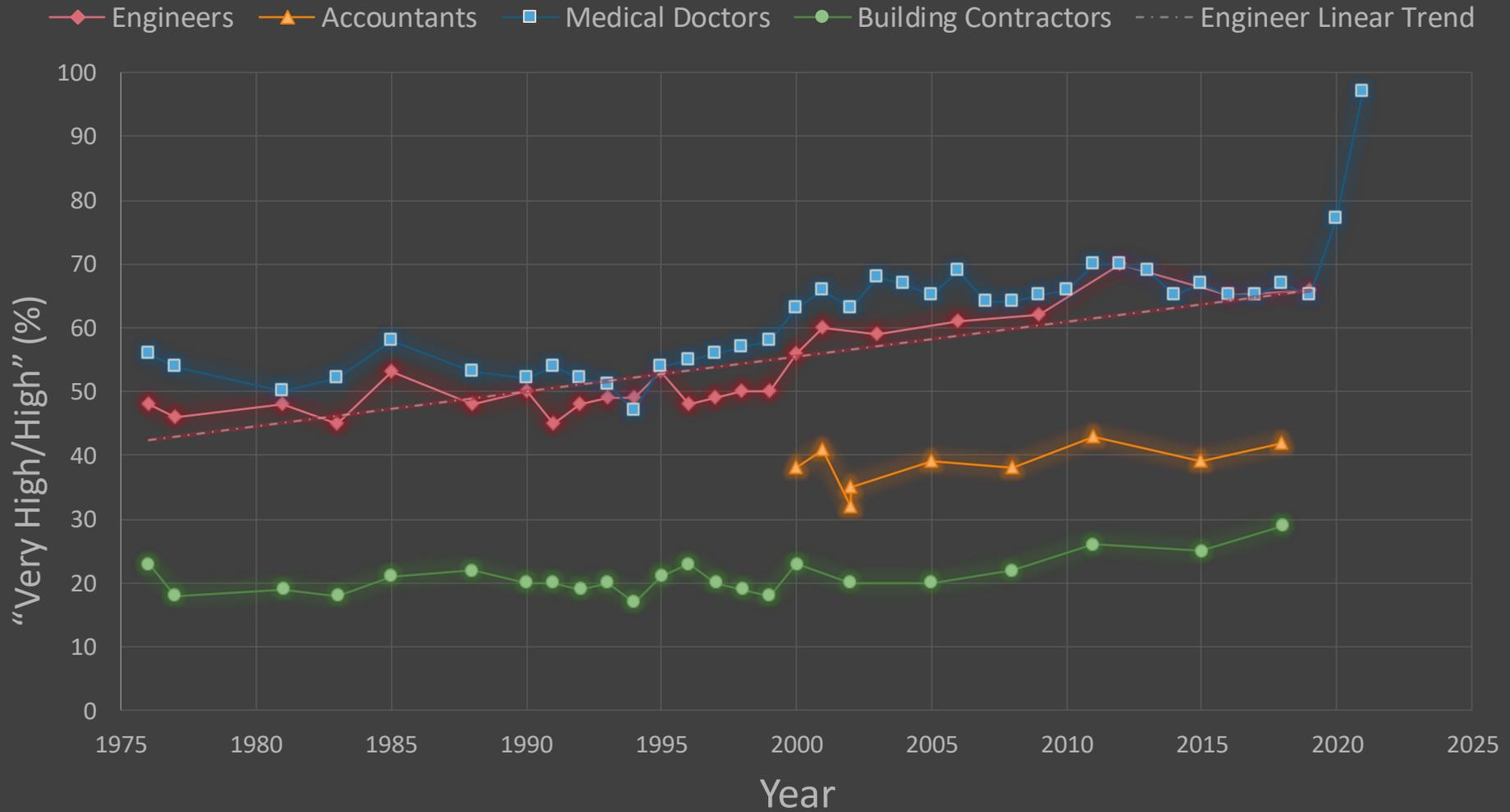


# Questions & Comments? Thank you!

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# Engineers Compared to Other Professions



# Integrity Strategy vs. Compliance Model

*“With the integrity strategy... Ethical values shape the search for opportunities, the design of organizational systems, and the decision-making process used by individuals and groups. They provide a common frame of reference and serve as a unifying force...”*

	COMPLIANCE	INTEGRITY
Ethos	Conform to externally imposed rules	Self govern according to chosen standards
Objective	Avoid criminal charges	Enable responsible conduct
Leadership	Lawyer-driven	Management-driven
Behavior	Autonomous beings guided by material self-interest	Social beings guided by values, ideals, peers, and self-interest
Standards	Laws and regulations	Company values, aspirations, social obligations

Managing for Organizational Integrity [Lynn S. Paine](https://hbr.org/1994/03/managing-for-organizational-integrity), <https://hbr.org/1994/03/managing-for-organizational-integrity>



# Are We Reporting What We Witness?

Ethical Violation	Rank among OBSERVED violations	Rank among REPORTED violations
Abusive behavior	1	24
Conflict of interest	2	21
Failing to correct health and safety risks	2	10
Wasting, mismanaging, or abusing company resources	4	26
Lying to employees	5	33
Violating OSHA guidelines	5	23
Stealing or theft	5	19
Lying to subcontractors, vendors, or suppliers	8	32
Lying to owners, clients or customers	9	34
Discriminating against employees	9	28
Abusing substances, such as drugs or alcohol, at work	9	21

Source: National Business Ethics Survey of the U.S. Construction Industry: Gauging Industry Practices & Identifying Ethics Challenges. Rep. Ethics Resource Center, 2013. [Online] [18 May 2015] page 14.

