

Moral Excellence: The Research

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Study Design

Structured interviews with twenty business professionals led to the creation of a theory of moral excellence. This study utilized the exemplar methodology, which posits that studying exemplary outliers in a specific domain yields insights about the most advanced aspects of development (Bronk, 2012).

Key Question

Which aspects of human volition keep people morally straight?

Criteria

To qualify for this study, all exemplars demonstrated a willingness to risk their own job security or career growth in order to live according to their values.

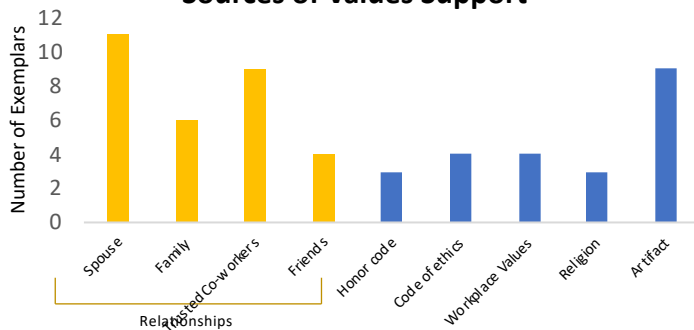
Meet the Exemplars

Three former Presidential Appointees, including a former member of the U.S. National Security Council; two Naval Academy graduates; a Marine Corps Captain; a law professor; a former governor; a university president; and senior executives at regulatory agencies and prominent businesses.

Moral Awareness

Exemplars devise their own methods of moral inspiration and affirmation. Many rely on multiple methods, such as a close relationship, an honor code, and an artifact. Note: the total responses are greater than the number of participants.

Sources of Values Support

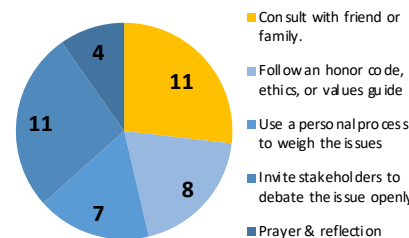


“My wife is the most principled person I’ve ever met. She instilled in me the fact that if you believe in something, you have to follow through on it.” W.M.

Perspective

Exemplars also create their own process for gaining perspective. Many discuss an issue with a trusted companion before taking action. Note: the total responses are greater than the number of participants.

Processes for Gaining Perspective

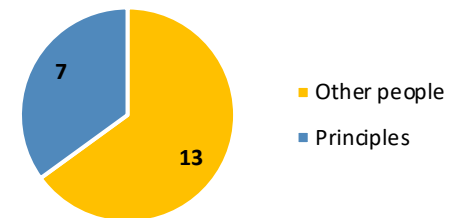


“My position is not absolute. When I find out I’m wrong, I’m the first one to step up and acknowledge it. And that willingness to be wrong has served me well by helping me build trust.” C.C.

Moral Courage

Without moral courage, there is no hope for a just society or for a workplace in which people flourish. Exemplars’ reasons for exerting moral courage are illustrated below, and each is represented once.

Reasons for Taking a Risk



“When you make the right decision, it’s rewarding. That doesn’t mean it’s comfortable, but it is comforting. The lack of comfort you feel before taking action is what drives you to make the right decision.” B.H.



OTHER PEOPLE INFLUENCE OUR MORAL CHOICES

Relationships are key to moral excellence. Relationships that enable people to grow while upholding their personal moral framework serve as a uniquely vital source of well-being.