

TEACHING ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN MARKETING

Thomas R. Wotruba, Department of Marketing, College of Business Administration,
San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182, Phone: (619) 594-5317, Fax: (619) 594-1573

ABSTRACT

Many questions are being discussed today about teaching ethics in marketing. The questions include how to do it, in what courses, with what pedagogical techniques, and even whether it should be attempted at all. This paper looks at only one aspect of the total issue -- the process of ethical decision making. Whether we can, or should attempt to, teach our students what is ethically right or wrong is debatable. But helping our students to become sensitive to the incorporation of ethical and moral factors in their future decision making is an objective being strongly pursued in our curriculum planning, and the subject of these comments.

This paper presents a framework for structuring the teaching of ethical decision making in marketing courses. The framework, based on a model of moral behavior by James R. Rest, includes four components: (1) recognizing alternative actions and affected parties; (2) determining the morally best alternative; (3) giving priority to moral values and intending to do what is right; and (4) converting intentions into action. These steps are described, relevant teaching suggestions are recounted, and references are provided for more detailed source materials.

Copies of the full paper, together with the list of references, are available from the author in the Marketing Department, San Diego State University.