

What Do We Truly Understand About Ethics?

By Melinda Young, CAMEx, CCAM, PCAM



IMPORTANT FACT

All CCAMs are required to take an ethics course every three years to maintain their certification in the State of California.

As members of CACM, our professional code of ethics may be something we take for granted. It is there and we know we are required to follow the outlined mandates, but past a basic overview, what do we truly understand about ethics?

Most of us define ethics as a concept or practice related to what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. Right and wrong or good and bad are moral concepts or values. And, morality and values differ between person to person, affiliate to affiliate, supervisor to supervisor and company to company. And, as most of us know, determining what is right or wrong isn't always as black and white as we might hope.

Fortunately, professional organizations like CACM develop a professional code of ethics for members to follow. Our code of ethics establishes standards in three areas: general, technical and other. Within general standards we find references to topics such as loyalty, fidelity, integrity, confidentiality, due professional care and competence and education. Technical standards includes references to inspections, maintenance, financial operations, insurance, legal issues, communications, records and transfer of client property. Other standards include references to conflicts of interest, use of client funds, fees, commissions and gratuities. Of course, our code of ethics is more exhaustive than this brief listing.

Back to those ethics questions that aren't black and white – there are a few simple tools for you to use to help clarify the question:

“How would this be reported on the local news?” If you knew your decision was going to

be made public in every way, would it change your decision? (Note of appreciation to Mary Howell, Esq. for the news concept.)

Or you could run through this abbreviated list of *Questions to Ask When Making a Decision*:

- Have you accurately defined the problem?
- Would the other party(ies) define the problem the same way? What is different about their definition and yours?
- To whom and to what do you give your loyalty as a person and as a professional?
 - Employer or company first and foremost?
- What is your intention?
- Whom could your decision or action injure?
- Is it possible to discuss with potentially injured party(ies)?
- Will your decision still appear to be the most ethical one in six months, a year, five years, ten years?
- And again, if everyone finds out about your decision, will it adhere to our code of ethics?

At the end of day, our professional reputation may be our most valuable resource – without a consistent ethical approach to everyday business dealings, this resource is at risk.

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