

IntegratedEthics™ (IE) Journal Activity

Participant Guide

Managing for Organizational Integrity, by Lynn Sharp Paine

Sharp Paine, Lynn. 1994. *Harvard Business Review* (March-April). Cambridge: Harvard Business School Publishing, Reprint 94207.

Overview

This journal activity provides a venue for reflection, discussion, and inquiry about the practice of ethical leadership in your organization. While reading “Managing for Organizational Integrity,” by Lynn Sharp Paine, you should consider how the author’s observations fit with your own opinions and beliefs about ethical behavior at work, and reflect on the key questions given in the participant handout. At the journal meeting, those questions will be used as the basis for collegial discussion about your experience with the ethical environment and culture in your facility.

Objectives for the IE Journal Activity Meeting

- Provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your own thinking and behavior with regard to ethical leadership in your practice area.
- Familiarize you with resources available in your local IntegratedEthics (IE) program.
- Enable you to engage in collaborative discussion with colleagues about the ethical environment and culture in your facility.

IE Journal Activity – Participant Handout

IE Journal Activity Format

Optimally, a journal discussion is both the result of prior activity, i.e., reading and reflection, and the catalyst for further activity, as shown in the RADIUS¹ format below.

Read the article critically.

Ask yourself the key questions.

Discuss the questions and follow-up actions with colleagues.

Inquire into IE program resources for help in resolving ethical issues.

Use what you have learned.

Sustain collaboration with others in ethical practice in your facility or VISN.

Read the Article Critically

Lynn Sharp Paine’s article was written primarily for a corporate audience, but has broad application to the health care sector. As you read, take note of any relevance you see to the IntegratedEthics (IE) program in your facility, and to your own practice of ethical behavior and leadership.

Ask Yourself the Key Questions

The four questions below will be discussed in the journal meeting you attend. They offer an opportunity for you to bring up ethics questions and concerns you may have, and to contribute your experience and perspective to the ongoing work of creating a culture that supports open discussion and careful decision-making about ethics.

Question 1: “Organizational ethics has everything to do with management”

Sharp Paine begins by debunking the idea that organizational ethics is “a question of personal scruples, a confidential matter between individuals and their consciences...In fact,” she says, “[organizational] ethics has everything to do with management... Managers must acknowledge their role in shaping organizational ethics and seize this opportunity to create a climate that... fosters exemplary behavior.” (p. 106)

- In addressing ethical concerns at work, how much are we influenced by our own “personal scruples” and how much by the organizational culture around us?
- Have we observed managers “seizing opportunities” to create a climate that fosters an ethical culture? What did they do?

¹ Adapted from the RADICAL model described in the Annals of Family Medicine Journal Club.
<http://www.annrammed.org/AJC/>

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Question 2: Integrity Strategies

Sharp Paine writes, “Though integrity strategies may vary in design and scope, all strive to define companies’ guiding values, aspirations, and patterns of thought and conduct. When integrated into the day-to-day operations of an organization, such strategies can help to prevent damaging ethical lapses while tapping into powerful human impulses for moral thought and action” (p. 107).

- Do we see our facility as having an integrity strategy that defines employees’ guiding values, aspirations, and patterns of thought and conduct? Is the strategy apparent? How does it impact our day-to-day operations?

Integrity strategies are implemented across the organization through the Compliance and Business Integrity Program and the Ethical Leadership component of IntegratedEthics (IE). How well we use these programs locally, however, is up to us. The breadth and depth of the two programs varies from facility to facility.

- What would we expect to see in our facility as a result of a fully-implemented integrity strategy? What would be different?

Question 3: Ethical Values as a Driving and Unifying Force

Sharp Paine writes, “An integrity strategy is characterized by a conception of ethics as a driving force of an enterprise. 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 across different functions, lines of business, and employee groups. Organizational ethics helps define what a company is and what it stands for.” (p. 111)

- How do we, as employees, know what our organization stands for?
- How does our organization ensure that its ethical values “shape the search for opportunities, the design of organizational systems, and the decision-making process used by individuals and groups?” Where are we taking the initiative to make ethics a “driving force?” Where do we lag behind?

(Supplementary) Question 4: Hallmarks of an Effective Integrity Strategy

Re-read the section entitled “Hallmarks of an Effective Integrity Strategy” (p. 112) to make sure you understand the characteristics of each hallmark. Then, based on your experience and knowledge of your facility, designate one hallmark “best,” i.e., most fully incorporated in the culture, and another hallmark “worst,” i.e., least incorporated in the culture.

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Hallmarks of an Effective Integrity Strategy	Best	Worst
1. <i>The guiding values and commitments make sense and are clearly communicated.</i>		
2. <i>Company leaders are personally committed, creditable, and willing to take action on the values they espouse.</i>		
3. <i>The espoused values are integrated into the normal channels of management decision-making and are reflected in the organization’s critical activities.</i>		
4. <i>The company’s systems and structures support and reinforce its values.</i>		
5. <i>Managers throughout the company have the decision-making skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to make ethically sound decisions on a day-to-day basis.</i>		

- Which hallmark got your ‘best’ rating? Which hallmark got your “worst” rating? Why did you rank the hallmarks as you did?
- How could your facility improve its “worst” rating?

Discuss Questions and Follow-up Actions with Your Colleagues

There are many ways to carry on discussion and take action to strengthen the ethical culture in your facility. If you are a leader, your responsibilities for communication and action are laid out in the Ethical Leadership Compass in the IE Primer. If you do not have a leadership role, you still have the right to speak up about ethics concerns—to leaders as well as to other employees—and to act on ethical values espoused by this organization.

Inquire into IE Program Resources for Help in Resolving Ethics Issues

The journal discussion may alert you to sections of the Ethical Leadership Primer and other IE program resources which may not be familiar to you. (For a list of resources, see p. 11 in the EL Primer.) Become acquainted with the resources in your facility, so that you have materials, tools, and contact information at hand when you need help in resolving a complex ethics issue.

Use What You Have Learned

Apply your learning from the discussion to improving your own ethical practices in health care. Your engagement with IntegratedEthics (IE) can inspire others to become engaged.

Sustain Collaboration with Others in Ethical Practice in your Facility or VISN.

All five case studies in the article show that transforming the ethical orientation and behavior of an organization is a process of continuous improvement that can take years—and may never be fully completed. If you are a leader, you have a particular responsibility to “ensure that key values permeate all levels of an organization, are discussed openly and often, and become a part of everyday decision-making” (EL Primer, p. 6).

In addition to practicing and modeling ethical decision-making in your own area, collaborate with other staff in reviewing and supporting progress across your facility. Periodically ask yourself and your colleagues, where are we in the transformation process, and what improvements should we focus on at this time?