

## **Business Ethics**

### **Issues, Actors, Processes**

This is a framework for helping the analyst to understand, to come to grips with, any fuzzy, messy, real-world situation. You may find it useful in clarifying your thoughts on the first topic or on later case studies in the course, but it is only one of several tools for this purpose, so don't feel constrained to use it rather than other techniques you may have to hand.

1. The first step is to decide on the area of interest / situation / environment. This may be drawn as large or as small as you decide necessary, but it is important that you draw a line to begin with, since the act of deciding where to draw it will get you thinking about the structure of the situation, and about your purpose in analysing it. (Note that I am avoiding begging the question by calling the situation a "problem.")

There is no "right" answer to the procedure, which is for the purpose of stimulating imaginative thinking about the situation. (Your answer will depend upon your perspective and purposes.) Hence, there is nothing to stop you returning to an earlier step at any stage and redrawing the boundaries of the area of interest, or relisting the actors, or re-asking the issues, or re-describing the process linkages.

2. The second step is to decide on the issues: the questions or problems related to the area of interest which you decide are important/relevant. It is useful to put the Issue in the form of a question, or series of questions.
3. The third step is to list the actors: those individuals, groups of individuals, or institutions which you decide are important. Sometimes these will be obvious, at other times you will want to make your own classifications.
4. The fourth step is describe the process, the dynamic linkages (ie, the linkages through time) between actors which are relevant to the issues, in order to develop a moving picture, an articulated skeleton, a *model*, of how the actors impinge on each other through time.

Go back to any of the previous steps and revise your thinking. Iterate forward and back until you decide that the I/A/P framework of, analysis has nothing further to offer you in increasing your understanding or adding to your insights.

*Example:* the social and private (psychological) cost of unemployment.

*Relevant Actors:*

1. Fred — recently unemployed, fired
2. Fred's family

3. The CES — a government agency
4. Fred's peers — workmates, fellow unionists
5. Welfare services
6. Potential employers
7. Fred's union

*Issues:*

1. Is there a personal cost to Fred in terms of changed self-esteem and unsatisfied needs?
2. Is the psychological cost to Fred an influence on
  - a. his family?
  - b. society at large?
  - c. others — his peers?
3. Does Fred's plight impose monetary costs on the rest of society?