

PMI Ethical Decision-Making Framework (EDMF)

Introduction

This PMI Ethical Decision-Making Framework (EDMF) document describes steps that can be used to guide an individual in the project management profession through a process to make a decision when confronted with an ethical dilemma. An ethical dilemma is a situation which has two or more conflicting values, none or which overrides the other. As such, these situations are beyond what is defined by law. In the case of an ethical dilemma, the individual is faced with a choice and needs to make a decision.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to supplement the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct with an aid for project management professionals who are confronted with an ethical dilemma.

Comments or questions about this PMI EDMF document can be provided via email to the PMI Ethics Insight Team (EIT): EthicsInsight@pmi.org.

Background and Context

Efforts by PMI global ethics teams continue to increase awareness of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (Code). This framework builds on ethics awareness levels by focusing on members' ethical decision-making capability and accountability. The PMI EDMF was developed as a companion to the Code, to guide ethical behavior.

The PMI EDMF team conducted a worldwide ethical decision-making benchmarking of dozens of organizations. Feedback to draft versions of the PMI EDMF was incorporated from PMI leaders at the 2011 North American Leadership Institute Meetings, from PMI members at the 2011 North American Global Congress, from members of various global PMI Ethics committees, from responses to PMI member surveys, and from the PMI Board of Directors (BoD). (PMI volunteer team: Michael O'Brochta,

Giusi Meloni, Shobhna Raghupathy, Peter Pfeiffer, Ethics consultant, Marty Taylor, 2011). The document was updated based on recent research to improve the effectiveness of the EDMF*.

How To Use The PMI EDMF

The PMI EDMF has been developed for use by individual members of PMI and for use by PMI credential holders; it is aspirational and not mandatory. Since the PMI EDMF is intended to be used as a guide for critical thinking throughout the ethical decision-making process, it is represented as a sequence of questions and sub questions to stimulate the user beginning with the recognition and assessment of the issue and ending with a decision and action. Critical to the successful use of the PMI EDMF is the recognition that the answers to the questions raised by the PMI EDMF are the responsibility of the user. The PMI EDMF can also be effectively used at the end of a decisionmaking process, when a decision is about to be made, to reflectively look back to see if the important steps have been taken and if the important considerations have been made.

Although the PMI EDMF is presented as a logical linear sequence of steps, it is understood that PMI EDMF users will likely find it useful to loop back-and-forth between steps. Since the PMI EDMF is not entirely prescriptive and does not include every possible step or question useful for making an ethical decision, users are encouraged to be stimulated by PMI EDMF to challenge themselves with additional steps and questions.

Assessment:

Make sure you have all the facts about the ethical dilemma

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- To what extent does the dilemma abide, align, or agree with:
 - The law?
 - PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct?
 - Employer's code of ethics and conduct?
 - Client's code of ethics and conduct?
 - Your ethical values?
 - Ethical values of the surrounding culture?

If it does not abide by the law, seek legal counsel. If the answers to the above questions provide substantial facts to make a case, go to the next step. If you are not sure, you may need to gather more facts or ask a trusted person for advice.

Alternatives:

Consider your choices

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List the possible alternative choices.
Consider the pros and cons for each possible choice.

If the alternatives result in a viable solution, go to the next step to analyze your candidate decision. If not, you may need to gather more facts and complete your research.

Analysis:

Identify your candidate decision and test its validity

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- To what extent will your candidate decision have a positive impact or prevent harm to:
 - Project managers?
 - PMI staff or volunteers?
 - · Clients?
 - Your employer's organization?
- Environment?
- Different cultures?
- Future generations?
- Other stakeholders?
- Will this decision seem like a good idea a year from now?
- To what extent are you:
 - Free from influence to make this decision?
 - · Calm enough to make this decision?

If the possible impacts are acceptable, proceed to check your decision against ethical principles in the next step. If not, consider taking time to test another candidate decision, review your alternatives and/or your case.

Application:

Apply ethical principles to your candidate decision

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- To what extent is your candidate decision consistent with the values of:
 - Responsibility?
 - Respect?

- Fairness?
- · Honestu?

If your alignment with these values evokes doubts or seem to create a new dilemma, you might need to reconsider your decision, review the facts, the alternatives, and the implications. If your candidate decision is consistent with the values, move to the next step to decide and take action.

Action:

Make a decision

- To what extent are you willing and able to:
 - · Accept responsibility for your decision?
 - Make your decision public and feel good about it?

If you are comfortable with your decision, take action. If not, retrace these steps to discover a better solution.