

# Ethics and Social Responsibility in Business, Communication, and Social Media:

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## Decision-making

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### I. Introduction

In recent years, educational institutions in the United States and elsewhere have increasingly attempted to break the traditional silo mentality between specific areas of learning by encouraging interdisciplinary studies.

The goal is to broaden the student's understanding of today's highly interconnected, technology-driven, and complex global business environment. Intended to inform and educate students majoring in the Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, this presentation briefly explores the ethical practices in social media, and communication, and the level of decision-making involved.

Actual business/industry case studies related to these concepts are used to illustrate the significance of ethics, morals, and communication.

### II. Bias, Stereotypes, and Social Media

- In all daily interactions, people's perceptions and knowledge of others play a significant role.
- In other words, positive or negative stereotypes may help, or hinder our communications and interactions in any given situation.
- Messages must be crafted to fit intended audience demographics.
- Receiver's bias and stereotypes should be considered.
- What one person finds hilarious, another may find harmful, offensive, or destructive.

### III. Decision-Making

- "Decisions are made explicitly whenever one consciously combines beliefs and values in order to choose a course of action. They are made implicitly whenever one relies on a ritualized response (habit, tradition) to cope with a choice between options (Fischhoff, 1983)."
- Factors that lead to poor decision-making include systematic bias, information overload, uncertainty, not knowing when to act, and/or not knowing how to assess the issue
- It has been theorized that the brain makes decisions in the same manner that the eyes filter information.
- "The brain efficiently encodes the visual world by ignoring predictable information and focusing on the surprising stuff (Singer, 2020)."
- Paul Glimcher suggests that the brain makes decisions in the same way. The more attractive the choice is between two options, the more neurons in the brain will fire rapidly.

### IV. Case Studies

1. People were asked to choose among an assortment of candy bars, including their favorite.
  - If there were only three options, participants would always choose their favorite candy bar, but if 20 options were given, participants would sometimes pick candy different from their favorite candy bar.
  - Then when the experiment leader removed all choices except their favorite candy and the one the participant selected, participants would wonder why they did not choose their favorite candy bar.
1. In 2013, Justine Sacco was fired for tweeting, "Going to Africa. Hope I don't get AIDS. Just kidding. I'm white!"
  - IAC tweeted, "The offensive comment does not reflect the views and values of IAC. We take this issue very seriously, and we have parted ways with the employee in question."

### V. Discussion

#### Social Media Ethics

1. What factors played into Justine Sacco's decision to post what she did?
2. Was there another way to tell the joke and it be perceived differently?

#### Ethics in Decision-making

1. What number of options is the best to have without a person overlooking their favorite choice?
2. If beliefs, values, and habits determine how decisions are made, should clearly favorable options become more attractive and draw focus?

### VI. References

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