SYKES
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Remembering The Past, Living in the Present, and Looking Towards the Future

"The past is history, the future is a mystery, which is why the present is a gift."
– Master Oogway, *Kung Fu Panda*

What were you doing on this day 10 years ago? What are you doing today? What will you be doing 10 years from now? Although we cannot predict the future, we can reflect on where we've been and plan for the future – while doing our best to enjoy the present. In this issue, we look back on the Center's past, talk about its present, and plan for its future.

The Importance of Ethics in Business Education

By: Frank Ghannadian, Ph.D. Dean, Sykes College of Business

Frank Ghannadian, Ph.D.

People ask us as administrators of business education as why teaching and learning of ethics is so important. We can start by stating that lack of ethics means there is nothing worthwhile in a business enterprise. Of course, that is an extreme case of where there is no ethics. Most cases that are worthy of discussing and teaching to our young students or the business community involve issues that are ethically wrong but might be legal. If an act or conduct in a business is illegal, then law enforcement would generally attempt to put a stop to it when they can and should. Business ethics supplement the law and attempt to outline positive behavior beyond the law. Generally, businesses will establish a set of guidelines by developing employee handbooks to promote good behavior for their employees which, in turn, increases trust from all stakeholders, including employees, investors and consumers.

Business schools do a great job in instilling the knowledge students need in accounting, finance, marketing, management, economics and other areas of business. A minimum knowledge in these key business areas is essential for the success of a firm or business, but today we know this is not enough. How a business is run and operated should not be just to maximize benefits to shareholders and others, but it's important to know the impact of actions on our community, neighbors and more.

Having business ethics in the curriculum will provide a basis and conceptual framework to discuss ethical issues and help weigh in potential impact of business decisions. By learning business ethics, future leaders can take distinct actions to make moral decisions and avoid unethical ones. Major companies and corporations have realized today that acting in a socially responsible way leads to increases in profitability, increased consumer satisfaction and employee loyalty.

I am happy that at the Sykes College of Business we have embedded ethical decision-making in many of our classes; and through seminars and student and community awards, we are continuously working to make ethical decision making the top of the list of our business teachings.

The Next Decade

By Robert Marley, Ph.D., Co-Director of Center for Ethics; Associate Professor of Accounting

The year is 2033. The average temperature outside is 117 degrees, eggs are sold individually for $5 apiece, and "Avengers 17: End End End Game" is the top grossing movie of the year. However, not all is grim — the Center for Ethics has made great progress over the decade. Naturally, the Center continues to publish high quality newsletters, hosts the Tampa Bay Ethics Award annually, and sponsors thought-provoking HotSeat speakers twice a year. During the years 2023-2033, the Center greatly expanded its outreach. For example:

• In 2025, the Center added a Student Ethics Award, annually recognizing undergraduate and graduate student recipients who have demonstrated strong ethical character during their time at university.

• In 2028, the "Five Pager Series" was introduced, a forum where scholars and executives publish brief thought pieces exploring the role of ethics in areas of emerging societal change.

• In 2032, the first annual Practical Ethics Conference was help on the UT campus. At the conference, the public joins with thought-leaders from research, industry, and faith for an interactive discussion about the things one can do in everyday life to exhibit and encourage ethical values.

The future is necessarily uncertain and sure to have its share of unwelcome developments. That doesn't mean we should fear the future, rather we should work together to spread the positive developments. I can assure you the Center for Ethics will be leading the way.

May your next 10 years be fruitful.

Robert Marley, Ph.D.

Gender equality in the boardroom: Where does Florida stand?

By Ashley Salaiz, Ph.D., Co-Director of Center for Ethics; Assistant Professor of Management

There is no doubt that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have finally arrived at the forefront of the strategic agenda in corporate America. Fifty-three percent of Fortune 500 companies have a chief diversity officer or equivalent personnel dedicated to assessing and developing diversity and inclusion. This made it all the more surprising when I worked on a project in 2022 that revealed Florida comes in last place in terms of the number of women on Florida public company boards. Out of 117 publicly traded companies in Florida that are large enough to be included on the Russell 3000 Index, only one quarter (24.5%) of board members are women, despite initiatives for public companies to achieve gender-balanced (50% male, 50% female) boardrooms. By comparison, California has the highest percentage at 34%.

My role in generating this census report was to analyze the data to better understand Florida's last place ranking. What we found was surprising: overall there is a lack of awareness of (1) the benefits of having female board directors and (2) Florida's last place ranking. A collaboration of senior executive level women is now working to raise awareness of Florida's last place ranking and to promote the inclusion of more women on Florida corporate boards. And the data show that female executives might be exactly what is needed to drive real change. What we found is the Florida companies with the most female board members also had women in key executive positions. For example, when a company's CEO is female, 43% of board members are female, but when a company's CEO is male, only 24% of board members are female. We found a similar pattern when a female held other executive or board level positions. In other words, more women in one area, such as top leadership, also means there are more women in the boardroom. While Florida companies have a long way to go, awareness of any issue is the first step. Now that the Florida census of female directors has established a baseline and has a task force to monitor and drive change, boardroom gender diversity in Florida may begin to see real growth toward balanced boardrooms.

Ashley Salaiz, Ph.D.

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Social Stories: Why Cognizance of Cultural Variance Leads to More Ethical Behavior Online

By Sabrina Shihvazger, Staff Assistant I, Sykes College of Business

In a society connected by a seemingly omnipotent device in the palm of one's hand, an average monocultural national may miss the world of variance that exists within digital spaces. While cultural anthropology and studies of cultural variance may only be blips on the academic radar of a student outside the realm of humanities, the concept of ethnocentrism persists beyond any degree — perhaps even more so if one is not consciously aware of it. As newer generations turn to digital communication as their primary form of social contact and information exchange, the tunnel vision caused by a lack of multicultural cognizance may lead to a lower ability to express ethical behavior online towards cultures and populations outside of one's own.

Digital spaces have come to serve as a microcosm of our outer world, and they are often as varyingly populated as our highly globalized community. Although social networks launched for anglophone markets evidently have enduring influences from Western populations, many -- such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat, et al -- have grown exponentially within larger international communities. Some -- such as TikTok and Telegram -- find global success spreading far outside their nation of origin alone. As vehicles for social media cross the invisible digital borders between us, our perceptions of the world may be radically shifted by differences in social norms and mores exhibited nation by nation.

Sabrina Shihvazger

Social Stories: Why Cognizance of Cultural Variance Leads to More Ethical Behavior Online

Just as with any other effort to build more inclusive communities, an existent predisposition towards ethnocentrism must undergo "translation" to understand -- as well as be understood -- by a shared, international digital space. The foundation of ethical intercultural communication lies in seeking to grasp viewpoints and backgrounds unlike one's own. To be a digital citizen of integrity, one must bridge the gap between flags by taking the initiative to consciously seek the similarities and differences between us, while realizing that "different" does not mean lesser than. We can all do our part in creating a more compassionate digital social sphere full of shared intercultural meanings if we take the time to endeavor beyond the only horizon we see.

Is TikTok the Next Step for University Communications

By Dominique Walker, Coordinator of Operations, Sykes College of Business

At the recent 2023 AACSB Marketing and Communications Conference, one of the biggest topics of conversation was TikTok. Should universities be using the social media site? And if yes, how should they go about it using it "correctly" while still staying on brand?

The use of TikTok brings up quite a few ethical issues regarding things like appropriateness with content creation and data-security. TikTok is different from other social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram in that content is exclusively video and much more about trends than carefully crafted images and beautiful landscape pictures of your university. This poses a challenge to universities on what type of content to post on TikTok and how to make sure they are engaging the correct audience without offending a different audience who may stumble upon the content. Younger generations like Millennials and Gen Z tend to want brands to be more active on social media and enjoy fun meme content that other older generations might not understand.

One of the presenters at the AACSB Conference told a story of a TikTok they created that poked fun about one of their rival universities. The video did very well with their audience on the app, but was seen by someone who was not their intended target and was very offended by the content. They were eventually instructed to take down the video. So, the ethical issues of how to create relevant and interesting content for your TikTok audience while also not alienating others who may come across the TikTok on other platforms is something universities are still trying to balance.

Another major ethical situation right now involving TikTok is privacy and data-mining. A recent *New York Times* article, "Why Countries Are Trying to Ban TikTok", discussed why the U.S. is taking steps to possibly ban the app completely. In the article, they mention security concerns with TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, sharing sensitive user information with the Chinese government. In fact, the Chinese government has laws that allow them to demand access to data from Chinese owned companies. Whether a university wants to use an app that might allow their data to be taken and shared with a foreign government is something to consider.

Digital communication is changing rapidly, and universities will have to change with it to make sure they are reaching their intended audiences. Whether TikTok becomes a major platform for university communications still remains to be seen.

Dominique Walker

Notes From the Board

By Mark Harmon, SVP, Compliance Training, Citi

Mark Harmon

How you are introduced, greeted and referenced in conversations makes a difference in how you perceive your standing on a team. Interactions affecting these perceptions can occur any time during the course of a normal day. For example, suppose your manager introduces you to a new teammate by simply sharing your name and years of service, while introducing another coworker as the person who built a novel application the team uses to improve productivity. Or suppose your manager talks about a major sporting event that took place over the weekend with a few team members without including the others. Experiencing these situations, or other similar situations, could influence your company's culture by way of micro-inequities.

Let's first define micro-inequities. According to Mary Rowe, Ph.D, the originator of the term, "Micro-inequities are hard-to-prove events which are covert, often unintentional, and frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator. Micro-inequities occur wherever people are perceived to be different. These mechanisms of prejudice against persons of difference are usually small in nature but not trivial in effect. They are especially powerful taken together."* It's important to note that although these behaviors are often unintentional, they can have a cumulative effective over time if left unrecognized or unaddressed.

Over time micro-inequities influence office culture because they affect how team members view the organization and their team. These day-to-day interactions shape how individuals view their fit on the team, thus influencing their contributions to team's output. Creating an atmosphere where all feel valued and where relationships are affirmative is important to create a caring and productive culture. A recent study by Groysberg, Lee, Price and Cheng notes that "cultural norms define what is encouraged, discouraged, accepted, or rejected within a group. When properly aligned with personal values, drives, and needs, culture can unleash tremendous amounts of energy toward a shared purpose and foster an organization's capacity to thrive."**

Leaders need to be aware of how their behaviors affect interactions with their teams. It is not uncommon for casual interactions to express unconscious behavior, where unintended consequences result because an employee picks up on subtle messages of acceptance and value. These unintended messages over time influence an individual and ultimately their perceived value and connection to the team.

Leaders have great responsibility for creating environments where individuals and teams can excel. Therefore, it is important they understand the impact and importance of micro-inequities on their firm's culture. As with so many types of behavioral change, awareness, training and purposeful actions are useful tools. For example, leaders can start by reflecting on their behaviors and the resultant impact on their teams. Of particular importance, Groysberg, Lee, Price and Chang decompose company culture into 8 different factors— where "care" was ranked as the 2nd most important factor in creating a results-oriented company culture.** Thus it can be surmised that a focus on reducing micro-inequities will foster a more caring culture where trust, teamwork and engagement lead to better results.

What can help create a caring culture? First, leaders should seek to define the type of inclusive team-based culture where all team members will thrive. That is, a culture where all employees are comfortable sharing ideas and challenging team members productively, while focusing on output and risk-management. Next, leaders should identify micro-inequities that prevent employees from experiencing the desired culture. Then, the vision of culture and desired behaviors needs to be shared with employees so all can emulate. Lastly, as a leader, get to know your team members by taking time to discover their interests and needs. Find out what gives them purpose and listen to their concerns. By starting with these steps, you will take the lead in building a culture where employees will thrive and succeed.

Mary Rowe, PHD, Micro-inequities (including Micro-aggressions) and Micro-affirmations (Mary Rowe, Ph.D. and creator of the term) https://mitmgmtfaculty.mit.edu/mrowe/micro-inequities/#:~:text=The%20original%20definition%20of%20micro,are%20perceived%20to%20be%20'different.

**Harvard Business Review The Leader's Guide to Corporate Culture. How to manage the eight critical elements of organizational life by Boris Groysberg, Jeremiah Lee, Jesse Price, and J. Yo-Jud Cheng (From the Magazine (January–February 2018))
https://hbr.org/2018/01/the-leaders-guide-to-corporate-culture

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