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A Message From the Chair

The mission of EPAC is clear. As a national association it is essential that its mission be understood and supported by Canadians across Canada. To do so, it is critical to use all available communications tools. EPAC has so far published a newsletter, created a web site, sent periodic electronic bulletins to its members, and held regional and national events. The time has come to take another step to ensure that we continue to support ethical behaviour in organizations.

The publication of an Association Journal is not an easy step but it will provide a needed forum for the exchange of information and as a venue for individuals to publish articles on the subject of applied ethics. This step will complete part of our communication strategy for 2001. The whole Association looks forward to the continued success of the Journal.

Marc Terreau

Marc Terreau is a retired Air Force Major-General who has taken a leadership role in ethics consulting as an Associate of KPMG Ethics & Integrity Services in Ottawa.

Un message du Président

La raison d'être de l'Apec est claire. Il est absolument essentiel que la mission de l'Apec soit bien connue et soutenue par les canadiens à travers le pays. Pour ce faire, nous nous devons de nous servir de tous les moyens de communications à notre porté. Nous avons déjà publié un feuilleton et nous avons maintenant un site web. Par ce medium nous faisons parvenir un bulletin électronique à nos membres en plus de nos rencontres locales,

régionales et nationales. Le temps est arrivé de faire un autre pas vers l'avant et cette résolution soutiendra notre mission d'encourager le comportement éthique dans les organisations.

La rédaction d'un journal de ce genre n'est pas une chose facile mais c'est nécessaire si nous voulons échanger des idées en donnant la chance aux auteurs de publier leurs articles sur l'éthique appliquée. De cette façon nous pourrons rencontrer notre but en matière de communications pour 2001. Il va sans dire que l'Association toute entière transmet ses meilleurs souhaits de succès au rédacteur ainsi qu'aux écrivains.

Marc Terreau

Marc Terreau est un major général d'aviation à la retraite qui est devenu un leader dans les services de conseils en éthique principalement chez les Services d'éthique et d'intégrité de la firme KPMG à Ottawa.

About This Magazine

This is the first edition of the bi-annual EPAC Magazine. In concert with the E-Bulletin it replaces the EPAC Newsletter – we are grateful to Neil Shankman for his work on the newsletter which makes our task easier.

In this magazine we want to provide a forum for the in-depth discussion of issues of interest to EPAC members. All EPAC members are welcome to submit their experiences and advice, analyses and critiques, views and opinions. Please send them in French, English, or both languages to Marc Saner, saner@magma.ca, Fax: (613) 520-3962. The magazine is intended for longer articles. Please send news items to Chantal

Plamondon, info@epac-apec.ca, Fax: (819) 953-8546, for inclusion in the E-Bulletin. Please participate by sending us articles. This is your forum.

Deadlines for contributions are 1 September (Fall edition) and 1 April (Spring Edition). All entries are © the undersigning authors.

Marc Saner and Michael Sutton

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*Michael W. Sutton is a consultant on values and ethics. His most recent work has included the publication (2000) *Building on a Strong Foundation – The Dialogue Continues: A Case Study Approach to Values and Ethics in the Public Service* (with Cornelius von Baeyer). Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development/Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. Michael may be reached at (819) 595-2695 or by e-mail at msutton@comnet.ca.*

À propos de cette revue

Voici le premier numéro du magazine semestriel de l'Association des praticiens en éthique du Canada (APEC). Le Bulletin électronique et ce magazine remplacent « The EPAC Newsletter ». Nous remercions Neil Shankman pour tout son travail avec le dernier.

Nous voulons faire du présent magazine une tribune pour discuter en profondeur des sujets d'intérêt pour les membres de l'APEC, qui

sont tous invités à nous faire part de leurs expériences, avis, analyses et critiques, points de vue et opinions (en les faisant parvenir, en français, en anglais ou dans les deux langues, à Marc Saner; courriel : saner@magma.ca; télécopieur : (613) 520-3962). Les articles d'une certaine longueur seront publiés dans le magazine. Les annonces, communiqués et nouvelles brèves seront publiés dans le Bulletin électronique – veuillez communiquer avec Chantal Plamondon; courriel : info@epac-apec.ca; télécopieur : (819) 953-8546. Nous comptons sur vous pour nous envoyer des articles. C'est votre tribune.

Vos communications doivent nous parvenir avant le 1^{er} septembre (pour le numéro de l'automne) ou le 1^{er} avril (pour le numéro du printemps). Toutes vos communications seront protégées par le droit d'auteur.

Marc Saner et Michael Sutton

Marc Saner est un des directeurs de l'APEC et un expert-conseil spécialisé dans l'éthique des sciences et de la technologie. Il est aussi le directeur de Saner Consulting (www.magma.ca/~saner). On peut communiquer avec lui par téléphone, au (613) 520-3942, ou par courriel, à saner@magma.ca.

*Michael W. Sutton est conseiller en valeurs et éthiques. Parmi ses publications récentes se trouve (2000) *Bâtir sur de solides assises -- le dialogue continue: une approche par études de cas aux valeurs et à l'éthique dans la fonction publique* (avec Cornelius von Baeyer). Ottawa: Centre canadien de gestion/Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor du Canada. On peut le rejoindre au (819) 595-2695, ou courriel: msutton@comnet.ca.*

Lead Article: EPAC – What Kind of an Organization Are We?

by Jane Garthson

Abstract: All associations grapple with achieving the proper balance between members as owners and members as customers. EPAC chose the high goal of making more ethical organizational behaviour our priority. We serve members to the extent the services help achieve that aim. That means EPAC, with its limited resources, has needed to make very careful choices of member benefits that are most important to our members. EPAC has been guided by director experience in other associations, and Donald Belfall's *Creating Value for Members: A Strategic Guide for Associations* (Canadian Society for Association Executives, 1999). As a result, priority is given to timely communication and information, and the development of professional education programs. Both further the mission as well as meeting member needs. We hope these choices will facilitate member retention, member volunteering and revenue generation.



Some associations are dedicated to a high goal and expect that members will remain active because it is such a noble aim. Such associations often remain small but with a strong volunteer base.

Some associations are devoted to member services and trust that a smorgasbord of benefits will keep members coming back. Such associations may be larger, but they tend to use up scarce resources for non-mission

activities. A smaller percentage of members will volunteer, or stay loyal if a competitor offers improved benefits.

Some associations strive continuously to achieve a balance between promoting a high goal and giving members good value.

Another way to say this is that associations must grapple with achieving the proper balance between members as owners and members as customers. Owners are assumed to be committed to the vision and mission of the organization. However, those same individuals, in their customer role, buy association services only as long as they receive good value and service.

How does all this apply to our EPAC?

The High Goal

In EPAC, we set our priorities when preparing for incorporation. Our mission, quoted as the overriding Object in the by-laws, is “to support ethical behaviour in organizations by enhancing the quality and availability of ethics advice and services across Canada”. Our vision has been that Canadian organizations would come to exhibit more ethical behaviour because they had good ethics advice from officers and consultants belonging to EPAC, and from those trained by EPAC’s academic members.

In other words, we chose more ethical organizational behaviour as our priority. We serve members to the extent the service helps achieve that aim. That mission statement has been reaffirmed by every EPAC Board, and will continue to be opened for review by each subsequent Board. The high goal is in place.

Good Value and Service to Members

How do association members perceive a value for membership? Donald Belfall, in *Creating Value for Members: A Strategic Guide for Associations* (Canadian Society for Association Executives, 1999) maintains that such value is “based on the results and outcomes of the association’s actions”. Members outside of the internal workings of an organization are not impressed with process or activities. We know time spent on by-law reviews, budgets, clarifying strategic priorities and other such necessary functions will not attract or retain members, although we must conduct such activities regularly or put the organization at risk.

How do members confirm their perception of value? Belfall identified four common ways. They volunteer, buy non-dues related programs and services, support fundraising and, of course, maintain their membership.

Volunteering

EPAC has been blessed with some great volunteers. Unlike many small organizations, it has never had trouble attracting high quality board members. EPAC has had to hold an election at each AGM so the members could choose which would govern the organization in the coming year. Numerous others have been part of committees and task forces. It is often a struggle to balance EPAC’s volunteer workload with business, family and community priorities – fresh energy is very welcome.

We still have a number of the originals, like myself, and are now starting to collect data on renewal rates. It is not easy to earn a living in ethics in Canada, and we’ve lost some to other fields of endeavour and to retirement.

Affordable Events Across Canada

Participation in EPAC sponsored conferences and ethics circles has been heartening. In North Hatley, in a fierce heat wave with broken air conditioning, we were turning away participants because the room couldn’t hold any more people! On a February weekend when many flights were cancelled or delayed due to winter storms and ice, every registered participant made it to Truro, even a guest from California. Calgary got 32 people out to its last round table, and the Ottawa Round Table mailing list exceeds 100. The interest is there, as is the willingness to pay affordable fees.

Supporting Revenue Generation

EPAC is actively working on a new sponsorship policy, in expectation that significantly increased sponsorship monies will soon be available. We acknowledge important financial support from within the organization from its inception to today. EPAC’s members have sponsored EPAC events or paid for tables themselves, and many others have been able to make corporate space available for meetings.

EPAC directors or their employers pick up all the expenses for travel to board meetings or for teleconference access – not many national nonprofits can make that claim! Of course, we wish we didn’t have to, since it could exclude good potential directors without such funds. Some have also paid their own way to represent EPAC at events of other organizations, like the Canadian Business Ethics Summit. Perhaps some day our membership and value of membership will grow enough that these sacrifices aren’t needed.

Maintaining Membership

Like most membership associations, our main source of revenue is memberships. However, most Canadians owning their own business or occupying senior positions in organizations receive far more membership solicitations than they could reasonably respond to each year. EPAC cannot achieve its mission unless many of those with an ethics focus in their work include EPAC in their annual memberships. That's where concrete member benefits based on the mission come in – principally information and education.

Timely Information

Our readings of association literature, and our personal experience with many other memberships, told us that timely information was the most highly valued benefit of professional memberships. We took that to heart, and shifted efforts away from the paper-based systems that had brought us much praise for their quality. One of our hardest working directors (Chantal Plamondon) not only developed the web site but also volunteered to issue regular e-bulletins. We engaged a member-service provider with high electronic literacy (Karen Moerman). Thus we are able to distribute regular information to members via e-mail, and we are now receiving far more praise for the extensive, well-organized information that members now receive *quickly*.

We knew some would miss the more in-depth articles the old newsletter carried, but space was very limited there too. This first issue of the EPAC Magazine confirms our commitment to continue providing members with thoughtful writings on organizational ethics.

Professional Education

Again, Belfall's book and our own experiences told us that professional education was the second most valued benefit. Being an ethics organization, we felt such education should be grounded in generally accepted knowledge, skills and attributes for an ethics practitioner. That new competencies profile sets those out. The Profile is now forming the basis for self-assessment and for exploration of many other initiatives in education, which you will hear about in future issues and through the members' e-bulletins.

We are very proud that little EPAC, with just over 100 members, can claim a global first in developing a Competency Profile for ethics practitioners.

Other organizations are starting to use the Profile to guide courseware, hiring standards and competency profiles for other professionals.

The Payoff

The best part of these member benefits is that they will further our mission. Focussed education, and self-awareness of strengths and gaps, will lead to better and better ethics advice to Canadian organizations.

Perhaps it is now clear why we do not take some of your \$50 fee and use to find you long distance savings, or car rental discounts. The EPAC Board is sticking to what you will value most, and we hope all members reading this are around to receive that value for many years to come.

As customers, we hope you find the e-bulletins, support for local circles, new educational initiatives and other benefits to be

of extraordinary value. As owners, we hope you share the vision, and will demonstrate the value you perceive by becoming more involved.

I belong to several other national and international membership associations. EPAC not only provides the best value for money, but by far the best value for outcomes – a more ethical Canada.

Jane Garthson

Jane Garthson, Principal Consultant of Mills Garthson & Associates, a Toronto-based firm consulting in leadership and ethics to Canada's voluntary sector. Jane is immediate past chair of the Ethics Practitioners Association of Canada. Contact her at (416) 512-6765, jane@millsgarthson.ca or via www.millsgarthson.ca.

**Sommaire : Article de tête :
APEC – Qui sommes-nous?**

par Jane Garthson

Toutes les associations sont aux prises avec le délicat problème de concilier les intérêts de leurs membres en tant que propriétaires et les intérêts de leurs membres en tant que clients. L'APEC s'est fixé comme priorité de faire la promotion d'un comportement organisationnel plus conforme à l'éthique. Les services que nous offrons à nos membres sont axés sur l'atteinte de cet objectif. Par conséquent, l'APEC, dont les ressources sont limitées, doit choisir avec le plus grand soin, parmi les services qui peuvent être offerts, ceux qui sont les plus importants pour ses membres. À ce chapitre, l'APEC s'est inspirée à la fois de l'expérience d'autres associations et de l'ouvrage de Donald Belfall intitulé *Creating*

Value for Members : A Strategic Guide for Associations (Société canadienne des directeurs d'association, 1999). C'est ainsi que la priorité est accordée à la communication et à l'information, ainsi qu'à l'élaboration de programmes de formation professionnel. Ces deux champs d'intervention contribuent à l'atteinte de notre objectif tout en répondant aux besoins de nos membres. Nous espérons que ces choix nous aideront à garder nos membres, inciteront ces derniers à se porter volontaires, au besoin, et nous permettront de produire des revenus.

Jane Garthson est conseillère principale chez Mills Garthson & Associates, (www.millsgarthson.ca) une firme d'experts conseil en leadership et en éthique dans le domaine bénévole. Jane est présidente sortante de l'Association des praticiens en éthique du Canada. On peut communiquer avec elle par téléphone au (416) 512-6765 ou par courriel à jane@millsgarthson.ca

**Regional Member Profiles:
Nova Scotia Outlook**

by Jack Gallagher

I would really like to have made this an Atlantic Outlook but for now most of the news is from Nova Scotia. We will endeavour to expand our view as we learn of activities in other parts of Atlantic Canada.

A **multi-year health policy project** is underway between Dalhousie University, the Nova Scotia Department of Health and the three teaching hospitals in Halifax. The project is looking at ethics law and policy issues at many different levels. They are also looking extensively at organizational ethics issues in the hospital environments.

Additional information on the Bioethics Department at Dalhousie is available at www.medicine.dal.ca/bioethics/.

The **Department of National Defence** held an “All Services Ethics Week” in the fall of 2000. Leading up to “Ethics Week” special posters were distributed to enhance awareness and facilitate discussion. Feedback from discussions that were held at all levels was forwarded to the National Defence Headquarters for collation and study. The consolidated information has been returned to all units for review and distribution. Ethics Co-ordinators are now mandatory in Maritime Forces Atlantic (MARLANT). The MARLANT Continuous Learning Centre as a special service, to the Personnel Branch, provided the training workshops for the Co-ordinators. Additional information is available on the Defence Ethics Program at www.dnd.ca.

A group of students pursuing Masters degrees at Dalhousie in Business Administration, Law, Environmental Studies, Development Economics, Public Administration, International Development and Information & Library Studies have formed an **organization to promote Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility**. They have been running for about one year and can be found at <http://is2.dal.ca/~cesr>.

The **Canadian Coast Guard** has expanded its ethics awareness training introducing it to all fleet Officers and Crew during corporate training offered through the winter. This initiative saw almost four hundred Coast Guard personnel take a full day of awareness training. The national Coast Guard website is www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca.

The **Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development** has just completed an internal Values Audit. This is going to be used as a stepping-stone to develop corporate values and develop a plan to inculcate the workforce with the new values. CEED is a special arm of the Nova Scotia Department of Education. The CEED website can be found at: www.ceed.ednet.ns.ca.

The **Nova Scotia Roundtable** has been reasonably active this year and has interesting talks in the past few months. Robert Caswill, the Executive Director of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nova Scotia, spoke about the boundary between professional codes and personal life. Carolyn Ells from the Bioethics Project at Dalhousie spoke about a survey that was done at three hospitals to determine their needs for ethics law and policy.

Nova Scotia played host to a **national event of the Ethics Practitioners Association of Canada** in February of 2001 in Truro. There was a wide range of speakers and workshops which made for a very interesting and educational event. EPAC members Dennis and Karen Moerman are to be congratulated for organizing a great program and ensuring that we had a well-run conference. Once the proceedings are finalized they will be posted on the EPAC website.

Jack Gallagher

Jack Gallagher is a Director of EPAC and a Halifax based Associate of Grainger & Associates – consultants in workplace ethics with national and international clientele. Contact: gallagherjack@hotmail.com or (902)489-2378.

Website is www.globalserve.net/~ethics/

Profils des membres régionaux La Nouvelle-Écosse:

par Jack Gallagher

J'aurais bien aimé que ce tour d'horizon englobe toute la Région de l'Atlantique, mais pour l'instant, la plupart des nouvelles proviennent de la Nouvelle-Écosse. Nous vous ferons part de ce qui se passe ailleurs dans la Région de l'Atlantique au fur et à mesure que l'information nous sera communiquée.

Un **projet pluriannuel de politique en matière de santé** commun de l'Université de Dalhousie, du ministère de la Santé de la Nouvelle-Écosse et de trois hôpitaux universitaires de la Nouvelle-Écosse est en cours. Dans le cadre de ce projet commun, on examine sous différents aspects, les dispositions législatives et les questions stratégiques relatives à l'éthique. On y examine également à fond toutes les questions touchant à l'éthique organisationnelle en milieu hospitalier. On trouvera de plus amples renseignements concernant le département de bioéthique de l'Université de Dalhousie au site Internet suivant : www.medicine.dal.ca/bioethics/.

Le **ministère de la Défense nationale** a tenu une « semaine de l'éthique dans tous les services », à l'automne 2000. Dans les semaines précédant l'événement, on avait distribué des affiches spéciales destinées à sensibiliser les gens à la question et à faciliter la discussion. Les comptes rendus des discussions tenues à tous les échelons ont été communiqués au Quartier général de la Défense nationale, pour qu'on les regroupe et qu'on analyse les idées formulées. La synthèse des comptes rendus a ensuite été renvoyée à toutes les unités, aux fins d'examen et de distribution. Il est désormais obligatoire de

désigner des coordonnateurs en éthique au sein des Forces maritimes de l'Atlantique. Le Centre d'apprentissage continu des Forces maritimes de l'Atlantique offre des ateliers de formation à l'intention de ces coordonnateurs. Il s'agit d'un service spécial fourni à la Direction générale du personnel. On trouvera de plus amples renseignements au sujet du programme d'éthique de la Défense nationale au site Internet suivant : www.dnd.ca.

Un groupe d'étudiants (au niveau de la maîtrise) en administration des affaires, en droit, en environnement, en économie du développement, en administration publique, en développement international ainsi qu'en services d'information et de bibliothèque de l'Université de Dalhousie, ont formé une **organisation de promotion de la responsabilité environnementale et sociale des entreprises**. L'organisation, qui existe depuis à peu près un an, a son site Internet (<http://is2.dal.ca/~cesr>).

La **Garde côtière canadienne** a intégré un volet « formation et sensibilisation en matière d'éthique » à la formation qui a été offerte à tous les officiers et membres des équipages de navires durant l'hiver. C'est ainsi que près de quatre cents membres du personnel de la Garde côtière ont participé à une séance d'une journée complète d'information et de sensibilisation consacrée à l'éthique. L'adresse du site Web de la Garde côtière canadienne est la suivante : www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca.

Le **Centre de développement et d'éducation en entrepreneuriat** vient tout juste de terminer une étude interne sur les valeurs. Les résultats de cette étude serviront de point de départ pour établir des valeurs propres à l'organisation et élaborer un plan afin d'inculquer de nouvelles valeurs à son

personnel. Le Centre est rattaché au ministère de l'Éducation de la Nouvelle-Écosse. L'adresse de son site Internet est la suivante : www.ceed.ednet.ns.ca.

La **Table ronde de la Nouvelle-Écosse** a été relativement active cette année et elle a été le lieu d'intéressants échanges de vues au cours des derniers mois. Ainsi, le directeur administratif de l'Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nova Scotia, Robert Caswill, a parlé de la frontière entre les codes des professions et la vie privée. Carolyn Ells, une des participantes au projet de bioéthique, à l'Université de Dalhousie, a parlé d'une enquête menée dans trois hôpitaux, dans le but d'établir leurs besoins ayant trait à la réglementation et aux orientations générales en matière d'éthique.

La Nouvelle-Écosse a été l'hôte d'une **conférence nationale de l'Association des praticiens en éthique du Canada (APEC)**, en février 2001, à Truro. Grâce à la grande diversité des conférenciers invités et des ateliers présentés, la conférence a été un événement aussi intéressant que profitable. Deux membres de l'APEC, Dennis et Karen Moerman, méritent nos félicitations pour avoir élaboré un programme aussi intéressant et avoir assuré un déroulement aussi efficace. Le compte rendu de la conférence sera affiché au site Web de l'APEC dès que la version définitive aura été établie.

Jack Gallagher

Jack Gallagher est un des directeurs de l'APEC. Il est aussi un des associés, à Halifax, de Grainger & Associates, un cabinet d'experts-conseils en éthique en milieu de travail qui a une clientèle nationale et internationale.

On peut communiquer avec M. Gallagher par courriel (gallagherjack@hotmail.com) ou par téléphone, au (902) 489-2378. Adresse du site Web : www.globalserve.net/~ethics/.

Views and Debate

Two Views on Transparency

by Cornelius von Baeyer

In the EPAC *Code of Ethics* (part of the *Ethical Standards for Members*), it says that members “encourage transparency and frankness wherever possible, as an important adjunct to ethical behaviour”. Despite its flavour of “jargon nouveau” I think we all know what we mean by “transparency” in this sentence. I know I had no doubts in my mind as I drafted this sentence for the Standards task force some years ago. But I have come to learn that this word is not quite as simple as it seems at first.

In addition to the meaning “openness” (as in “TI – Transparency International”), this word has come to have a use in computing and telecommunications that is almost the exact opposite of its meaning in ethics.

A popular electronic newsletter warned readers last year about the security threat from a design flaw in complex Web sites. The problem was described as follows: “Any information that I type into a form, what pages I visit on that site, anything that happens in that session can be sent to a third party, and it can be done **transparently**.” The meaning here is that the information about the user is captured **without the user knowing it is happening**. This transparency is clearly different from “frank” and “open”, and in this case is an undesirable characteristic. (*EduPage*, 4 Feb. 2000, “Web design source

of new security threat”. Emphasis added here and below.)

There is a similar usage in the world of telecommunications. *Newton’s Telecom Dictionary 1999* lists 10 headwords with “transparency” or “transparent”. Three involve variations of the optical use of the term (i.e. the opposite of opaque), while seven involve the “invisible to the user” meaning. Here are two – note that the second explicitly sets out invisibility as a desirable objective.

“Transparency: a data communications mode ... [in which] the user is unaware that he is transmitting to a machine that receives faster or slower, ... He is **unaware of the changes occurring** – they are transparent.”

“Transparent Communications – A basic objective of telecommunications systems, to make the transportation of information **invisible to the user.**”

“Invisible” is also a concept in ethics – although this is ethics of a retrograde kind. One dramatic example springs immediately to mind.

Bill Vander Zalm lost the premiership of British Columbia for conducting private business through his public office. He had claimed that no harm could come from his practices as long as they were **not public knowledge** – they were a private affair. The investigation by Commissioner of Conflict of Interest Ted Hughes concluded that “the Premier’s problem stems not just from his inability to draw a line between his private and public life, but in his apparently sincere belief that no conflict existed so long as **the public wasn’t aware of what was going on.**” We could say that Mr. Vander Zalm argued

for a form of transparency for his private transactions, in the sense that citizens would be unaware of them.

I take two lessons from this tale of transparencies. Users of the word beware when you have techies in the audience. And secondly, we should all be prepared to argue strongly that invisibility does **not** confer an advantage in ethics!

Cornelius von Baeyer

Cornelius von Baeyer is Vice-Chair of EPAC, and head of the Education and Competencies Committee. In between, he is principal of Workplace Ethics Consultancy in Ottawa (<http://ethics.hypermart.net>).

Opinions et débats

Sommaire : « Transparency »

par Cornelius von Baeyer

Deux points de vue sur la transparence. Le mot anglais "transparency" est également utilisé en informatique mais il a une signification qui est l'inverse de celle en éthique -- un processus invisible à l'utilisateur. Praticiens en éthique prenez garde!

Cornelius von Baeyer est le vice président de l'APEC et président du comité responsable des compétences et de l'éducation. En plus, il est le conseiller principal chez Workforce Ethics Consultancy d'Ottawa. (<http://ethics.hypermart.ca>)

Views and Debate

Pledges and Oaths—Your Views?

by Marc Saner

EPAC's mission is to "support ethical behaviour in organizations by enhancing the quality and availability of ethics advice and services across Canada." We are all familiar with codes as a tools to promote a focus on ethics in organizations. Within educational and science communities another approach has recently regained favour: pledges and oaths. I post the following two excerpts here as "a teaser" for debate – given your experience: what are your views on this approach? Please send comments suitable for publication in this column to saner@magma.ca.

Example 1: Graduation Pledge Alliance

Humboldt State University (California) initiated the Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility. It states, "I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work." (students define what being "responsible" means to themselves). This is becoming a national movement in the U.S. Dozens of colleges and universities have enacted the pledge at some level and graduates who voluntarily signed the pledge have turned down jobs they did not feel morally comfortable with and have worked to make changes once on the job.

[<http://ARES.manchester.edu/departement/peaceStudies/gpa.html>].

Example 2: AAAS Pledge of Scientists

At the February 2001 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) the workshop "To Pledge or

Not to Pledge: An Oath for Scientists?" took place. This is taken from the description of this workshop (from www.aaas.org):

"The idea of taking an Oath in science surfaced most recently at the 1999 World Conference on Science in Budapest, where Sir Joseph Rotblat, 1995 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, proposed there be something like a Hippocratic Oath for science. A survey by AAAS identified an estimated 15-16 oaths for scientists or engineers proposed or currently being used. Proponents of such an Oath refer to its great symbolic value by reaffirming the importance of behaving ethically. ... Opponents argue that an Oath would be too general to provide useful guidance. And, if mandatory, would be viewed more as an obstacle to overcome than a set of ideals to be embraced."

Marc Saner

Opinions et débats

Sommaire : Promesses et serments – vos idées?

par Marc Saner

L'APEC a pour mission « d'encourager le comportement éthique dans les organisations en améliorant la qualité ainsi que l'accessibilité des conseils et des services professionnels reliés à l'éthique au Canada ». Nous savons déjà comment utiliser les codes pour promouvoir l'éthique au sein des organisations. Récemment, un moyen d'atteindre ce même objectif est redevenu populaire dans les milieux de l'éducation et de la recherche scientifique : les promesses et les serments. Afin d'amorcer un débat sur cette démarche, j'aimerais savoir ce que vous pensez, à la lumière de votre expérience, des deux exemples que vous trouverez (en

anglais) dans les sites ci-dessous. Veuillez faire parvenir vos commentaires, sous une forme pouvant être publiée dans la présente chronique, à l'adresse suivante : saner@magma.ca. (Le premier exemple, Graduation Pledge Alliance, est présenté au : <http://ARES.manchester.edu/department/peaceStudies/gpa.html>; le second exemple, AAAS Pledge of Scientists, est présenté au : <http://www.aaas.org>.)

Reviews

The editors of the EPAC Magazine have received a copy of Peg Tittle's new book, *Ethical Issues in Business: Inquiries, Cases and Readings* (Broadview Press: Peterborough, Ont., 2000). The editors ask whether any readers of the magazine would like to review this book. Contact:

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Critiques

Les directeurs de la publication ont reçu un exemplaire du nouveau livre de Peg Tittle, intitulé *Ethical Issues in Business: Inquiries, Cases and Readings* (Broadview Press : Peterborough, Ontario, 2000). Les lecteurs qui aimeraient faire des commentaires sur cet ouvrage sont invités à communiquer avec :

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"Ethics" Defined (not by us)

In this column we want to reproduce some of the very many definitions of that elusive concept called "ethics." We start with three examples that were chosen to provoke and that are broad, i.e., not restricted to business ethics. Comments and submissions of your favorite quotes welcome!

The first quote is by the contemporary academic ethicist Peter Singer (Princeton):

"What is ethics? The word itself is sometimes used to refer to the set of rules, principles, or ways of thinking that guide, or claim authority to guide, the actions of a particular group; and sometimes it stands for the systematic study of reasoning about how we ought to act. In the first of these senses, we may ask about the sexual ethics of the people of the Trobriand Islands, or speak about the way in which medical ethics in The Netherlands has come to accept voluntary euthanasia. In the second sense, 'ethics' is the name of a field of study, and often taught in university departments of philosophy. The context usually makes clear which sense is intended ... Some writers use the term 'morality' for the first, descriptive, sense in which I am using 'ethics'. They would talk of the morality of the Trobriand islanders when they want to describe what the islanders take to be right or wrong. They would reserve 'ethics' (or sometimes 'moral philosophy') for the field of study or the subject taught in departments of philosophy. I have not adopted this usage. Both 'ethics' and 'morality' have their roots in a word

for ‘customs’, the former being a derivative of the Greek term from which we get ‘ethos’, and the latter from the Latin root that gives us ‘mores’, a word still used sometimes to describe the customs of people.” [Peter Singer, ed., *Oxford Readers: Ethics*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 4-5.]

The second quote is by the enigmatic and influential philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. In his lecture on ethics in November 1929 at Cambridge University, he not only provides a succinct formulation of G.E. Moore’s definition of ethics but also makes the less than obvious link to the field of aesthetics:

“My subject, as you know, is Ethics and I will adopt the explanation of the term which Professor Moore has given in his *Principia Ethica*. He says: ‘ethics is the general enquiry into what is good.’ Now I am going to use the term Ethics in a slightly wider sense, in a sense in fact which includes what I believe to be the most essential part of what is generally called Aesthetics.” [Taken from Peter Singer’s reader quoted above, p. 141.]

Finally, here is a dictionary definition taken from the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy:

ethics (Gk. *ethos*, character) The study of the concepts involved in practical reasoning: good, right, duty, obligation, virtue, freedom, rationality, choice. Also the second-order study of the objectivity, subjectivity, relativism, or scepticism that may attend claims made in these terms. ...

[Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 126.]

Send your thoughts on the possibility of a universal definition, on the distinction between ethics and morals, on the link between ethics and aesthetics (etc.), as well as your favorite quotes and definitions to saner@magma.ca. Don’t forget to specify your name, affiliation and contact information – we want to attribute your contribution appropriately.

The Editors

Les définitions de « l’éthique » (pas les nôtres)

Nous avons l’intention de présenter, dans cette rubrique, quelques-unes des très nombreuses définitions de l’éthique une notion plutôt difficile à cerner. Dans la version anglaise, nous débutons par trois exemples que nous avons choisis parce qu’ils sont susceptibles de provoquer des réactions et en raison de leur portée générale (ils ne s’appliquent pas uniquement au monde des affaires). Nous vous invitons à nous faire part de vos commentaires sur ces définitions et à nous indiquer celle que vous préférez. Les délais ne nous permettent pas de publier des définitions en français dans le présent numéro, mais il y en aura dans les prochains.

Les responsables de la publication

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