The Ethics Unwrapped “Giving Voice To Values” Video Series

The Giving Voice To Values (GVV) video series summarizes the introductory points of Giving Voice to Values: How To Speak Your Mind When You Know What’s Right, developed by Mary C. Gentile with support from the Aspen Institute and the Yale School of Management.

The GVV videos can be watched individually or collectively, although they will be most useful if used together and viewed with the introductory video. This series can serve as a springboard for further classroom discussion of ethics and values as they pertain to students’ personal and professional lives.

Although GVV was created for business ethics programs, the lessons in GVV are broad and applicable to a variety of fields including education, fine arts, liberal arts, communication studies, engineering and the sciences, and professional schools. GVV case studies, curriculum and teaching pedagogy are available at http://www.babson.edu/academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/home.aspx

The G.V.V. Approach

Giving Voice to Values (GVV) is an innovative approach to values-driven leadership development. GVV identifies the many ways that individuals can – and do – voice their values in the workplace and provides opportunities to build the “moral muscles” necessary to do so.

Most people want to bring their whole selves to work. Yet, experience and research demonstrate that values conflicts will occur during the course of a person’s life and career – those times when what we believe and want to accomplish seem to be in opposition to the demands of others, including peers, supervisors, organizations, etc. The GVV curriculum helps people build and practice the skills individuals need to recognize, speak and act on their values when these conflicts arise.

GVV identifies and builds upon SEVEN PILLARS or principles that represent ways of thinking about values and our own capabilities and identities in order to enhance our ability to voice and enact our values effectively. The SEVEN PILLARS are: Values, Choice, Normalization, Purpose, Self-Knowledge & Alignment, Voice, and Reasons & Rationalizations. Each video in this series introduces a GVV PILLAR.
The GVV approach includes:

* A focus on how a leader or manager raises values-based issues in an effective manner—what he/she needs to do to be heard and how to correct an existing course of action when necessary;
* Positive examples of times when people have found ways to voice and thereby implement their values in the workplace;
* An emphasis upon self-assessment and a focus on individual strengths when looking for a way to align one’s individual sense of purpose with that of the organization;
* Opportunities to construct and practice responses to frequently heard reasons and rationalizations for not acting on one’s values;
* Practice in providing peer feedback and coaching.

G.V.V. Video: Pillar 4 – Purpose

Mary Gentile encourages us to ask ourselves, “What am I working for?” If we answer this question explicitly and in a broad way, we can more easily accept values conflicts as a normal part of a career and a normal part of everyday living. She suggests further that we should identify the personal values that underpin our personal and professional lives. For example, if we have a broad, inclusive understanding of our professional purpose, we can both find greater motivation to act on our values in service to this grander purpose, as well as find compelling ways to appeal to a shared purpose in others whom we wish to influence or persuade.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the overarching values that guide your personal life? What are the overarching values that guide your career path or professional life? Consider the following questions:
   - What impact do you want to have? On whom?
   - Whom do you want to know you benefited? In what ways?
• What do you want to learn?
• How do you define your impact as a/n: auditor, investor, manager, product developer, marketer, senior executive, teacher, health care professional, designer, entrepreneur, architect, attorney, etc.?
• What do you hope to accomplish? What will make your professional life worthwhile?
• How do you want to feel about yourself and your work, both while you are doing it and in the end?

2. Consider how Charles Handy responded to the question “what’s a business for?”

Both sides of the Atlantic would agree that there is, first, a clear and important need to meet the expectations of a company’s theoretical owners: the shareholders. It would, however, be more accurate to call most of them investors, perhaps even gamblers. They have none of the pride or responsibility of ownership and are, if truth be told, only there for the money. Nevertheless, if management fails to meet their financial hopes, the share price will fall, exposing the company to unwanted predators and making it more difficult to raise new finance. But to turn shareholders’ needs into a purpose is to be guilty of a logical confusion, to mistake a necessary condition for a sufficient one. We need to eat to live; food is a necessary condition of life. But if we lived mainly to eat, making food a sufficient or sole purpose of life, we would become gross. The purpose of business is not to make a profit, full stop. It is to make a profit so that the business can do something more or better.


a) Do you agree with Handy’s response?
b) If you accepted it, how might it affect your decision-making
c) What might be some examples of the “something more or better” that he mentions?
Additional G.V.V. Resources


For a discussion of the “Purpose” pillar, see Chapter Five of Giving Voice To Values, “What Am I Looking For?.”

For a discussion of the “GVV Starting Assumptions,” see Chapter One of Giving Voice to Values, “Giving Voice to Our Values: The Thought Experiment.”

For a summary of the Giving Voice To Values Seven Pillars download An Action Framework for Giving Voice To Values—“The To-Do List.” http://www.babson.edu/Academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/curriculum.aspx


Transcript of Narration
Written and Narrated by Mary C. Gentile

Those people who find ways to voice and act on their values effectively are often folks who have reflected, in advance, on what they are really trying to accomplish in a particular situation. They have thought about the kind of meaning and impact they want their work and their organizations and their lives to have. Are they just trying to get the highest bonus this quarter? Or are they trying to build a successful career and have a positive impact on their companies and in their communities?
Having thought about the meaning of their lives in this broader way allows them to tap into strengths they didn’t know they had, when facing values conflicts. It also gives them language – actual “arguments” – which they can use to inspire and persuade the folks around them to act ethically as well.

It’s easy to get into a narrow and short-term way of thinking when we are busy, over-worked, and goal-oriented. But if we step back and explicitly take time to think about the meaning we want our academic experiences or our career experiences to have in the long run, we can find confidence and strength to act, and we can also serve as inspirations to others.

Think about times when you felt you were a positive influence on your friends or colleagues or family. And think about times when others were a positive influence on you. What was the type of purpose that drove those inspirational behaviors? Define your personal and professional purpose explicitly and broadly before conflicts arise. Decide what is the impact you most want to have. This is the type of purpose you can use to strengthen your resolve and from which you can draw language for your values “scripts.” And remember to appeal to this sense of purpose in others as well.

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This material is based upon the Giving Voice To Values curriculum (www.GivingVoiceToValues.org). The Aspen Institute was founding partner, along with the Yale School of Management, and incubator for Giving Voice To Values (GVV). Now based and supported at Babson College.

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