

BOOK REVIEW

Defining Moments: When Managers Must Choose Between Right and Right

Joseph L Badaracco, Jr.
Harvard Business Press

Reviewed by
John Barnes, Ph.D.
Lecturer, Graduate School of Business
Assumption University of Thailand

The reviewers' interest in this topic derived from teaching Tourism Business Ethics in the Tourism MBA Program. This book differs from many in my collection in that it involves three case studies in the more diverse business environment beyond tourism and hospitality. Each case discussed involves a higher level of complexity in finding both ethical philosophical and situational answers within the wider business community. The author Joseph L Badaracco Jr. is the John L Shad Professor of Business Ethics at Harvard University

This is a slim volume of 147 pages and unlike many other books in the field is easy to read and the case studies are adapted from real business life situations. Baldaracco invites us to consider each case in the light of literature dating from the ancient Greek to more contemporary works of literature.

The book comprises nine chapters in numerical order as follows:

Dirty Hands takes its' title from a play by Jean Paul Satre which involved governing or leading an organization, knowing many facts and getting deeply involved with less than ideal knowledge of aspects of business in the public and private sectors, and being prepared to get ones hands dirty to get the job done.

Right versus Right introduces each of the three case studies and broadly outlines the practical and ethical difficulties faced by each manager in doing right by the people involved; right by the company stakeholders and by the manger's ethical principles.

The Futility of Grand Principles begins with an explanation of credos and mission statements, of each company and then moves on to the law as it applies to business. By this chapter's end no clear solutions are offered to the three cases.

Sleep Test Ethics refers to performing one's business duties in such a way that one can sleep peacefully afterwards. However, Baldaracco suggests that perhaps Hitler slept well whilst Mother Teresa often spent many sleepless nights. The sleep test is seen as useful but perhaps insufficient to test the ethicality of our actions in business.

Defining Moments refers to a person's actions in such a way as to enhance their own ethical character development rather than merely solve the immediate problem in an expedient way. Two examples from contemporary literature are cited. The first was

Schindler's List a book written by Thomas Kennealy narrates how Schindler saved many Jews from Hitler's concentration camps by employing them in his own factories and arranging their escape. The book was later made into a movie by Steven Spielberg. Another example cited by Badaracco was about the life of Stevens, a butler to Lord Darlington of the UK. In the story written by Kazuo Ishiguro and movie starring Anthony Hopkins entitled *The Remains of the Day*. Both the story and the movie are testament to a person striving for excellence in the performance of their duties often at great personal sacrifice i.e. facing decisions which were to become *Defining Moments* in the life and personal character development of that person. I believe this is particularly poignant, in that, we at Assumption University strive to develop character in our students.

Become Who You Are more than other chapter in the books touches on a various ethical philosophies of Nietzsche, Aristotle and Machiavelli and applying them to the three case studies discussed earlier in the book. Perhaps the three important lessons identified by Badaracco here are: 1. Listen to your head; 2 Listen to your heart and 3. See the world as it is.

Truth is a Process here the Johnson and Johnson (1982) Tylenol poison case is revisited, but with more historical insight than many case study books provided to students. This alone makes the book well worth reading. In 1982 one or more people injected cyanide poison via hypodermic syringe through the plastic cap and into bottle of Tylenol tablets on supermarket shelves in Chicago. Seven people died and The perpetrators demanded US\$1 million for the poisoning to stop. Instead Johnson and Johnson withdrew all products from the market and destroyed them rather than risk people's lives. The culprits were eventually apprehended.

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/2010/01/08/possible-breakthrough-in-tylenol-poisoning-case.html> accessed 13 December 2016

Virtu, Virtue and Success details the most complex case study of all three covered in the book and specifically the actions of Michael Sakiz, Rousel Uclaf's (a large French multinational pharmaceutical company) CEO, in the decision to launch or not to launch the RU 486 birth control pill. All ethical philosophies are brought to bear on this case and the end-result is a surprise (so I will not reveal it here).

A Space of Quiet in today's fast paced world, there is a need to make time to pause and reflect before acting.