Media Kit

Ethical Systems is a collaboration of top researchers, most of whom are faculty at leading business schools. We all share the conviction, backed by research, that in the long run, good ethics is good business. We believe that integrity in business can be enhanced by wise leaders who take a systems approach to their organizations and the environments in which they operate.

Ethical Systems is housed in NYU Stern's Business and Society Program. Our mission is to bridge research by leaders in academia and the corporate world. Meet our team:

- Collaborators
- Core Team
- Steering Committee
- Advisory Board
Distinguished Collaborators

Top experts who link academic research to the practice of business.

Among others
Core Team

Jonathan Haidt
Director

Noel Boyland
Interim Executive Director

Brian Gallagher
Communications Director

Catarina Bulgarella
Research

David Dobolyi
Webmaster
Ethical Systems is a collaboration of top researchers who share the conviction—backed by research merging systems thinking, psychology, and economics—that in the long run, good ethics is good business.

The heart of our site is “The Research” tab, where each collaborator reviews the existing research in their respective field of expertise and distills best practices, based on insights from the behavioral, social, and management sciences.

Ethical Systems also offers organizations opportunities to work with us directly, as noted in “Our Services,” which includes executive education, behavioral-science-and-ethics interventions, culture assessments, and speaker engagements. We also hold a biennial conference, Ethics by Design, which is a gathering of academic and business luminaries to discuss research and practical insights to improve business ethics.

Ethical Systems design is based on the principle that behavior in organizations must be understood by examining the interaction of many factors and forces; you should not start by looking for good and bad people. This is particularly true in business, where leaders, managers, and employees face conflicting incentives, messages, and pressures from multiple stakeholders. If you want to improve ethical behavior within your organization you have to think about many moving parts, take many different perspectives, and draw on research from many scientific fields. The purpose of Ethical Systems is to help organizations do that.
Ethics by Design brings together researchers and practitioners every two years to present strategies for running ethical organizations. Our participants will discuss individual behavior, group norms, and legal/regulatory structures and how these relate to designing ethical systems in organizations in a combination of keynote presentations, panels, and research roundups.

March 15, 2019
NYU Stern School of Business

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Academic and business “luminaries” discuss “ethics by design”
Ron Carucci covered Ethical Systems’ 2016 conference “Ethics by Design,” writing that “Among the many dynamic conversations was exploring the role leadership plays in unwittingly promoting ethical misconduct in organizations.”

Ethical Systems put on a “fascinating all-day seminar”
“Ethics and corporate rectitude are not impractical, esoteric matters...,” wrote Tim Askew. “[It] is increasingly a practical necessity related to profit and ROI. In many cases goals do more harm than good and rigid adherence to specific outcomes can be disastrous. The solution? I don’t know. But the answer is surely somewhere near the corner of ethics, culture, and human meaning.”

Virtuous leaders influence employees to feel a sense of “elevation.”
Dave Mayer wrote, citing the research of Ethical Systems founder Jonathan Haidt, that the feeling is “a positive emotion that lifts us up as a result of moral excellence. This elevated emotional state can inspire employees toward behaviors that aren’t required of them but that greatly improve organizational functioning.”
Publications

Cultural context and regulations drive behavior
Carrot or stick? Azish Filabi considers culture as a regulatory approach. Plus, Linda Trevino and co-authors write on the invisible role of middle management plays in unethical behavior and setting unrealistic expectations.

How directors can safeguard financial firm culture
Michael Silva & Azish Filabi described how their “personal experiences and study of existing and emerging research on the role of culture have demonstrated that culture is the single most important driver determining whether an institution contributes positively to a trusted financial system.”

“Make business ethics a cumulative science”
Jonathan Haidt & Linda Trevino argued that the “benefits to humanity from research that helps firms improve their ethics could be enormous, especially if that research also shows that strong ethics improves the effectiveness of companies.”
Our Services

Executive Education

*Ethical Systems* provides custom education sessions for executive teams ranging in length from one-hour to all-day programs. Executives can learn about topics in the social science of ethics, including:

**The business case for ethics**

**Cognitive biases and ethical decision-making**

**Behavioral ethics research and findings**

**Workplace formal and informal systems**

**A framework for ethical organizational culture**

The sessions are interactive workshops, including case studies, group discussion, and lectures on research findings.

Behavioral Science In-company Research

Behavioral science can be a powerful way for your company to enable more ethical behavior through choice-architecture. “Nudging” for ethics has been shown to spur more ethical decisions.

**Our researchers can help organizations design interventions and systems that use behavioral science, data, and rigorously generated evidence to advance the goals of ethics, compliance, or risk-management efforts.**

We develop targeted experimentation tailored to company needs, measuring their impact on goals—testing what works, and what doesn’t advance the outcomes companies care about.

Culture Assessment

The *Ethical Systems* culture-measurement modules are a unique resource, specifically vetted through academic channels: the peer-review journal process (for survey questions) and a working group of leading practitioners and academics that *Ethical Systems* convened to assess the highest-quality measures.

**Our team is available to assess organizational culture to provide companies with a roadmap on how their culture affects company ethical behavior.**
“The Research” Portal

Best practices distilled, based on insights from the behavioral and management sciences.

Image: Portrait of Niccolò Machiavelli by Santi di Tito, via Wikimedia Commons. Machiavelli told political leaders that it was more important for them to be feared than loved. In lawless times with weak institutions, he may have been right.

But in today’s business world, for most industries, the evidence points more the other way.
JEFF KAPLAN

This emphasis on culture presents a challenge to companies—given how broad and all-encompassing a topic culture is, how can companies better grasp and manage their internal cultures? How would they know whether they have “an organizational culture that encourages ethical conduct” per the FSGO?

AZISH FILABI

It is a challenge, but not an insurmountable one. Many companies already recognize the importance of culture and regularly conduct employee engagement or compliance surveys. These approaches, however, are often not digging deep enough around behavior and ethics. Employee engagement, for example, is an outcome of culture not necessarily a driver of it. Given the emphasis by regulators on ethical culture, more companies are focusing on measurements specific to whether they have a “culture of ethics.” This is where social scientists can add much value.

Academics have been developing measures of ethical culture for a few decades and validated tools already exist in peer-reviewed journals. The Ethical Systems website provides additional details on these tools and how companies can begin to measure their culture.

There is no one definition of an ethical culture. It will inevitably vary across companies and is an interplay of the formal and informal systems we talked about earlier.
Policy Insights

Ethical Systems members and collaborators write on how to transform culture in financial services.

### 2.1: Carrot or Stick? Culture as a Regulatory Approach

**Ethical Systems**

**Azish Filabi, Executive Director**

### 3.1: How do organisations motivate people to act?

**Bocconi University**

**Dr. Celia Moore, Associate Professor and Academic Fellow, Ethics and Compliance Initiative, Department of Management and Technology**

### 3.5: The invisible role of middle management – unethical behaviour and unrealistic expectations

**Academic Collaboration**

- **Professor Linda Treviño, Penn State University Smeal College of Business – Organizational Behaviour Ethics**
- **Niki A. den Nieuwenboer, The University of Kansas School of Management**
- **João Vieira da Cunha, ISEG School of Management**

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**Discussion Paper**

DP18/2

March 2018
Behavioral Science “One-sheets”
Ethical and behavioral science concepts, explained and connected to daily workflow and workplace culture.

**Ethics Pays:**
HOW AN INVESTMENT IN ETHICS TRANSLATES TO PROFIT, PRODUCTIVITY, AND PRESTIGE

**Goals Gone Wild:**
HOW AGGRESSIVE GOAL SETTING CAN LEAD TO UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

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**What It Is**
Research shows that an organization that commits to ethical business practices reaps a wide range of benefits. Ethical companies—those that avoid illegal, enforcement actions, and negative headlines while installing a culture based on doing the right thing because it is the right thing—enjoy an enhanced reputation and an increased ability to attract and retain the best talent. Omitting ethical pitfalls also leads to stable and steady growth, rather than the alternative: dramatic pendulum shifts of loss and catch up.

**What It Does**
With ethics you get what you respect but with compliance you may not get ethics. In short, don’t marry someone you want to live with. Doing so can encourage people to find ways to do whatever they can get away with, not what’s truly right.

**Why It Matters**
Good governance matters for a variety of reasons, both in the immediate time frame and over the long term. The Ethics Systems website features a range of research that explains how ethics supports sustainable growth.

**Where To Go Next**
Popadak J. A Corporate Culture Channel How Increased Shareholder Governance Reduces Firm Value (October 25, 2013).

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**What It Is**
Business researchers and managers agree: goal setting “works.” It motivates employees to take action, and ultimately, it might just lead to work, productivity, and revenue. Recent research has begun to recognize that aggressive goal setting can lead to unethical behavior in the workplace for several reasons:

1. Goals set in our research tended to keep us focused on achieving the ethicality of our behavior. Thus, we may be acting in unethical ways while claiming we are acting ethically.
2. In an effort to achieve a goal (especially with financial incentives and under threat of being held), it’s easier to justify unethical behavior. This research indicates that managers who engage in unethical behavior are likely to do so.
3. Before we have met our goals, we may find ourselves in a situation where we need to act in a “gray” situation. Oftentimes, there is a “gray” area in business that is not clearly defined. For instance, an employee may be on the edge of meeting a goal, but if they don’t meet the goal, they will be insufficient. This situation is often met with ethical behavior.

**Why It Matters**
Many believe that if they are truly good, most people, they can escape an ethical environment. However, a great deal of research suggests that ethical behavior is not just a matter of culture. Ethical behavior is the result of the actions of individuals. People can make a conscious decision to act ethically or unethically, and in the face of pressure to act against their ethics, they can make the right decision.

**Where To Go Next**
Popadak J. A Corporate Culture Channel How Increased Shareholder Governance Reduces Firm Value (October 25, 2013).

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**What To Do**
Draw a distinction: With ethics you get what you respect but with compliance you get what you don’t respect. Doing so can encourage people to find ways to do whatever they can get away with, not what’s truly right.

**Why It Matters**
Highlighting efforts to promote ethics—both internally and externally—demonstrates the value placed on doing the right thing. It examines the organization’s reputation and reinforces the sense that ethics is a priority for your firm. This, in turn, helps employeess to be aware that your organization values.

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**What To Do**
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“Ethics by Design” Conference 2016 on YouTube
How to use nudges, norms, and laws to improve business ethics

Ethics By Design 2016
13 videos • 283 views • Last updated on Jun 10, 2016

Ethics By Design: How to Use Nudges, Norms and Laws to Improve Business Ethics brought together prominent thinkers and leaders across each level to meet, share and exchange research, resources and relateable strategies around strengthening the ethical climate and culture of today’s business world.

Learn more at www.ethicalsystems.org
Blog

Thought provoking, stimulating articles drive engagement with Ethical Systems, expanding online reach.

Listen to Adam Grant Talk Leadership Science with Preet Bharara

It is safe to say that I am a podcast junkie. Whenever I find myself “ears-free”—while taking a shower, walking the dog, riding the subway—I listen to an episode. Usually it is intellectual fare—scientists or other sorts of scholars discussing their new books with, for instance, comedian Joe Rogan (on whose show our founder, Jon Haidt, just appeared).

Recently I’ve wandered into more current- and legal-affairs territory, and discovered “Stay Tuned” with Preet, hosted by Preet Bharara, a former US attorney for the Southern District of New York who President Trump fired.

Continue Reading →
Contact
For media, collaboration, and research opportunities.

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