

国际商业伦理 简明教程

A SHORT COURSE IN
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ETHICS

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总序

进入“十三五”，我国高等英语教育迎来深化改革和创新发展的关键期，商务英语专业也随之从规模发展进入内涵发展和质量提升的新常态。截至2016年，全国已有293所高校开办了商务英语本科专业，有近500所高校的英语类专业开设了商务方向或课程。2017年，教育部制订的《高等学校商务英语专业本科教学质量国家标准》（以下简称《国家标准》）也将颁布，《国家标准》对商务英语人才培养提出了明确要求，以满足对外开放的国家战略和需求。

为了认真贯彻落实《国家标准》，全国高等学校商务英语专业教学协作组与上海外语教育出版社密切合作，对入选“十二五”普通高等教育本科国家级规划教材的“新世纪商务英语专业本科系列教材”进行全面修订。修订后的“新世纪商务英语专业本科系列教材（第二版）”体系更加完整，涵盖英语知识与技能和商务知识与技能两个模块，很好地体现出《国家标准》对商务英语专业学生知识和能力的要求。

本系列教材中，英语知识与技能模块包含《商务英语综合教程》、《商务英语视听说教程》、《商务英语阅读教程》、《商务英语写作教程》、《商务英语论文写作》、《商务英语口译教程》、《商务英汉翻译教程》等。

商务知识与技能模块包含《国际贸易实务与操作》和《国际商业伦理》、《国际商务合同》、《国际经济学》、《国际知识产权》、《国际营销》、《国际支付》、《国际贸易单证》等简明教程。

本系列教材具有以下四个鲜明的特色：

第一，完全对接《国家标准》规定的培养目标和课程体系，突出打牢英语基本功，拓宽国际视野，提升人文素养，培养商务意识和素养，着重提高英语应用能力、商务实践能力、跨文化交流能力、思辨与创新能力、自主学习能力。

第二，编写理念先进，选材新颖，充满时代感，坚持语言、文化、商务三者有机结合，充分体现国际化、人文性、复合型、应用性的特点和全人教育的理念。

第三，体系完整，覆盖商务英语专业核心课程，英语知识与技能教材突出听、说、读、写、译、跨文化交际等技能训练导向；商务知识与技能教材理论体系完整，知识讲解简明扼要，语言原汁原味，配套练习实用性和可操作性强，注重中外真实案例分析，培养思辨和创新能力。

第四，课堂任务设计多样化和立体化的特色鲜明，突出网络多媒体技术的应用，提供丰富的视频材料和教学资源，加大了英语学习的趣味性和输入的有效性。

本系列教材是全国高等学校商务英语专业教学协作组重点推荐教材，由国内商务英语教学专家编写，可供一、二年级商务英语专业本科生、英语专业商贸方向学生、财经类院校本科生以及各类经管专业本科生使用，同时也可作为大学英语ESP课程模块的商务英语教材，以及各类企业培训和社会商务英语学习者的参考书。本套教材的修订得到上海外语教育出版社领导和编辑的大力支持，在此表示衷心感谢。

全国高等学校商务英语专业教学协作组组长
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前言

《国际商业伦理简明教程》是在美国学者查尔斯·米歇尔(Charles Mitchell)的《国际商业伦理》(*International Business Ethics: Combining Ethics and Profits in Global Business*)一书的基础上编著而成,目的是对原书进行进一步解读和拓展。本书按照原书的主题,共分十五章,涵盖了商业伦理学的基本知识,并且围绕每章的知识点做了充分的提炼、解读和补充,以强化练习、加深理解。

具体讲,“本章概要”对每章内容进行提纲挈领的概括,阐释该章中心思想,总结提炼该章主要内容;“学习目标”对该章的学习提出基本目标和拓展目标;“知识链接”提供相关背景知识,方便和帮助学习者熟悉相关专题;“巩固练习”则通过填空、翻译、判断对错等形式的练习和讨论题,加深学习者对该章知识点和专业问题的理解和思考;“案例分析”由案例故事、案例讨论和案例总结三部分组成,从实践应用层面对本章的理论进行诠释;“拓展阅读”对本章相关理论进行延伸,又对该章相关理论在现实中引发的问题或思考进行追踪探索,在丰富学习者理论知识的同时,也引导学习者关注现实问题,学会如何将理论应用于实际。此外,对于文章中出现的主要专业术语和疑难词汇均提供了中文释义。

《国际商业伦理简明教程》不仅可以帮助学习者熟悉商业伦理的理论和热点话题,也为学习者提供了一个了解国际企业管理和跨国经营的窗口。资本主义前所未有地提升了效率,创造出就业,带来财富,但其狭隘的观念阻碍了企业满足更广阔社会需要的潜力和符合伦理规范的可能性。在21世纪的商业环境中,要想基业长青,企业必须突破传统的“股东利益至上”、“商业社会零和”的商业思维,努力将商业和社会、伦理整合到一起。企业的意义应当被重新定义为创造共享价值,而不是利润本身,这将推动全球经济下一轮的创新和增长。学会如何在满足法律基本要求和伦理社会规范的前提下,创造商业与社会的共享价值,是企业重获合法性的最佳机会。在跨国经营环境中工作的经理人员和企业员工,也需要重新思考如何在自身的管理实践中践行新的商业思维。

本书可作为大专院校国际贸易、商务英语、国际商务等专业学生的国际商业伦理课程的教材,也可作为企业各类管理人员的商业伦理培训教材,以及对国际商业伦理感兴趣或学习商务英语的读者的阅读参考书。

本书由西交利物浦大学西浦国际商学院尹珏林博士编写,西交利物浦大学的贺钰琇同学对部分章节的资料收集整理工作提供了帮助。本书的出版承蒙上海外语教育出版社谢宇女士的大力支持,在此深表感谢。

本书若有不当之处,敬请大家不吝赐教,以便日后进一步完善。

尹珏林

2017年于苏州独墅湖畔

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Why Ethics Matter

伦理的重要性

CHAPTER 1

本章概要

商业伦理，又称企业伦理或企业道德，指的是企业经营涉及的伦理原则和规范。自国际商务出现以来，有关商业伦理内涵、外延和必要性的讨论持续而激烈。世界各地的商业人士面临着日益复杂的伦理挑战，遵循伦理道德进行商业活动不可避免地成为未来的趋势。本章是全书的开篇章节，重点论述了商业伦理的重要性。本章首先介绍了商业伦理产生的原因，商业活动和商人地位的历史变迁，以及人们对商业伦理理解的变化。然后，作者解释了商业伦理作为社会契约的作用，以及企业公民的概念。最后，作者提出可持续发展是最新的趋势，也反映了消费者对企业的期望。

学习目标

作为全书的开篇章节，这一章学习的重点在于了解商业伦理在国际商务活动中的重要性。作为导论性章节，本章学习目标可以分为以下两大方面：

1) 基本目标 (Textbook based)

- 掌握商业伦理概念的内涵和外延
- 理解商业伦理对于开展国际商务活动的重要性

2) 拓展目标 (Textbook related)

- 了解商业伦理与其他相关概念如企业公民、企业社会责任、可持续发展的区别和联系
- 能够将当今商业环境和商业活动的新特点与商业伦理的新要求结合起来

THE MORE ONE KNOWS ETHICS, THE MORE IT IS USED AND THE MORE USEFUL IT BECOMES.

— PLATO

Word Study

write off 注销, 勾销
corporate income tax 公司所得税
pass muster 通过考核, 及格, 符合要求
smell /smel/ v. 散发臭气
glean /glin/ v. 仔细收集(消息、材料等)

DEBATES ABOUT INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ETHICS are as old as international business itself. During the decades of the 1980s and 1990s business ethics was predominately a subject taught at business schools and debated by academics. It had little impact in the international business world, where the prevailing attitude was that anything goes and everyone is paid to cut a deal. Many governments (including France, Japan and Germany), recognizing the reality of doing business in certain parts of the world, actually allowed businesses to write off bribe payments on their corporate income tax.

Ethical Challenges Everywhere

Every executive, regardless of his or her geographic location, every corporate board, regardless of where it sits, has at some point faced a decision that challenges their ethical standards. The course of action taken often does not quite pass muster with basic ethical standards. In other words, it “smells.”

A European manufacturing company trying to break into the Asian market is asked to “donate” to a charitable foundation run by the brother of a high government official. A German drug company offers government health officials from developing countries lavish entertainment as an inducement to buy its drugs. A local government hoping to have its city become a venue for the Olympics arranges for the local university to provide entrance for offspring of selection committee members. A US Internet company sells information gleaned about its customers’ online habits without their consent or even their knowledge.

In each case, the company’s managers can reasonably argue that they are pursuing the interests of shareholders in a lawful manner. A decade ago, not breaking the law may have been enough. Today, however, the global business playing field is changing. The pressure to act ethically, to act as a good corporate citizen of the world, is growing in both developed and developing nations.

For example: One-third of UK consumers claim to be seriously concerned about ethical issues when shopping — although only half of that number put their principles into action and buy (or boycott) products because of the manufacturer’s reputation. The MORI research firm, commissioned by Britain’s Co-operative Bank, found one-in-four consumers claim to have investigated a company’s social responsibility at least once: one-in-two shoppers say they have bought a product and recommended a supplier

because of its socially responsible reputation. The report shows a heightened awareness of ethical issues among the UK public and a boom in the market for ethically-oriented products and services. The ethical consumer market, which encompasses a whole range of products from stock investments to green beans, is worth an estimated 8 billion pounds per year. And it is growing annually.

Ethics: Good for Profits?

According to a 1999 survey conducted by the UK-based Prince of Wales Business Leadership Forum and Environics International Ltd., an Australian consulting firm, 40 percent of 25,000 respondents in 23 countries had thought in the past year about punishing a specific company perceived as not being “socially responsible”; half of their respondents — one-in-five consumers worldwide — have avoided the product of a company or spoken out to others against a company perceived as shirking its “corporate citizenship” role. Meanwhile, consumers were just as likely to “reward” a company perceived as socially responsible by purchasing their products.

Business leaders and CEOs read these numbers and realize the bar has been raised. Corporations of all sizes, especially multinationals, are more attuned to the bottom-line value of being a good corporate citizen and playing by the rules. Individual business people are seeking to do “what is right” (though this is often prodded by corporate ethics standards and local laws) rather than maintaining an attitude of “anything to close the deal.”

All these factors, along with the growth of large multinational companies, have transformed the concept of business ethics from an academic discipline into an emerging operating force. Along with corporate ethics, corruption and bribery in international business have surfaced as important issues in an interdependent world economy. No longer seen purely as a morality play, the increasingly accepted view of corruption and bribery is that they hinder competition, distort trade and harm consumers and taxpayers while undermining public support for government. As a result, more and more corporations see business ethics as a bottom-line issue — not an optional one of morality. The acceptance of ethics as contributing to corporate operating profits or losses means they are receiving unprecedented attention.

It is for this reason that “behaving ethically and responsibly” may be the wave of the future, if only because the right thing to do can also be the profitable thing to do. Consider:

- A two-year study by The Performance Group, a consortium of seven international companies — Volvo, Unilever, Monsanto, Imperial Chemical Industries, Deutsche Bank, Electrolux and Gerling — concluded that improving environmental compliance and developing environmentally friendly products can enhance company earnings per share, increase profitability and also be important in winning contracts or investment

Word Study

shirk /ʃɜ:k/ *v.* 逃避, 躲避

be attuned to 习惯于, 适应

consortium

/kən'sɔ:tɪəm/ *n.* 协会, 联合, 财团

compliance

/kəm'plaɪəns/ *n.* 遵从, 依从

Word Study

pivotal /'pɪvətl/ *adj.*

关键的

convergence

/kən'veɪdʒəns/ *n.*

汇聚, 汇合

deify /di:'faɪ/ *v.*

将……神化

grace /greɪs/ *v.*

给……增光

larger than life

超群的

lesser mortal

普通人, 凡人

oligarchical

/ˌɒlɪ'gɑ:kɪkəl/ *adj.*

寡头政治的

approval in emerging markets.

- A 1999 study, cited in the US journal *Business and Society Review*, showed that 300 large corporations found that companies which made a public commitment to rely on their ethics codes outperformed companies that did not do so by two to three times, as measured by market value added.
- A 1997 study by DePaul University found that companies with a defined corporate commitment to ethical principles do better financially (based on annual sales/revenues) than companies that don't.

The challenge — and part of the problem — is that business has been globalized faster than the development of a universally recognized framework for a code of ethics and conduct. Technology has raised ethical issues that only a few years ago simply did not exist. Ethical debates now rage on issues from genetically modified food and animals to human cloning to privacy on the Internet. Globalization also brings companies into more frequent contact with other countries and cultures that (sometimes to their surprise) do business by different rules. This raises a pivotal question: “Whose ethics are we talking about?”

Corporations are only beginning to learn that while expanding into profitable new markets, they must also begin to take into account the social agendas and cultures of these new markets. While no global standard of ethics and conduct yet exists — there are several suggested standards being promoted from the Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the United Nations and the US Department of Commerce — the world is seeing a convergence of sorts in what corporations and consumers from all cultures deem important. For example, although values and cultures differ, there is universal acceptance of the notion that a good corporate reputation is a competitive advantage in global business. How that reputation is built is another matter.

History: Why Business Has Ethical Problems

We are living in an era when “The Captains of Industry” have become somewhat deified, gracing the covers of news and business magazines and appearing as larger than life icons meant to inspire us lesser mortals to success. Considering historical attitudes towards the ethics of business people, this amounts to a major comeback for the profession of business. (There are many business analysts who will argue that this celebrity status has actually proven to be a major distraction to many CEOs who are more concerned about their personal image than their company's bottom-line and long term performance.)

Of course it wasn't always this way — and it still isn't in some societies. (The popular attitude towards today's oligarchical new capitalists in Russia — one of outright contempt and loathing — is one example.) In fact, since

the dawn of recorded history, the businessperson, the merchant and the trader have been on the bottom rung of the social ladder. Doing business and being good were considered mutually exclusive.

Karl Marx, a failed stockbroker turned economist, wrote that greed is inherent in humankind — he meant it as a negative, of course. He seems to have been on to something. If there is one constant in history, it is the fight against people's seemingly innate urge to take advantage of others. Beginning with the Code of Hammurabi in the 18th century B.C., society has tried to play a role in introducing some basic ethics for business. Hammurabi was the chief of Babylon which is considered by many to be the world's first metropolis, complete with a form of organized commerce.

The code regulates in remarkably clear terms the rules of society — and business. It would not be a stretch to call it the first corporate code of ethics. It behooved the merchant-trader to follow the rules — or else. Bad business practices were harshly punished with a biblical eye-for-an-eye mentality. For example, if a man built a house badly and it collapsed, killing the owner, the builder was to be killed in retaliation. If the owner's son was killed, then the builder's son was slain. This is an early indication of the problems of defining ethical behavior.

THE ANCIENT GREEKS

The ancient Greeks continued the trend of imbuing businesspeople with less than honest motives and intent. Hermes, the Greek god of Commerce and the Market, was the official patron of traders and merchants. However, he was also considered the official patron of thieves. His distinguishing qualities were cunning, ingenuity, knowledge and creativity — all valued qualities in the world of business — and criminal activity. He was the fastest of the gods (Hermes became the Roman god Mercury), and one of his main tasks was leading the souls of the dead to the Underworld. He spun lies and illusions (too bad there was no truth in advertising laws back then) that turned those who came into contact with him into some of the earliest victims of fraud. The ancient Greek priests, eager to maintain their own power, lumped together the virtues of successful businesspeople and successful con men. It has been a stigma that has proven very hard to shake.

THE WORLD'S GREAT RELIGIONS

Since their inception, the world's great religions have been preaching the need for ethics in business. Holy books are strewn with warnings about wealth accumulation without accompanying social responsibility. All seem to be suspect of successful business practitioners, equating business success and making gobs of money with, in some cases, eternal damnation.

For example, the Bible's Book of Exodus (23: 6–8), warning against “greasing the wheels” with cash, states: “Thou shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials and subverts the cause of those who are in the

Word Study

- rung /rʌŋ/ *n.* 梯阶
- innate /iˈneɪt/ *adj.*
天生的, 固有的
- Hammurabi
/ˌhɑːmʊˈrɑːbi/ 汉谟拉比 (古巴比伦王国国王)
- behoove /biˈhuːv/ *v.*
理应, 有必要
- eye-for-an-eye 以牙还牙, 以眼还眼
- retaliation
/rɪˈtæliˈeɪʃən/ *n.*
报复
- Hermes /ˈhɜːmɪz/ 赫尔墨斯 (希腊神话中司畜牧、商业、交通旅游和体育运动的神)
- con man 骗子
- stigma /ˈstɪɡmə/ *n.*
耻辱, 污点
- inception /ɪnˈsepʃən/ *n.*
开端, 初期
- preach /ˈpriːtʃ/ *v.*
宣传, 鼓吹
- strew /struː/ *v.* 散播, 散布
- grease the wheels
贿赂, 使顺利进行

Word Study

bash /bæʃ/ *v.* 猛烈

攻击

conniving /kə'naɪvɪŋ/

adj. 阴险的

clout /klaʊt/ *n.*

影响, 势力

right.”

And Ecclesiastes (5:12) warns against too much business success: “Sweet is the sleep of the laborer whether he eats little or much; but the overabundance of the rich will not let the rich sleep.”

The Islamic holy book, the Koran (Surah CIV), singles out the unethical businessperson for a one-way trip to Hades. “Woe to every slanderer, defamer who amasses wealth and considers it a provision against mishap. He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal. Nay, he shall most certainly be hurled into the crushing disaster.”

And the Jewish Talmud is a must read for any businessperson with plans for a post-retirement stint in heaven. The Talmud discusses what types of questions people are asked by God after their deaths. The very first question, says the Talmud, is *Nasata V'netata Be'emunah* — “Did you conduct your business affairs with honesty and integrity?”

Business Bashing in Great Literature

William Shakespeare made *The Merchant of Venice's* Shylock a despicable character (as well as an enduring symbol of that less-than-respectable profession of loan sharking). It is Shylock who greedily demands “a pound of flesh” in payment for a debt. It wasn't a slip for Mr. Shakespeare — he generally held merchants and those in commerce in low esteem, often portraying them as plotting, conniving and generally unethical lowlifes. It wasn't personal but rather a reflection of the prevailing attitudes of Shakespeare's society.

Charles Dickens chronicled the horrors of sweatshops, child labor, debtors' prisons and the practices of swindlers and Scrooge-like characters in such epics as *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Christmas Carol*.

And the noted 18th century French Philosopher Honoré de Balzac reflected the mood of his times (and in many cases modern times) with his often repeated quote “Behind every great fortune ... is a crime.”

In cultures as diverse as Japan and England, merchants and traders or any engaged in commerce were looked down upon by nobility but tolerated nonetheless as necessary evils. Indeed, the English class system of recent centuries judged individuals not on their wealth but rather on how they came by their money. The retail trade was the lowest of the low. Those with “new money,” that is money made in commerce rather than through family inheritance, had little clout or respect (though one has to question the attitude of a society in which a penniless “Lord” brought low by gambling and excess might engender more respect than a hard-working, successful merchant).

This disdain and distrust of commerce had real effects on the relative development of some nations.

Moving Towards Acceptance

The status of those with commercial ambitions improved somewhat during the European Renaissance. Merchants were no longer excluded from political power and, in fact, aspiring to wealth through commerce was considered a socially acceptable vocation in many parts of Europe. It was partly this newfound respectability that opened the door to the industrial revolution and the accumulation of mega-wealth by individuals engaged in commerce.

Despite some grudging admiration, or at least acceptance, of wealth accumulation, industrialists in the United States had managed by the mid-19th century to undo all the newfound goodwill. They were, often deservedly, referred to as “Robber Barons,” ruthlessly running their railroads and steel mills and manipulating financial markets with little regard for employees, consumers or the public good. Monopoly tactics, predatory pricing and near slave labor conditions were basic practices of big business. There was a reason for the stereotyping of the successful capitalist as a fat, over-dressed, cigar smoking white male with a hardened heart of coal and no sense of social responsibility. It is no wonder that out of this dismal period of business behavior sprang the beginnings of trade unionism and the search for a kinder, gentler way of doing business. The hangover from this era of business irresponsibility — at least in the United States — can still be felt.

The Ford Pinto and the Global Ethics Boom

The 20th century’s two world wars took some of the heat off big business but the mentality in the United States that “what is good for General Motors is good for the country” was short-lived. The ethical consciousness of the US population was reawakened in 1965 when Ralph Nader brought the rather slipshod ethics of big car manufacturers to the public’s attention with his book, *Unsafe at Any Speed*. Still, not until the 1970s did business ethics become a major issue for the American consumer (and later the world), thanks to Ford Motor Company’s infamous Pinto — a subcompact car that had a tendency to explode when involved in a rear-end collision.

Before Lee Iacocca became famous for rescuing Chrysler from bankruptcy, he was president of Ford. Eager to follow up on his success with the Mustang, and facing increased competition in the small car arena from foreign upstarts like Volkswagen, Iacocca and Ford engineers conceived the Pinto.

The mission statement for the car was simple and uncompromising: “The Pinto was not to weigh an ounce over 2,000 pounds and not cost a cent over \$2,000.” It was rushed through production without regard to serious design flaws that would eventually land Ford in court.

It came to light that having relied on a “cost-benefit analysis” of strengthening the fuel tank design against rear-end impact, Ford had estimated that its

Word Study

- robber baron 强盗式
贵族, 强盗式资
本家
- predatory pricing
掠夺性定价
- hangover /ˈhæŋ.əʊvə/ n.
后遗弊病
- slipshod /ˈslɪpʃɒd/ adj.
马虎的, 不严谨的

Word Study

catastrophe

/kə'tæstrəfi/ *n.*

大灾难

lapse /læps/ *n.* 过失

unsafe fuel tanks would cause 180 burn deaths, 180 serious burn injuries, and 2,100 burned vehicles each year. It calculated that it would have to pay \$200,000 per death, \$67,000 per injury and \$700 per vehicle for a total of \$49.5 million. However, the cost estimates for saving these lives and injuries ran even higher. Alterations would cost \$11 per car or truck, which added up to \$137 million per year. Essentially, Ford's executives reckoned that it would be cheaper to pay lawsuit damages rather than recall the vehicles.

Jurors were naturally outraged over Ford's low-value attitude toward human life and awarded the victims huge settlements. However, the final insult came once Ford ordered a recall. The costs of alterations were just over one dollar per car, not the \$11 it had used as the basis for its "cost-benefit analysis" defense.

Many ethics experts believe the Pinto settlement and the outrage caused by Ford's attitude fuelled current-day skepticism about the ethics of American business. The ethics genie was out of the bottle and waiting to spread worldwide. It also showed that big corporations were vulnerable to pressure groups and PR (public relations) disasters.

Global Business, Global Disasters

Just 50 years ago, catastrophe meant natural disasters such as hurricanes, volcanoes, famines, and earthquakes. Now with the explosion of technology and the globalization of commerce, the damage caused by ethical lapses in business can lead to catastrophe on the scale of traditional natural disasters. Perhaps more importantly, the scope of these human-made catastrophes can easily spread across international borders.

Apart from fundamental challenges to national sovereignty, cultural tradition and human rights, globalization has unleashed a broad range of complex and unprecedented ethical challenges in areas as diverse as foreign investment, education, medicine, poverty, environmental sustainability, immigration, marketing, intellectual property, the Internet and sports. The intensity of competition, the scale of commercial activity and the speed of communication have given a frightening momentum and sinister urgency to the concept of the survival of the fittest.

The 1980s were a time when many modern companies and governments first confronted the moral dilemmas presented by globalization. The US-based Union Carbide Corporation was confronted with the nightmare of the Bhopal chemical plant accident in India. The Soviet government was faced with a cross-border disaster when the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine exploded, sending a radioactive cloud drifting over Western Europe as far as Scotland.

But it was the Bhopal incident that first posed serious questions about ethical standards for multinational corporations. Just after midnight on December 3, 1984, a pesticide plant in Bhopal accidentally released 40

metric tons of methyl isocyanine into the atmosphere. The incident was a catastrophe with an estimated 8,000 deaths, 100,000 injuries and significant damage to livestock and crops. The long-term health effects from the incident were difficult to evaluate; the International Medical Commission on Bhopal estimated that as of 1994 upwards of 50,000 people remained partially or totally disabled.

The incident had serious implications for US-based multinational corporations, both at home and abroad: the US-based Union Carbide Corporation was the parent company to the Bhopal plant operator Union Carbide India Ltd. (UCIL). Questions that would be addressed in the ensuing trial included:

- Should Union Carbide be held responsible for the design of, maintenance for, and training on equipment at the Bhopal plant?
- Should Union Carbide be responsible for informing the local government and community of the hazards associated with the plant?

The Bhopal incident is considered a watershed for awakening multinational corporations to the demand for greater accountability outside of their home country. This incident is cited as a factor in the development of industry standards such as Responsible Care under the Chemical Manufacturers Association, and the development and implementation of US environmental legislation and regulations, including the US Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

The Chernobyl nuclear accident in April 1986 was kept secret by Moscow for almost a month and caused an international furor. It underscored the potential international implications governments face if they choose to act in an unethical manner. Moscow's initial silence on the affair was an amazingly unethical act.

A Journalistic Watershed

The 1990s brought a media feeding frenzy surrounding corporate missteps, especially in the environmental area. The Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska again called into question the corporate ethics of a large American company. Also the Dutch company Shell Oil suffered two blows to its reputation in 1995.

The first blow came from its attempted disposal of the Brent Spar oil rig in the North Sea and the second came over the company's failure to oppose the Nigerian government's execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a human-rights activist in a part of Nigeria where Shell had extensive operations. Since then, Shell has rewritten its business principles, created an elaborate mechanism to implement them and worked harder to improve its relations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs have been a major thorn in the side of multinational corporations because of their demands for greater corporate responsibility on a global scale.

Word Study

watershed /ˈwɔ:təʃed/ *n.*

分水岭

furor /ˈfjʊərə/ *n.*

(抗议浪潮的)

爆发

thorn /θɔ:n/ *n.* 使人

苦恼/生气的事物

Word Study

lurch /lɜ:tʃ/ v. 蹒跚
前行

What makes Shell's response an important event in the realm of international business ethics is that the firm's actions were not the result of anyone holding a legal or financial gun to its head. Shell was not compelled to do anything. Neither incident did lasting damage to the company's share price or sales — although the Brent Spar incident resulted in a brief dip in Shell's market share in Germany following a consumer boycott. The epiphany was that being a responsible corporate citizen made good sense and in the long run was a better business practice than lurching from crisis to crisis.

One reason Shell officials have given for acting in a pre-emptive manner: Shell employees around the globe were uncomfortable with the company's involvement in these high profile incidents and with the company itself. Senior management concluded that people are happier working for organizations they regard as ethical — and in a tight job market that proved to be a powerful incentive to act.

What Business Ethics Are and Are Not

Sociologist Raymond Baumhart once posed the following question to a gathering of business professionals: "What does ethics mean to you?"

Among their replies:

- "Ethics has to do with what my feelings tell me is right or wrong."
- "Ethics has to do with my religious beliefs."
- "Being ethical is doing what the law requires."
- "Ethics consists of the standards of behavior our society accepts."
- "I don't know what the word means."

The answers are insightful and provide clear reminders of what applied ethics are not.

Philosophers have been debating the concept of ethics since before the time of Socrates, more than 2,500 years ago. Many would say there has been little progress — and even less agreement on exactly what ethics are. In its simplest form, the concept involves learning what is right — or wrong — and then doing the right thing. The real problem lies in coming to an agreement on just what "the right thing is" at any particular time.

Many academics will say there is always a right thing to do based on accepted moral principles. Others will argue that "the right thing" is really based on a combination of specific situations, national cultures and personal morals. Ultimately what is right depends on what the individual thinks is right. (For a further discussion of the principle of relativism in ethics see Chapter Two: Are Ethics Culturally Based?)

The real business world is made up of multiple shades of gray. A business manager is not perplexed by black and white choices such as "should I steal from the company" or "should I lie to the public." The really hard ethical choices are inevitably more complicated.

A factory manager who spent more than a decade working in

developing countries in Africa and Asia says not a day went by without his having to make “judgement calls” on what was “the right thing to do” in dealing with employees, government officials and the company headquarters back home. He was armed with company guidelines and legal statutes, but the guidelines only addressed vague generalities and the laws were always filled with loopholes you could drive a bulldozer through.

His basic attitude to these questions: “I often used to think back to the ethics courses I was forced to take in graduate school. Most of them seemed to discuss theory and laid out situations that were obvious. Now I have to make decisions on the fly. Decisions that affect real people. My instincts tell me what is the right thing to do. They pass my personal smell test but you know I could never give you an exact accounting of how or why I arrived at some of those decisions. I know they were right but I can’t always tell you why. And you know, someone else might have made the opposite decision — and they too could be right. There are often many, many roads to choose and all of them can be argued ethically.”

Business Ethics as a Social Contract

Business ethics are based on broad principles of integrity and fairness that tend to focus on shareholder and stakeholder issues such as product quality, customer satisfaction, employee wages and benefits as well as local community and environmental responsibilities, issues that a company can actually influence. According to scholars it means going well beyond simple legal compliance.

Business ethics define how a company integrates its core values — such as honesty, trust, respect and fairness — into its policies, practices and decision-making. Business ethics, of course, also involve a company’s compliance with legal standards and adherence to internal rules and regulations. As recently as a decade ago, business ethics consisted primarily of compliance-based, legally-driven codes and training that outlined in detail what employees could or could not do in regard to areas such as conflict of interest or improper use of company assets.

Today, a growing number of companies are attempting to design values-based, globally consistent programs that give employees a level of ethical understanding that allows them to make appropriate decisions, even when faced with new challenges. At the same time, the scope of business ethics has expanded to encompass a company’s actions with regard not only to how it treats its employees and obeys the law but to the nature and quality of the relationships it wishes to have with stakeholders including shareholders, customers, business partners, suppliers, the community, the environment, indigenous peoples and even future generations.