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Guiding Ethical Business Decisions in Today's Organizations

Most businesses seek to “do the right thing” but many fail. Why? Are they unable to tell the difference between ethical and unethical conduct? Are they ignorant of their organization’s written codes for ethical conduct? Most ethics codes are lists of proscribed behaviors, not guides for desirable behavior. Assuming that most people act out of self-interest and also that most people respond better to prescriptions than proscriptions, the authors suggest that all decisions be put through 10 screens before becoming final. While not a guarantee of ethical behavior, this practical framework should at least help well-meaning managers do the right thing while furthering their organizational goals.

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