



## THE ETHICS COMPASS

HOW TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS. When managers face exceptional decisions, ethical orientation can be helpful.

by Dr. Frank Hagenow

There are always situations in which you as a manager have to make difficult decisions. This is part of the day-to-day business of people with leadership responsibility and is nothing special for the time being. Sometimes, however, there are exceptional key situations in which you are unsure.

In my German book "Führen ohne Psychotricks" ("Leading without Mind Games") there is a whole chapter for the concrete use in everyday business. From this 'Manager Toolbox' I would like to present a tool for such difficult key situations.

### HOW TO RECOGNIZE KEY SITUATION

How do you recognize these key situations? In these situations the problem is not your own ignorance or lack of information, but your indecision or helplessness. You do not know any advice because you are stuck in an inner stalemate situation. The various options are actually crystal clear on the table; nevertheless, it is simply not yet possible for you to decide at the moment.

Even after a long period of reflection, no clear course is emerging. You therefore repeatedly postpone the decision without actually coming any closer to a solution. Sometimes there are also legal or at least moral concerns.

## DETERMINING THE RIGHT COURSE

If you are constantly wavering between action and doubt, then my 'Ethics compass' can help you get more clarity for a decision:

As you know, such a compass serves as orientation and helps to determine the right course. It has four points of the compass (N, E, S and W), each of which stands for a direction in which you can think.

### *N - STANDS FOR YOUR "NETWORK".*

What would your board, your boss, your coach or your partner say?  
Could all your friends know about your decision? How would they react?

### *E - LIKE "ETHICS COMMITTEE".*

Suppose an ethics committee were asked to review your decision. How would it judge the case?

### *S - STANDS FOR "SECOND TIME".*

Could you also communicate and justify the decision openly a second time to those affected?  
Or would it be expected that the whole thing would only work once?

### *W - LIKE "WORLDWIDEWEB".*

What would it be like if the decision were spread via the social media?  
What if your action were to make the headline on the first page of a major daily newspaper tomorrow?

## APPLY THE EXCLUSION PRINCIPLE

These four course directions can help you get one step closer to the right decision in difficult situations. After all, it's a lot to be gained if you can rule out the less promising options. Especially in difficult situations it can be helpful to pause for a moment and focus on fundamental values such as ethics and decency. On this basis, further solutions with inner clarity and foresight are often possible.

Otherwise, you will find further helpful tips on the topic: "[3 steps to more sovereignty](#)".

Looking from an ethical perspective can help you make the right decision in really difficult situations.

For more information: [www.frank-hagenow.com](http://www.frank-hagenow.com)