

Book Review: *Ethical Marketing: Basic Ethics in Action*

Written by Murphy, Lacznia, Bowie, and Klein

Reviewed by: Julia Cronin-Gilmore, Ph.D., Bellevue University and

Diana Maguire, University of Pittsburgh

Background

Over the past decade, most authors of marketing textbooks have begun to integrate ethical bits into their coverage of standard Principles, Consumer Behavior, and Strategy courses. The topic of ethics has rarely been offered in most marketing programs as a standalone course. In many undergraduate programs, as well as some masters and MBA programs, the topic of ethics is approached from a business standpoint and is viewed as part of the core curriculum; however, some programs leave the coverage of business ethics to the discretion of their instructors. Although the subject of marketing ethics has rarely been offered as a standalone course, some Masters of Science in Marketing and MBA marketing programs are offering such a course and a textbook written specifically on marketing ethics is needed. In searching for a textbook, *Ethical Marketing: Basic Ethics in Action* was one of the few published items available that is an actual textbook. Most of the others were topical books that would be considered supplemental as an addition to another course with not enough material to support a standalone marketing ethics class.

Review

The textbook is comprised of the following seven chapters: (1) Ethical reasoning and marketing decisions; (2) Ethics in researching and segmenting markets; (3) Product management ethics; (4) Ethical issues in distribution channels and pricing; (5) Ethics in advertising and on the internet; (6) Personal selling ethics; (7) Implementing and auditing ethical marketing. The chapters were written succinctly with adequate coverage of the material presented. Each chapter begins with at least two scenarios that challenge the reader to think about the concepts presented in the chapter. As written, it is easy to read and could be used at the undergraduate or graduate level. The chapters contain rich exhibits from published journals that add credibility to the book. At the end of each chapter, illustrations of points made in the chapter outline various options for overcoming the ethical impediments. After the chapters conclude, a marketing functions audit is presented as a checklist with yes or no questions for product, price, distribution, and promotion. An ethical compliance list and ethical climate audit checklists are also provided, which all can be the basis for starting an ethical evaluation of an organization.

Evaluation

The authors present practical, action-focused tools for the marketing practitioner to utilize in real-life settings. The 'Ideas for Ethical Marketing' sections at the end of each chapter contain useful advice. Additionally, the audit tools included in the appendices: Marketing Functions Audit, Ethical Compliance Audit, Ethical Climate Audit provide everyday guidance for developing appropriate dialog on the ethical issues. However, undergraduate instructors should be cautioned that the level of analysis may be more appropriate for graduate students, whose

better appreciation of terminology and working experience would allow them to apply the practical concepts offered. Critical elements missing from the text are a legal perspective on marketing ethics and an adequate coverage of issues of equality in marketing. Some legal perspectives are approached at times throughout the text, but it isn't a primary focus of the book. Given that many ethical situations have legal implications, more time should have been spent integrating that aspect into the book. Issues of equality in terms of the gender, race, ethnicity or personal orientation of consumers, as represented in marketing activities are important factors for marketers. The industry offers numerous examples of companies that have employed ethical practices of equality well, and those that have fallen short. Coverage of the implications for companies dealing with equality issues in marketing would have improved the substance of the text. When comparing *Ethical Marketing: Basic Ethics in Action* to other books in the market, it lacks an in-depth discussion on many subjects including but not limited to strategy and ethics, consumer rights, marketing to children and minorities, green washing, and cause-related marketing. If using the book for a standalone course, it lacks in several areas including: additional questions, examples, mini-cases, and instructor supplemental material. Its lack of thorough coverage of the issues would be challenging to use in support of a new course, which is disappointing given it is published by Pearson, one of the largest publishers in the market. If used as a supplemental book for another marketing course, it is a good choice. Given the fact that educators are creating courses solely for marketing ethics, and may use this as such, the book needs improvement.

Publisher/Price: The book is a first edition, published in by Pearson Prentice Hall with a price of \$76.00 at the time of review.

