

Evaluation of the Ethical Decision Tools

We consider the ethical decision tools presented to us as part of the same "tool", or perhaps rather "framework".

We would like to compare this tool to another analysis or information handling technique called mindmap, with its corresponding set of tools. Mindmap is intended to impose a structure on your information, and as such provide additional quality to the information you handle. In order to use such tools, a certain level of experience and skill is required. And for this, you need adequate instruction and training. We consider the ethical decision tools to be similar in this respect, which means that they may become cumbersome and obstructive to its intended purpose without the adequate experience.

This tool is good for structuring and relating the kinds of issues that are important to keep in mind when you make ethically burdened decisions. It does a good job of highlighting possible ethical complications involved in a decision. However, it does not provide any aid in actually identifying all the important factors relevant to the dilemma (stakeholders, values, interests, principles, etc.). The tools simply ask you to identify them. Thus, it still comes down entirely to the insight of the analyst.

There is a red thread of sorts going from OLE to HA to AT, with ETHXPRT as a form of digital extension of AT. The OLE questions 1 to 4 provide information for the four fields of the HA tool. Question number 5 is in essence the AT spreadsheet, and question number 6 wraps up the questionnaire by guiding you to write a thoroughly grounded rationale for the decision.

While we find this collection of tools as a whole to be a set of wise and important thoughts, it may by some be considered not much more than common sense rephrased. By that, we mean that its effect is like stating "be careful", without providing any means to identify hazards. It may however be very useful given proper education and training, which we currently lack.

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