

Chapter Summary – Module Eleven

Ethics is defined as standards of conduct, or "doing the right thing." When people question whether employees in the mass media have ethics, they are asking if these influential gatekeepers have standards to guide their decisions and conduct, and if they adhere to those standards. News professionals have long claimed that they adhere to standards of truth without obligation to any economic imperative, but research reveals that economics and politics have often dictated news content. Further, although public relations and advertising personnel have been charged with being loyal to the organization that employs them rather than to the truth, standards of conduct are also applied to decision-making in these professions. Ethical decision-making involves careful, thoughtful analysis, which is difficult to accomplish in a competitive, deadline environment. Because the mass media permeate our society, and because they are the primary conveyors of information, media professionals need to address ethical issues.