



Defining Moments: When Managers Must Choose Between Right and Right

By Joseph L. Badaracco Jr.



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"Defining moments," according to Badaracco, occur when managers face business problems that trigger difficult, deeply personal questions. In deciding how to act, managers reveal their inner values, test their commitment to those values, and ultimately shape their characters. Badaracco builds a framework for approaching these dilemmas around three cases of increasing complexity, reflecting the escalating responsibilities managers face as they advance in their careers. The first story presents a young man whose choice will affect him only as an individual; the second, a department head, whose decision will influence his organization; the third, a corporate executive, whose actions will have much larger, societal ramifications. To guide the decision-making process, Badaracco draws on the insights of four philosophers--Aristotle, Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and James--because they offer practical rather than theoretical advice. He thus bridges the gap between classroom philosophy and corporate pragmatism. The result is a flexible framework that managers can draw on to resolve issues of conflicting responsibility in practical ways.

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Editorial Review

Review

This solid, penetrating work, obviously deeply felt by the author, is likely to be well received by boomer managers. --Library Journal

"The book is well-crafted, readable and interactive. --USA Today -- *USA Today*

From the Back Cover

"So much of making sound decisions comes from asking smart questions. Defining Moments asks all the right questions in a way that will help any manager who wants to reach judgments that are morally sensitive and professionally sensible." --George Stephanopoulos, Visiting Professor at Columbia University, political analyst for ABC, and former adviser to the Clinton Administration

Defining Moments outlines a refreshingly realistic approach to ethics in management. Badaracco shows how managers can choose, without sacrificing their values, between multiple acceptable solutions--not the one right answer that most ethicists claim exists. It is a book to be put into practice, not just read and set aside. --Andrall Pearson, Chairman & CEO, Pepsico Food Division

Critical decisions between shades of right are inescapable in our professional and personal lives and do create defining moments' for each of us. Badracco brings a clarity to the decision process that I did not think possible. --Gail Long, Senior Vice President, Group Executive, Large Corporate, BankBoston

Finally, here's a book that helps us prioritize our personal and institutional loyalties and responsibilities in decision making, wend our way through real-life moral mazes, and develop our character in the process. A crystal-clear, practical writer, Badaracco provides a new and unorthodox approach to issues of great complexity. He offers pragmatic assistance to real people weighing conflicting duties, ends, and virtues of business life. --William McLennan, University Chaplain, Tufts University

About the Author

Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr., is the John Shad Professor of Business Ethics at the Harvard Business School. He is the co-author of Leadership and the Quest for Integrity and the author of The Knowledge Link and Loading the Dice (all HBS Press).

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Michelle Chase:

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Danny Saleem:

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