

Imagine that you are the first person to arrive for your business ethics class. As you sit down at your desk, you notice an iPod on the floor underneath the adjacent seat. You pick it up and turn it on. It works just fine, and it even has some of your favorite music listed. Looking around, you realize that you are still the only person in the room and that no one will know if you keep it.

Not being able to decide immediately, and seeing that other students are beginning to enter the room, you place the iPod down on the floor next to your own backpack and books. As the class begins, you realize that you have the full class period to decide what to do.

- What would you think about as you sat there trying to decide what to do?
- What would you do?

Now let us change the scenario. Instead of being the person who finds the iPod, imagine that you are a friend who sits next to that person. As class begins, your friend leans over, tells you what happened, and asks for advice.

The lesson for today's business ethics class is chapter 2 of your textbook, *Business Ethics: Decision Making for Personal Integrity and Social Justice*.

Finally, imagine that you are a student representative on the judicial board of your school. This student decides to keep the iPod and is later accused of stealing. How would you make your decision?

- What are the key facts that you should consider before making a decision, as either the person who discovered the iPod, the friend, or the judicial board member?
- Is this an ethical issue? What exactly are the ethical aspects involved in your decision?
- Who else is involved, or should be involved, in this decision? Who has a stake in the outcome?
- What alternatives are available to you? What are the consequences of each alternative?
- How would each of your alternatives affect the other people you have identified as having a stake in the outcome?
- Where might you look for additional guidance to assist you in resolving this particular dilemma?

Decision Point Revisited

What Would You Do?

Applying our decision-making model to the iPod case, we would first try to determine the facts. Knowing that the iPod functioned perfectly would be good evidence for concluding that it was left behind accidentally rather than intentionally discarded. Knowing the actual cost of the iPod would also be evidence that it is something likely to be highly valued and not something easily abandoned. The cost, as well as your own understanding of private property, makes it clear that this situation raises ethical issues of rights, happiness, personal integrity, and honesty.

Most obviously, this would seem to involve two major stakeholders: the true owner and yourself. But, upon reflection, you can understand that whatever decision you make will have broader implications. People will talk about the stolen iPod or the iPod that had been returned; and these ramifications could encourage or diminish a campus culture of trust and honesty.

Imagining yourself in the position of the student who lost the iPod or of the student who might sit in judgment at a campus judicial hearing can provide a perspective otherwise easily missed if you think only of yourself. Imagining the results of keeping the iPod and then having that fact discovered and publicized is another helpful step. How would you try to justify that decision to others? Considering the number of hours someone might have to work at an on-campus job in order to earn enough money to buy another iPod introduces another important perspective. Finally, a concern with personal integrity would encourage you to reflect on the type of person who keeps another's property and to ask yourself if this is who you really are and want to be.

Given all these steps, it would be difficult to imagine that one could justify a decision to keep the iPod.

Consider how different roles might impact your judgment about the discovery of the iPod. Your judgment about the iPod might differ greatly if you knew that your friend had lost it, or if you were a teacher in the class, or if you were a member of the campus judicial board. Our judgment about Richard Grasso might change when we learn that his professional responsibility included