

The Big Four

IAC Ethics Mini-Exercise

“Watch out for the Big Four”. This is the warning given by ethics writers Eric Harvey and Scott Airitam. The Big Four are the factors that lead to unethical behavior: Greed, Speed, Laziness and Haziness.

Let’s look at these factors individually...

Greed impels us to acquire more than we should.

Speed entices us to cut corners in response to the accelerated pace of business.

Laziness leads us down the *easy* path rather than the **right** path.

Haziness leads us to act and react without thinking something through.

With this basic information, an ‘icebreaker’ (5-10 minutes activity) could be handled in a number of ways.

1. Prepare ‘signs’ with each factor listed separately. Four volunteers represent each individual factor. Ask the volunteers to arrange themselves in order of the most serious culprits in County government OR ask the crowd to arrange the volunteers in order. Either way, there should be some serious discussion among the participants as to what they consider most serious. The facilitator should lead a general discussion regarding WHY people feel these factors should be ranked the way they were.
2. A follow up to this might be to have participants ‘vote’ by raising hands on which factor poses the biggest threat to County government. Again, facilitator should ask why.
3. A separate activity might be to have participants break into 4 small groups. Assign each group one of the factors and have the group come up with examples, either real or possible, for their assigned factor. Allow about 4 minutes for this. Follow up with each group presenting their list of examples. As a closing, facilitator should add any additional examples that come to mind.
4. ANYTHING YOU COME UP WITH TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE! These are simply suggestions meant to help generate discussion about Ethics.

Source for the Big Four: Business Ethics, by Archie Carroll
Icebreaker Ideas by Kathy Ackerman