



**DON'T LOSE YOUR SOUL JUST TO WIN AN ELECTION**

**A Campaign Ethics Workbook**

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**The ethical choices faced by those who work in politics are seemingly endless. They are also often unseen. The best campaign professionals pay as much attention to their ethical choices as they do to their strategic and tactical ones. You should treat ethics like you treat the other parts of your campaign: plan ahead, work deliberately, and learn from your mistakes.**

This document highlights some of the types of ethical choices you may face as a political professional and offers some ideas about how to navigate those choices. This isn't a complete list of decisions you will have to make, but is rather a way to think about your ethical judgment. This also doesn't tell you what your ethics should be. It is not a polemic promoting the Quran, Aristotle, Saint Paul, or Nietzsche. Instead, I encourage you to develop your own foundation and to stick to it. When you stand up for a candidate or issue you should be sure you are standing on a solid rock, not shifting sand.

That said, I support the promise of American democracy. I am evangelist for what our nation could be, and for a system of politics that can help us get there. I believe the process in which we participate as political operatives has value. Politics matters. What you are doing matters.

Our system is far from perfect. Racism is baked into our founding documents. America's first peoples were killed and chased from their homes by those who wanted their land and resources. Money, gerrymandering, irresponsible pundits, and more work to undermine democracy and democratic values.

You have to describe the country in terms of what you passionately hope it will become, as well as in terms of what you know it to be now. You have to be loyal to a dream country rather than the one to which you wake up every morning...

We should face up to unpleasant truths about ourselves, but we should not take those truths to be the last word about our chances for happiness, or about our national character. Our national character is still in the making.

- *Richard Rorty, [Achieving Our Country](#)*

I have spent a career in politics trying to make our system more fair and just, and to teaching the next generation of advocates. I can do this because our political system was designed to be changed. It was built to move toward "a more perfect union." I can advocate for change in our political system because our system depends on advocacy. My primary obligation is not to my clients or students – it is to the political process in which we participate. This workbook echoes that belief.

I'm not just shouting these ideas from an ivory tower. Over the past 25-plus years, I've been a House and Senate staffer, served in President Obama's administration, consulted, lobbied, run and helped run public and private sector organizations, and advised issue campaigns and candidates at all levels. I have also taught political communication at The George Washington University for two decades, both as an adjunct and fulltime instructor. In 2019 I launched the

[Project on Ethics in Political Communication](#) to promote the study, teaching and practice of ethical political communication.

Of course mine isn't the only perspective. The American Association of Political Consultants has a [Code of Ethics](#), as do the [Public Relations Society of America](#), the [International Association of Business Communicators](#), and others. All are worth checking out.

This document works from ethical foundation to applications. It is relatively short, and includes links to outside sources. I have also included a list of suggested readings at the end.

As you flip through this you will notice a lot of empty boxes, those are for you to fill in. Grab a pen (or better yet, a pencil), find a quiet place to read and think, and dive in.

- Peter

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**This is a work in progress. Let me know what you think – what worked and what could work better? What should we add and remove? What else should we read and include in our list of additional readings?**

## **The Big Picture**

You work on campaigns or run for office because you believe our world should, and can, be a better place. You might define better as a world not doomed to climate disaster, or in which individual liberty is paramount. Maybe you think everyone should have access to quality health care they can afford, that the federal budget should be balanced, that our immigration system should be reformed, or all those things and more. There is a point to what you are doing beyond a candidate, election or political party. The point is helping create a better place for all of us. Keep that place front of mind when you make every decision. Remember that you work on campaigns because you are working toward an ideal, not just a paycheck.

Consultants get paid to win the next election or pass the next bill. But we must never mistake the immediate goal for the greater stakes.

- *Democratic strategist Oren Shur and Republican strategist Susan Del Percio in [Campaigns & Elections](#)*

Take some time to consider that ideal and write down what it is in the box below. For example, "A world in which everyone is treated fairly and with respect, and in which everyone works together for a sustainable, just future."

**Always work toward that** 

Along the way you will have to make compromises and hard choices. But you should never lose sight of where you're going and why you're going there.

## Your Foundation

You wrote down the better world for which you are working. Now take some time to consider why you made that choice. Why does it matter if the world is wrecked after you die? Who cares if people you will never meet aren't treated fairly? These seem like crass questions – of course you care about the future of the planet and the wellbeing of strangers – but the questions speak to something beyond what you put in the box above. What is it?

This reminder of a truth or ideal beyond our day-to-day is why many go to church, or walk in nature, or read poetry. It is a ritualistic and regular stepping outside of oneself, to catch one's mental and emotional breath, to remind ourselves that there is a world beyond our own line of sight and immediate moment.

Some people spend a lifetime contemplating these questions. A character on the sit-com [The Good Place](#) was based on the frustration and endless complexity of this pursuit (and how irritating people who pursue the question can be). You don't need to read the [Tao Te Ching](#) or the [Nicomachean Ethics](#) in their original languages to have a moral or ethical foundation. But you ought to reflect on it, consider why you believe as you do.

What is your foundation? Write it in the box.



**That is the rock on which you stand when you stand up for a candidate or cause.**



**Make sure both feet are firmly planted on that rock at all times.**

## Your Shortcut

Ethical foundations aren't easy. How we sort through who we are (and who we want to be) in the world can be complicated and ever-changing (for a rock, it can move around a lot). Most

answers come with caveats and more questions – “always tell the truth, except if it would hurt someone’s feelings, but sometimes it’s better to hurt someone’s feelings a little now and save them more embarrassment later, except when...” Just as you need mental shortcuts to make strategic and tactical decisions, you can find some mental shortcuts to help make sound ethical decisions.

These shortcuts should be the same ones on which you rely when you make other decisions in your life. Political campaigns don’t stand outside of who we are or how we ought to behave. For some this short cut is an imagined conversation with their grandfather, for others it’s “WWJD,” an historical figure, or even fictional character (I default to Milo in Norton Juster’s, [The Phantom Tollbooth](#) – I even named a consulting firm Milo Public Affairs to keep the book’s lessons front of mind). What’s your shortcut? Write it down in this box.

These are the “big think” parts of the exercise. The “take a walk or sit in the park and let your mind wander” steps. It’s channeling your inner [Henry David Thoreau](#). Hang on to those parts as we move to the more practical.

### **Getting Specific**

Ethical decisions and tradeoffs in campaigns abound. Many wind up being of the means/ends variety – what are you will to do to get what you want? Can you cheat to advance the greater good? If so, how much? If not, how close can you come? How do you avoid always being one tactic or election away from doing the right thing?

Consider a tweak on Michael Walzer’s [classic example](#) of the “[problem of dirty hands](#).” Imagine a good person is running for local office for all the right reasons, and wants to run an above-board and ethical campaign. Now imagine this person’s opponent is a shady operator who will

do whatever it takes to win, and once in office will sell city contracts and cut every corner to make a buck. The campaign is very close. Two weeks before the election a corrupt local politician approaches the good candidate with a deal. As Walzer writes:

*“In order to win the election the candidate must make a deal with a dishonest ward boss, involving the granting of contracts for school construction over the next four years. Should he make the deal?”*

Saying ‘no’ to the deal means a fully corrupt person who stands against all you think is right, wins. Agreeing to the deal would result in some corruption and would likely rely on illegal (or at least unseemly) action to win the election. But once in office, the good person would do good things, school construction contracts aside.

Do you take the deal? Are you willing to get your hands dirty? How dirty? What about the next deal, and the one after that?

Broadly speaking, there are three sets of ethical choices you make as a political campaign professional: for whom to work, how to work for them, and what to do between elections. There is obviously more to it than that, but these three categories are a useful way to think about the ethical choices you may face.

## For Whom to Work

You will never find a candidate with whom you agree on everything, all of the time. Even if you’re the candidate, you will find yourself changing your mind or embracing positions with which you may not fully agree to advance your larger goals.

**Here is what some political professionals told the Project on Ethics in Political Communication in our [Five Questions](#) series:**

Here’s a possible standard ... what if you were the target of the communication? Would you think it was fair, truthful enough, captured the essence of the topic? Even if you didn’t like it, would you say it was above board?

- *Jim Kessler EVP Third Way, former campaign strategist*

...there’s a fine line between running smart and savvy campaigns and being unethical. In my view, the key is having the wherewithal in those moments to hit pause – and consider whether you’re about to say or do something that you’ll feel good about long after Election Day.

- *Oren Shur senior Democratic media strategist*

Think about how you would treat family, friends, and strangers, and treat your political opponents like that.

- *Andrew Lautz former Republican opposition researcher*

A career is a short time. Try to live each day as if your career would be judged on what you did that day. Because the day will inevitably come when you’ll be doing the things on which your career will be judged.

- *Bill Dauster 20+ year Senate and White House veteran*

You are limited in for whom you work not just by the absence of an ideal match for your beliefs, but also by things like geography (where are you willing to move?), salary (politics can be a calling, but someone has to pay the rent), and the people who are running for office and running the campaign. Another practical matter to consider is that most political operatives find they have to pick a side in order to keep working. Democrats hire Democrats and Republicans hire Republicans. There are cases in which the candidate from the party you tend to support is so far from your beliefs that you (reluctantly) support the opposition. But those cases are few and far between, and often come with career consequences.

Other factors that may matter include: whether or not your favorite candidate has a shot at winning, or if someone you like less than your ideal but more than the other side's candidate might be more likely to win a general election; whether or not the candidate or campaign manager are people you trust and want to work for (working for jerks with whom you agree may be worse than working for good people with whom you may not agree as much); and if what the campaign needs is a good match for the skills you can bring to the effort.

The time to sort these things out is before you start looking for work on campaigns. Just as you would with any job or big decision, write down what you're looking for, your "must haves," and your "no ways." Are there issues about which you feel so strongly that you will not work for someone on the other side (for example abortion, immigration, or guns)? Are there organizational or structural standards (for example diverse leadership, respect)? Think about your choices and what tradeoffs you are willing to make and write them down below.

**Must Have**



**Would Be Good to Have**

**Not Ideal to Have**

## No Way

You can't anticipate every ethical choice you will face, but you can predict many of the types of choices. In addition to keeping the "big think" handy, there are a few other things you can do.

First, of course, don't lie, cheat or steal. Obey the law. Do not accept donations in exchange for favors. Do not attack your opponent based on their race, gender identity, faith, or national origin. Beyond that it gets trickier.

A few areas to think about include:

### **Fundraising**

The first thing a lot of people think of when you ask about campaign corruption is money. [Political scientists find](#) there is a complicated relationship between money, campaigns and public policy. It's not as simple as money for votes.

There is no question that campaigns are exceptionally expensive (in part so they can pay people like you). This means that campaigns spend a lot of time raising money, time they could spend talking to voters or learning about issues. It is also true that people who donate a lot of money have different access to candidates (and if the campaign succeeds, to elected officials) than

other people do. That means issues important to big donors get heard. You need money to win, and money isn't free.

Before you begin the campaign, the candidate and senior team should have a thoughtful discussion about how you will ensure that money helps the

campaign, rather than the campaign helping people with money. The right time to make hard decisions about money is when the campaign is new and things are relatively calm. The wrong time is in the middle of a tough primary or general election when everyone is tired, stressed, and likely to take "just this one shortcut" (which turns into two, then five, and more).

Some questions to consider:

*Whose money won't you take?*

Is there support you do not want, or whose support you do not want to be seen receiving? Will you refuse corporate PAC money, money from certain industries or interest groups, or individuals? If so, who are they? Write them down in the box.

One way to help ensure no one expects special favors or access because they donate to your campaign is to have a clear statement in all your fundraising materials that says something like, "Donating to this campaign does not mean your input or ideas are taken more seriously than anyone else's. Donations will not result in votes, meetings, or policy positions. Support this campaign because you believe in the candidate, not because you expect anything in return."

*Whose money won't you really take?*

If you won't take corporate PAC money, will you take money from other PACs (such as "[leadership PACs](#)")? What if those PACs are supported by corporations? Will you accept money from individuals at corporations or interest groups? Will you do an internet search of every donor to see if they meet your standards? Will you only search donors who give over a certain amount? If so, what amount? Are your rules the same as above, or do you need to refine them? Write your (updated) rules in the box.

*Digital fundraising*

Digital fundraising has gotten a lot of press for all the wrong reasons. In the wake of aggressive (and maybe illegal) tactics, the *New York Times*' Shane Goldmacher [wrote](#), "Digital operatives in both parties deploy an array of manipulative tactics that can deceive donors of all age groups: faux bill notices and official-looking correspondence; bogus offers to match donations and hidden links to unsubscribe; and prechecked boxes that automatically repeat donations, which [are widely seen](#) as the most egregious scheme."

Do not mislead people in your email subject lines. Do not trick people into donating money through tactics like [automatic recurring donations](#). Yes, donors could read the details and yes they could opt-out. I could also floss my teeth more and drink less coffee, but those things aren't happening either. Do not send a donor you have never met an email you would not send to your least politically or internet savvy relative.

## Opposition research

Most campaigns hire a person or a firm to find out as much as they can about the opposition, a process called opposition research, or “oppo.” The best campaigns also investigate their own candidate. You want to know as much as you can about your opponent and you don’t want to learn something bad about your own boss two weeks before the polls close.

A lot of oppo is straightforward. If your opponent is an entrepreneur new to politics, what happened to her companies and how did she treat her employees? Is your opponent on the record saying things that run counter to their current campaign or counter to values your voters hold? Do they even vote? Campaigns, like sports teams, scout their opponents looking for weaknesses.

Everyone has skeletons, or at least things they would rather not see all over social media. Some of that information may be relevant (someone claiming to be a successful entrepreneur whose companies have all gone bankrupt for example). But a lot clearly is not relevant. Someone’s medical history or personal life are probably out of bounds.

But, because there is always a ‘but’, what if the personal information is at odds with their campaign? You might say a candidate’s personal life is out of bounds, but what if you learn a vocal “family values and sanctity of marriage” opponent is having an affair? Or you may decide that it is not OK to attack anyone in the opponent’s family, but what if your opponent’s spouse is an active member of a hate group?

If you do learn something potentially damaging about your opponent, how much proof do you need before you use it?

As with all other ethical decisions, the time to decide where your bright lines are is early, not late. You are much less likely to make a decision you will regret if you consider it six months before voting starts, rather than six weeks or days.

Voters deserve to make informed decisions, and the research that my colleagues and I delivered to our bosses, clients, and media gave voters important information about the men and women who sought to represent them in government...

Part of the reason opposition research ethics is difficult is because of a central tension inherent in the work: truth versus convenience versus what helps you win. Picture this as a triangle, and imagine that most of the time you only get to pick two of the three.

- *Andrew Lutz, former opposition researcher, in [Political Communication Ethics: Theory and Practice](#)*

Where are your bright lines and gray areas?

**Fair to attack**

**Never OK**

**It depends on...**

### **Ads and Mail**

Direct mail and video spots are vital parts of most campaigns. Grabbing someone's attention in the mail box or screen can be tough, and getting someone to act the way you want them to after grabbing their attention can be tougher.

A lot of ad content is driven by what campaigns learn in polling and opposition research. As such, you should decide early - before public opinion and opposition research - what is in bounds and out of bounds.

The decision whether or not to run negative ads, and if so what kind of negative ads, is related to research. If voters knew \_\_\_\_\_ about your opponent, they might be less likely to vote for her. Some of this information is useful because it helps voters get beyond promotional headlines, the candidate who brags about being a successful entrepreneur whose businesses have all failed for example. Other ads can point to hypocrisy or inconsistency, such as a "zero tolerance for drugs" candidate who has been in and out of rehab but never went to jail.

You also need to decide how much you want to rely on emotional appeals. Since at least Aristotle, scholars have noted that the best appeals rely on logic as well as emotion, and that emotional appeals can sometimes overwhelm reasonable ones. Appealing to emotions isn't necessarily a bad thing, we all rely on our gut or what "feels right" to make important decisions. But there are limits. Think about the appeals you are willing to make and not willing to make.

Think about whether or not all of your material will balance emotional and logical appeals, or if all your material will strike a balance.

When you construct your mail and ads think about the pictures and stories you're using. Do they represent your district? Are you implying the person in your ads is someone they are not? When you tell the story of a constituent or person you want to help, think about the effects the story might have on them as well as the effects the story could have on your campaign. Non-profits and advocacy organizations have begun looking at ethical storytelling, and campaigns can learn from their insights. One good place to start is the Markula Center for Applied Ethics' [Ethical Storytelling Guide for Nonprofits](#).

### Digital media

Digital media have been blamed, fairly or not, for all the ills facing our politics and society.

Digital ethics fall into two buckets. How you get and use people's data, and what you say or do online.

The first question is about data and privacy. Sticking with a theme, since at least Aristotle, persuaders have known you need to shape your message to fit your audience. We now have the ability to shape messages for audiences of one. Campaigners can learn where you live, what you do online, where you shop and what you shop for, what you read, and much more, and can craft messages just for you. Online fundraising relies on data about your past giving to ask you for a specific amount to donate. With enough data used the right way, candidates can run endless versions of slightly different campaigns, each catered to individual voters.

You need to decide how private you want your public statements to be. Voters want to hear your thoughts on their concerns, and want to know you "get" them – how much digital spying can you do to make those connections? Do you diminish public debate if you mostly have private conversations?

Whether you become a government official, a Facebook or TikTok employee in their policy or news departments, a journalist, an editor, an online influencer or the staff for a candidate for public office, your daily decisions will contribute to the future of ethics in political communications. Your actions will have a ripple effect on the rest of society, its history and laws beyond even your good intentions. How will your personal beliefs and experiences along with the wisdom of the ages align with how you practice the art of political communications? And how will you adjust to unforeseen consequences of your actions and speech in the political arena?

- *Cheryl Contee and Rosalyn Lemieux in [Political Communication Ethics: Theory and Practice](#)*



## Walking the Talk

Saying you're going to do the right thing and actually doing the right thing can be very different things. You also can't keep every scenario, and every reaction to it, in your head all the time – let alone get everyone on the campaign team to memorize everything. Instead, you should have clear guidelines for big decisions you might have to make, and a framework to guide how you and the campaign will make the million choices you will face every day.

One way to help ensure you stick to your ethical principles is to stick your ethical principles all over your campaign. Pete Buttigieg published "[rules of the road](#)" when he was running for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, [a version of which](#) was adopted by eventual nominee Joe Biden (predictably, Biden added a "no malarkey" clause and used a train graphic).

What are your rules of the road (or train track, river or bike lane)? Write them down here (you'll get a chance to write them again in a bit).

**Hold yourself and others accountable to it. Walk your talk.**

## The Election is Over. Now What?

The election is over. The yard signs have been collected and put in the candidate's garage, the last vendors have been paid, and you've re-introduced yourself to your friends and family.

Maybe you treated yourself to a week in Costa Rica, or at least stopped constantly checking email and Twitter. Now what?

Some campaign staff go work for legislators or agencies, a few join state or national party organizations. A handful immediately jump to special elections, run-offs or other campaigns that don't end the second Tuesday after the first Monday in November of even-numbered years. Most will do something else. What you do will be driven by opportunity (you can't turn down a job you haven't been offered), geography, interest, personal finances, and hopefully ethics.

Choosing to join another campaign is not a tricky ethical task, you apply the same criteria to the new opportunity you applied to the last one. Party organizations or groups that work to elect your preferred type of candidate, are a little trickier but not much. You may be obligated to help some candidates you don't love, but odds are very good those candidates are better than the alternative. You can similarly weigh the actions of agencies, approaches of advocates, and agendas of elected officials.

Consulting firms present different ethical challenges. Most political communication consulting firms don't work for candidates most of the time. Many do, but many also take on corporate or non-profit clients (often both). Candidate campaigns are cyclical, candidates don't always pay their bills on time (especially if they lose), and other types of clients often pay better. A lot of firms take on non-candidate clients to smooth the bumps between elections and even supplement their candidate or advocacy client work.

Some firms only work for progressive or conservative clients, those are often an easy fit for campaign staff.

There are also firms that work for progressives and also provide corporations with support on their social responsibility efforts (social responsibility is good, but some corporate social responsibility efforts [have been criticized](#) by advocates and others accuse companies of "[greenwashing](#)") or do other corporate work that doesn't seem overly partisan, but that helps a corporation lobbying against progressive priorities.

While it's not well-known outside the political class, many consultants who advise campaigns are often working for corporate clients at the same time—and all too frequently, these clients interests' directly oppose the goals of any progressive coalition.

- *Veteran Democratic consultant Rebecca Kirschner Katz, [The Nation](#) Feb. 22, 2019*

Similarly, there are conservative firms that have a roster of conservative and private sector clients. Those private sector clients might support policies on LGBTQI+, immigration or other issues at odds with the conservative organizations with which the firm works and that might be

at odds with what you believe. You may not have to go near those issues, but you are helping those companies – and thus those policies – succeed.

These firms do interesting work, and they pay the bills. Working at places like these allows political professionals to live less itinerant lives, pay off student loans, and raise a family. You probably won't have to work on issues with which you disagree. But you may have to work on other priorities those companies that support those issues have, such as copyright protection or targeted corporate tax breaks. You might agree with the issue, or have no opinion about it one way or the other, but those companies do a lot of things with which you might disagree and they likely donate to candidates you oppose. Do you take the job, steer clear of the issues with which you disagree, and donate more to candidates and causes you support? Will you refuse to work for companies whose primary point is something with which you strongly disagree, such as tobacco? Do you hold out for a job with firm that only takes on clients you fully support? What if that job doesn't come and rent is due?

I am standing in a glass house while gathering the preceding stones. I was a senior vice president at a progressive communications firm before opening my own public affairs shop. I have friends at every kind of firm I listed above. I also have a nice house and like to take nice vacations.

Most people who build careers in politics have to confront these issues. The best establish clear guardrails and decision making criteria – and stick to them. The best time to set these guardrails and guidelines is before you need your next job.

Take a moment and write down what you hope to do after the election, what you are willing to do, and what you absolutely will not do.

**I Would Love To**

**I Am Willing To**

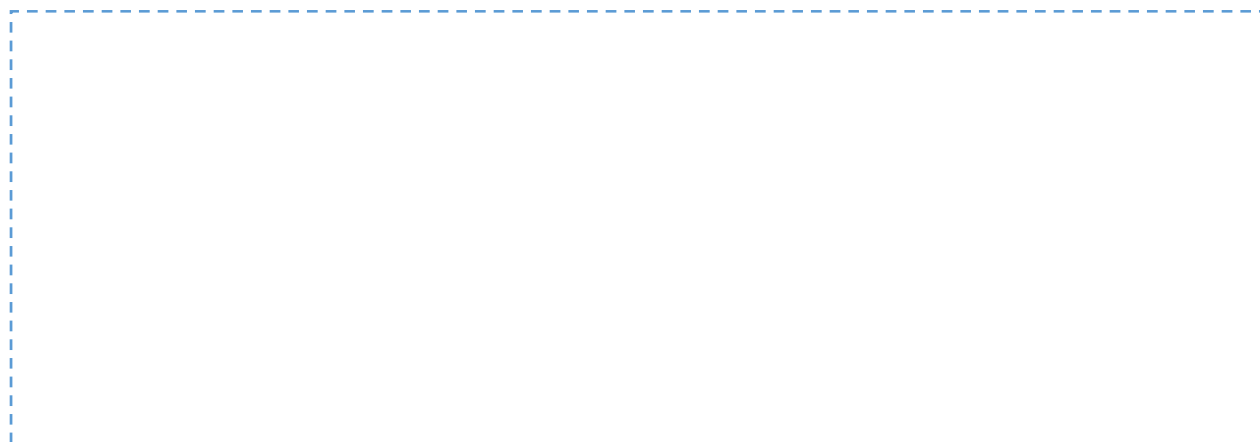
**I Won't**

## **Once More With Feeling and a Pair of Scissors**

You have read, thought, and written a lot to get to this point. Your ideas may have changed as you worked through it, or you may be more committed than ever to your initial positions. Either way, take a few minutes to review what you wrote. Let it sit with you, maybe go for a walk or do whatever you do when you need to think through a tough decision. While you're up, get a pair of scissors.

### **What are you working toward?**

Revisit what you wrote at the beginning, edit if you need to, and write it below.



Cut it out and tape it somewhere where you will see it regularly.

### **What's Your Shortcut?**

When the pressure is on and you don't have the luxury of taking a long walk, what's your shortcut to an ethical decision? What is the phrase or line that will connect the decision in the moment to your core beliefs? (The box is smaller on purpose).



Cut this out and keep it handy.

### **What Are Your Campaigns Rules of the Road**

What are the five or 10 rules your campaign team – from candidate through volunteers – will follow? This is something you should put on posters, t-shirts, banners, anywhere people will see how you plan to treat the campaign, the people, and the process. This one takes a full page.

**Everyone on this campaign, from the candidate down, is expected to follow our rules of the road.**

**1.**

**2.**

**3.**

**4.**

**5.**

**6.**

**7.**

**8.**

**9.**

**10.**

## **Conclusion**

If you've gotten this far, you've put in some difficult and important work. Well done.

Keep your notes, and more importantly your thinking, close at hand.

Remember, ethics aren't something you do once and move on, like getting your appendix removed. Ethics are in the decisions you make moment by moment. People aren't ethical – their choices are. Every choice is an opportunity to be a little bit better.

This isn't easy on campaigns. Campaigns are about motion, but ethics are often about sitting still for a moment. Take some of those moments to sit still and reflect during the campaign. Think about what you can do better, how you can be better.

Thank you for spending some of your moments with this workbook. I hope you continue to find pockets of time to reflect. And thank you for investing your time and beliefs in our shared democratic experiment. That you are here and working and taking ethics seriously means that democracy is working.

Keep working to make our politics, and the policies it produces, better for all of us.

## **Further Reading**

A lot of people have written a lot of words about ethics, politics, communications and campaigns. Socrates, via Plato, dismissed the idea that the “art of politics” could be taught, the Roman orator Quintilian complained about “hack advocates,” and Orwell wrote that “political language...is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.” And those are the polite and thoughtful critics.

Below is a short selection of some reading you might find helpful or interesting. This is far from a comprehensive list, but it's a start.

### **Books**

Here are a few books worth checking out. More books and chapters are on the Project on Ethics in Political Communication's website, <https://ethicsinpoliticalcommunication.org/books-on-ethics>

Applebaum, Arthur Isak. (1999). *Ethics for Adversaries: The Morality of Roles in Public and Professional Life*. Princeton.

Denton, Robert (Ed.). (1991). *Ethical Dimensions of Political Communication*. Praeger.

Denton, Robert (Ed.). (2000). *Political Communication Ethics: An Oxymoron?*. Praeger.

Loge, Peter (Ed.). (2020). *Political Communication Ethics: Theory and Practice*. Rowman & Littlefield.

This a book I edited. Half of the chapters are academic looks at the issue, from Isocrates through social media, and half the chapters are by political practitioners writing about the day-to-day challenges they face.

Nelson, Candice J., Dulio, David A. and Stephen K. Medvic. (2002). *Shades of Gray: Perspectives on Campaign Ethics*. Brookings.

Chapter two, “Civic Responsibility of Self-Interest?” is especially worth reading.

### **Articles and Essays**

A handful of articles and essays are below (some of these are also quoted in the text). More are on the Project on Ethics in Political Communication's website, <https://ethicsinpoliticalcommunication.org/articles-on-ethics>. Please [email me](#) any others you see or like – more is more when it comes to people talking about ethics in political communication.



Del Percio, Susan and Oren Shur. (2020). The Ethical Responsibility for Consultants in this Moment. *Campaigns and Elections*. Dec. 14.

<https://www.campaignsandelections.com/campaign-insider/the-ethical-responsibility-for-consultants-in-this-moment>

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Miller, Sean J. (2019) Can Running and Ethical Campaign Help You Win? *Campaigns and Elections*. Sept. 6. <https://www.campaignsandelections.com/campaign-insider/can-running-an-ethical-campaign-help-you-win>

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### Case Studies

The Media Ethics Initiative at the University of Texas – Austin is developing short case studies on political communication ethics. They are worth checking out -

<https://mediaethicsinitiative.org/political-communication-case-studies/>.

### Codes of Ethics

A number of organizations have codes of ethics worth reviewing.

American Association of Political Consultants (AAPC) - <https://www.prsa.org/about/prsa-code-of-ethics>

American Marketing Association - <https://www.ama.org/codes-of-conduct/>

International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) - <https://www.iabc.com/About/Purpose/Code-of-Ethics>

Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) - <https://www.prsa.org/about/prsa-code-of-ethics>

Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) - <https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

### More

The Project on Ethics in Political Communication hosts video chats, online discussions, a “Five Questions” series, and more to promote the study, teaching and practice of ethics in political communication. Our guests and discussants are political practitioners, journalists, academics, students, and others with a stake in our political system. I think they’re worth a look, <https://ethicsinpoliticalcommunication.org/video-conversations-on-ethics>

**Go do good, and do it well.**