

Defining Unethical Behavior by Firms (Response)

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Here is the best I could do for unethical acts (I use the term “socially irresponsible acts”). It is an operational definition: Simply ask people what they would do in the given situation without specifying a role. I used this procedure in the paper cited below.

“A socially irresponsible act is a decision to accept an alternative that is thought by the decision maker to be inferior to another alternative when the effects upon all parties are considered. Generally, this involves a gain by one party at the expense of the total system.”

Taken from the first paragraph of “Social Irresponsibility in Management,” by J. S. Armstrong, *Journal of Business Research*, 5 (1977), 185-213 [in full text at <http://jscottarmstrong.com>].