Personal Ethics versus Business Ethics

**Personal Ethics**
Generally accepted principles and values of right and wrong that govern interactions among individuals.

**Business Ethics**
A professional code, often unwritten, that governs moral decisions and actions of individuals within a company.

May Conflict With

[Example] Honesty is an ethical virtue common to both personal and business settings. However, the amount and type of information which you disclose to your friends or family is much different than the amount and type of information you should disclose to a boss, customer, or competitor. The way in which you dispense your honest views should also differ.

While our personal code of ethics allows us to speak very honestly with our friends and family.

That same type or level of honesty isn’t appropriate in business.

Conflict may occur when adherence to a personal code of ethics is contrary to the professional code of your employer.

In many real-life situations, a line must be drawn between your role in business and your role as an individual. Sometimes a business professional must decide to follow a professional code of ethics even though he or she personally disagrees with the expected decision or action.

As an owner, manager or employee, you must remember that it’s your job to default to the professional standard for ethics when a conflict with personal ethics exists. If your professional obligations put you in such a state of conflict that you feel you can’t uphold your personal ethics, you always have the option of resigning.