

Principled Decision Making

[A Cheat Sheet]

Since we are all the sum of our decisions, **Principled Decision Making** is about approaching our decisions with intention, a habit that keeps us grounded even as we navigate complexity. But when people ask, “What does getting a little better look like in action?” the answer often comes down to using a practical tool: the **Dignity Chart**. Based on the classic “quad chart” concept, this chart serves as a structured space for making principled decisions and getting a little better, especially useful in situations that challenge our core beliefs or principles.

Part 1 - The Dignity Chart: A Map for Principled Decisions

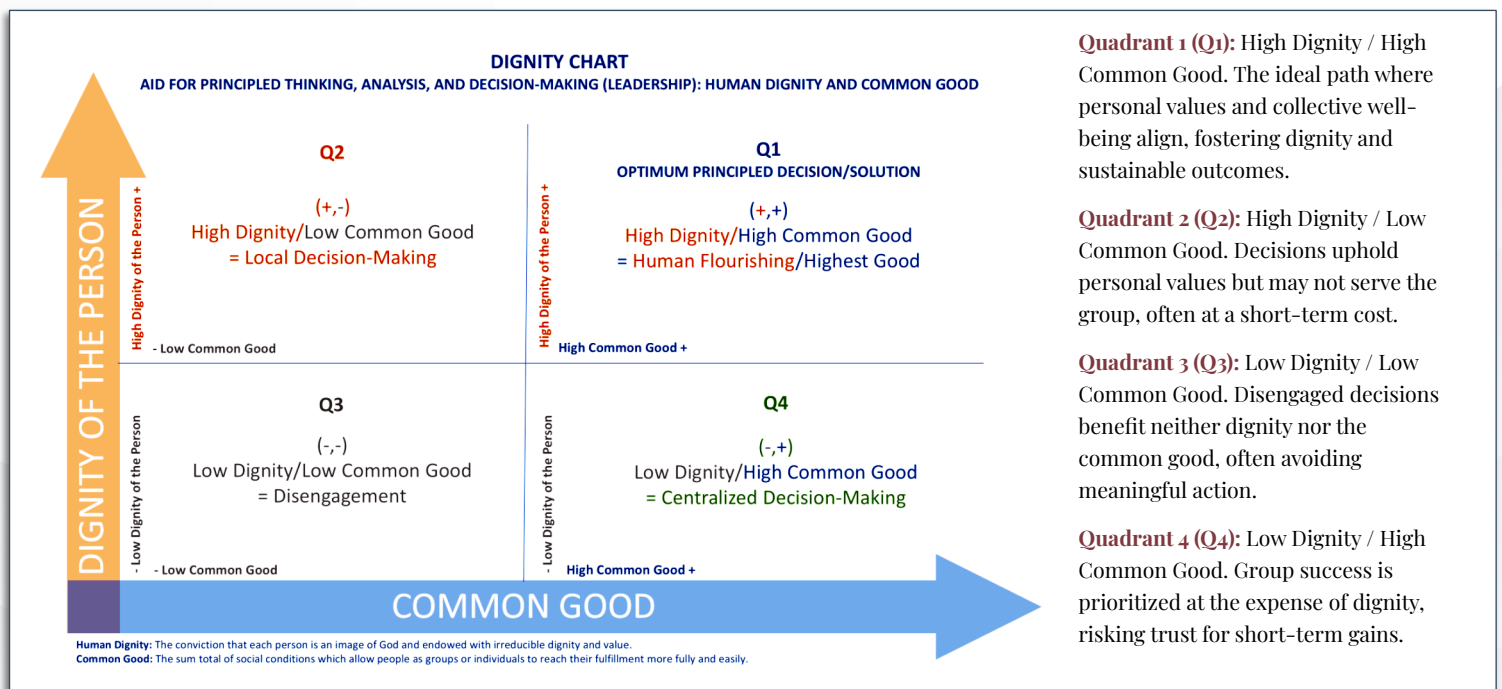
Originally developed in business and science, this quad chart has been adapted to prioritize principled decision-making and pursuing what is possible, rather than succumbing to human nature's tendency to follow a path of least resistance, just to move on to the next task. Principled solutions are better and help us get a little better in the process. Make sense? By using the Dignity Chart, we can bring our focus back to core principles—individual dignity and the common good—while finding practical solutions to real-world problems. The Dignity Chart creates a structured space to create principled solutions that result in more goodness, beauty, and growth for all of the individuals impacted by the solution.

Why Use the Dignity Chart?

For most, decisions often align with personal values, but conflicts can make principled choices difficult. The Dignity Chart serves as a “navigation map,” ensuring dignity and the common good stay central. Principles guide decisions; values drive execution.

How the Dignity Chart Works: Four Quadrants of Decision-Making

The Dignity Chart divides decision-making into four distinct quadrants, each representing different balances of human dignity and common good:



When the Dignity Chart Becomes Critical

The Dignity Chart offers clarity when we need it most: in ethical dilemmas, high-stakes decisions, and situations with no obvious solution. By keeping human dignity and the common good in balance, it helps us identify the path that not only works but is also worth taking.

Part 2 - Process in Action: Dora's Dilemma

Dora Flowers, a year into her job at Pseudonym Solutions, is asked by her supervisor, Jacqueline, to cut a project timeline from eighteen months to twelve—an unrealistic goal. Jacqueline argues this tactic secures contracts, expecting clients to agree to extensions later. Dora faces a dilemma: follow Jacqueline's directive and risk her integrity or refuse and strain their relationship. The Dignity Chart offers a structured way to navigate this tough decision.

Step 1: Define the Problem

Write a concise summary of the problem:

Dora's Dilemma: Dora is facing pressure to misrepresent a project timeline, which risks client trust and her own sense of professional ethics.

Step 2: List the individual stakeholders (including roles and priorities), and define the "Common Good" impact on each.

How does this situation impact the individuals involved? This principle requires honesty, transparency, and respect for all individuals involved.

- For **Dora**, it means upholding her ethical standards and professional integrity.
- For the client (**XYZ Company**), it means setting realistic expectations and receiving a high-quality deliverable without undue stress or financial overruns caused by false promises.
- For the company (**Pseudonym Solutions**): Winning the bid, maintaining a good reputation, and fostering sustainable client relationships.
- Jacqueline** (Supervisor): Senior staff member, pushing for an aggressive bid to secure the contract; represents company leadership but also a potential risk of compromising ethics.

Stakeholder	Role	Priorities
Dora	Decision-Maker	Ethical integrity, career growth
Jacqueline	Supervisor	Winning bid, meeting objectives
XYZ Company	Client	Honest expectations, project success
Pseudonym Solutions	Organization	Reputation, financial success

Step 3: Define Quadrants and Create Potential Solutions

To evaluate the situation thoroughly, we consider all proposed solutions, factoring in their likely short- and long-term impacts on the **Common Good** and **Human Dignity**.

Solution A: Jacqueline's Approach (Promise a 12-Month Timeline).

Jacqueline's solution prioritizes securing the bid with an unrealistic timeline. While the company may benefit financially in the short term, the client is misled and likely harmed, leading to frustration, possible financial overruns, and a damaged relationship.

- Short-Term Common Good: High for the company (winning the bid); Low for the client (being misled).
- Long-Term Common Good: Low for both parties (damaged trust and reputation; deception).
- Quadrant: Q4 (Low Dignity / Low Common Good).

Solution B: Maintain the Original 18-Month Timeline. Dora could insist on the original, realistic estimate. This upholds transparency and respects client trust but risks making the bid less competitive for Pseudonym.

- Short-Term Common Good: Low for the company (risk of losing the bid); High for the client (receives an honest and achievable timeline).
- Long-Term Common Good: High for both parties (fosters trust and sustainable collaboration).
- Quadrant: Q2 (High Dignity / Mixed Common Good).

Solution C: Propose a Compromise Timeline (e.g., 15 Months). Dora could suggest a middle-ground timeline that is ambitious yet achievable. This balances competitiveness with realism and preserves honesty with the client.

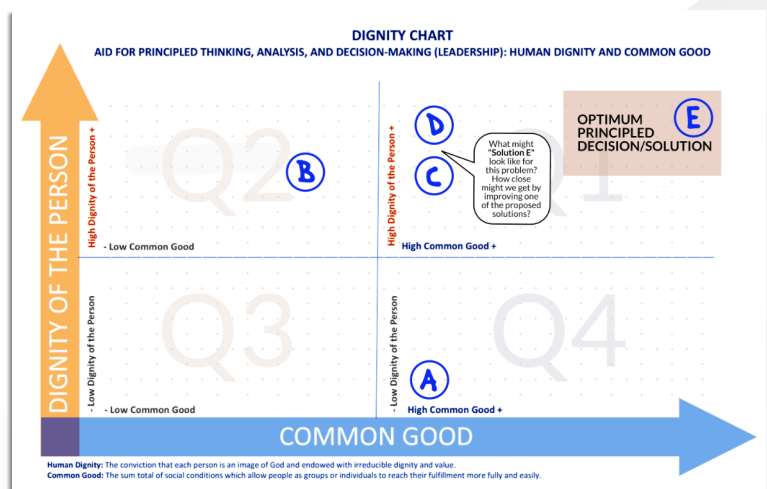
- Short-Term Common Good: Medium for the company (more competitive bid); Medium-High for the client (timeline is challenging but achievable).
- Long-Term Common Good: High for both parties (aligns trust with successful outcomes).
- Quadrant: Q1 (High Dignity / High Common Good).

Solution D: Seek Mediation or Guidance from a Colleague or Senior Team Member. Dora could involve another trusted team member to help advocate for a principled solution. This builds consensus and ensures the decision reflects shared values.

- Short-Term Common Good: Medium for the company (depends on the outcome of mediation); Medium-High for the client (avoids being misled).
- Long-Term Common Good: High for both parties (reinforces trust and values).
- Quadrant: Q1 (High Dignity / High Common Good).

Solution	Description	COMMON GOOD		Human Dignity	Quadrant
		Short-Term	Long-Term		
A	Promise unrealistic timeline (Jake's approach).	High (Company)	Low (Both)	Low	Q4
B	Stick with realistic 18-month timeline.	Low (Company)	High (Both)	High	Q2
C	Propose a 15-month compromise.	Medium	High	High	Q1
D	Seek mediation from a colleague or senior team member.	Medium	High	High	Q1

Step 5: Position the Solution in the Appropriate Quadrant



The proposed solution aligns with Quadrant 1 (High Dignity / High Common Good). By standing for honesty and transparency, Dora can both maintain her professional integrity and foster a trustworthy, sustainable client relationship for Pseudonym.

Taking a stand in Quadrant 1 isn't risk-free. Dora might face tension with Jacqueline or lose the bid if XYZ picks a competitor. Advocating for principles in high-stakes situations can also strain her well-being. Still, this choice prioritizes lasting relationships and her integrity, key to sustained success.

Principled Decision Making

with the Dignity Chart

Step 1: Define the Problem

What is the dilemma or challenge you are addressing? Write a concise summary.

Step 2: List the individual stakeholders (including roles and priorities), and define the "Common Good" impact on each.

How does this situation impact the individuals involved? This requires honesty, transparency, and respect for all individuals involved.

Stakeholder	Role	Priorities	Other Considerations

Step 3: Define potential solutions.

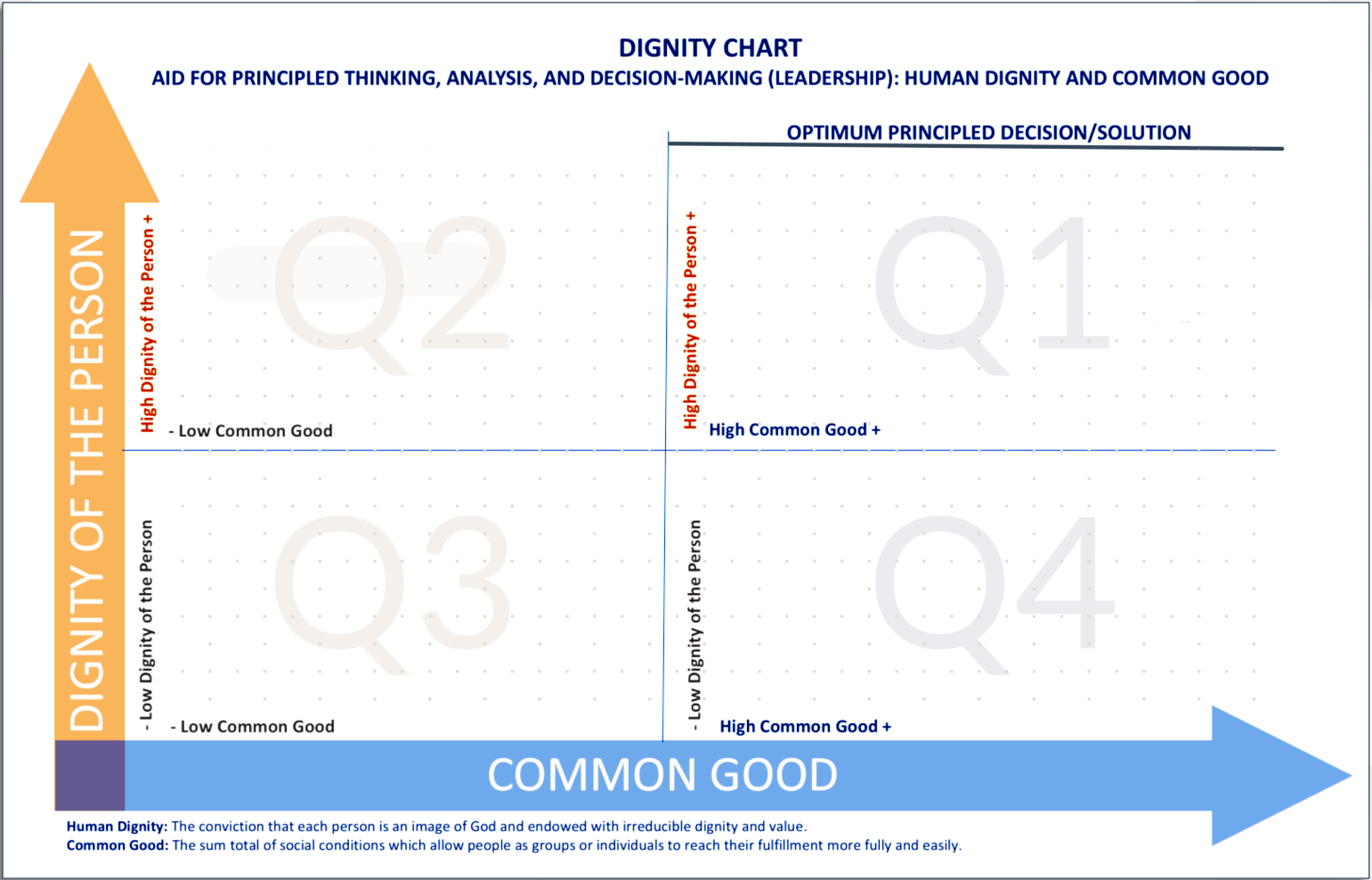
For each solution, describe its approach and evaluate its impact.

Solution	Description	COMMON GOOD		Human Dignity	Quadrant
		Short-Term	Long-Term		

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP WORKSHEET

Step 4: Position the Solution in the Appropriate Quadrant.

How does this situation impact the individuals involved? This requires honesty, transparency, and respect for all individuals involved.



Additional Notes, Observations and Conclusions:

A Process Worth Following

While there are no guarantees, the Dignity Chart offers a practical framework for principled decision-making. By balancing human dignity with the common good, it gives individuals a structured path to make ethical choices, even when facing conflicting values. The Dignity Chart isn't just about decisions; it's about cultivating a process that leads to sustainable growth, trust, and ultimately, a little better version of ourselves every day.

