Exercise: A Tale of Two Stories

In your careers thus far, you have likely encountered workplace situations when your values conflicted with what you were asked to do. Often it is not easy to align your own personal values and purpose with those of your boss, your co-workers, your direct reports or your firm. This exercise is designed to help you identify and develop the competencies necessary to achieve that alignment.

Objectives
1. To reflect on your previous experiences, successful and less so, at effectively voicing and acting on your values in the workplace.
2. To discover which conditions and problem definitions empower you to effectively voice your values, and which tend to inhibit that action.

Instructions:

Part I
• Recall a time in your work experience when your values conflicted with what you were expected to do in a particular, non-trivial management decision, and you spoke up and acted to resolve the conflict.
• Consider the following 4 questions and write down your thoughts and brief responses:
  o What did you do, and what was the impact?
  o What motivated you to speak up and act?
  o How satisfied are you? How would you like to have responded? (This question is not about rejecting or defending past actions but rather about imagining your Ideal Scenario.)
  o What would have made it easier for you to speak/act?
    ▪ Things within your own control
    ▪ Things within the control of others

In this exercise, a “values conflict” refers to a disagreement that has an ethical dimension to it. That is, I might disagree with your idea about the most efficient process flow design for an assembly line, but there is usually not an ethical component to that decision. However, if one design reflected a commitment to worker safety or environmental concerns and the other didn’t, for example, even this disagreement might be appropriate here.
Part II

- Recall a time in your work experience when your values conflicted with what you were expected to do in a particular, non-trivial management decision, and you did not speak up or act to resolve the conflict.
- Consider the following 4 questions and write down your thoughts and brief responses:
  - What happened?
  - Why didn’t you speak up or act? What would have motivated you to do so?
  - How satisfied are you? How would you like to have responded? (This question is not about rejecting or defending past actions but rather about imagining your Ideal Scenario.)
  - What would have made it easier for you to speak/act?
    - Things within your own control
    - Things within the control of others