The PDM Dignity Chart™

A Worksheet for Principled Decision Making

AUTHENTIC LEADER FORUMS

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 PDM 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 PDM Dignity Chart™: A Map for Principled Decisions

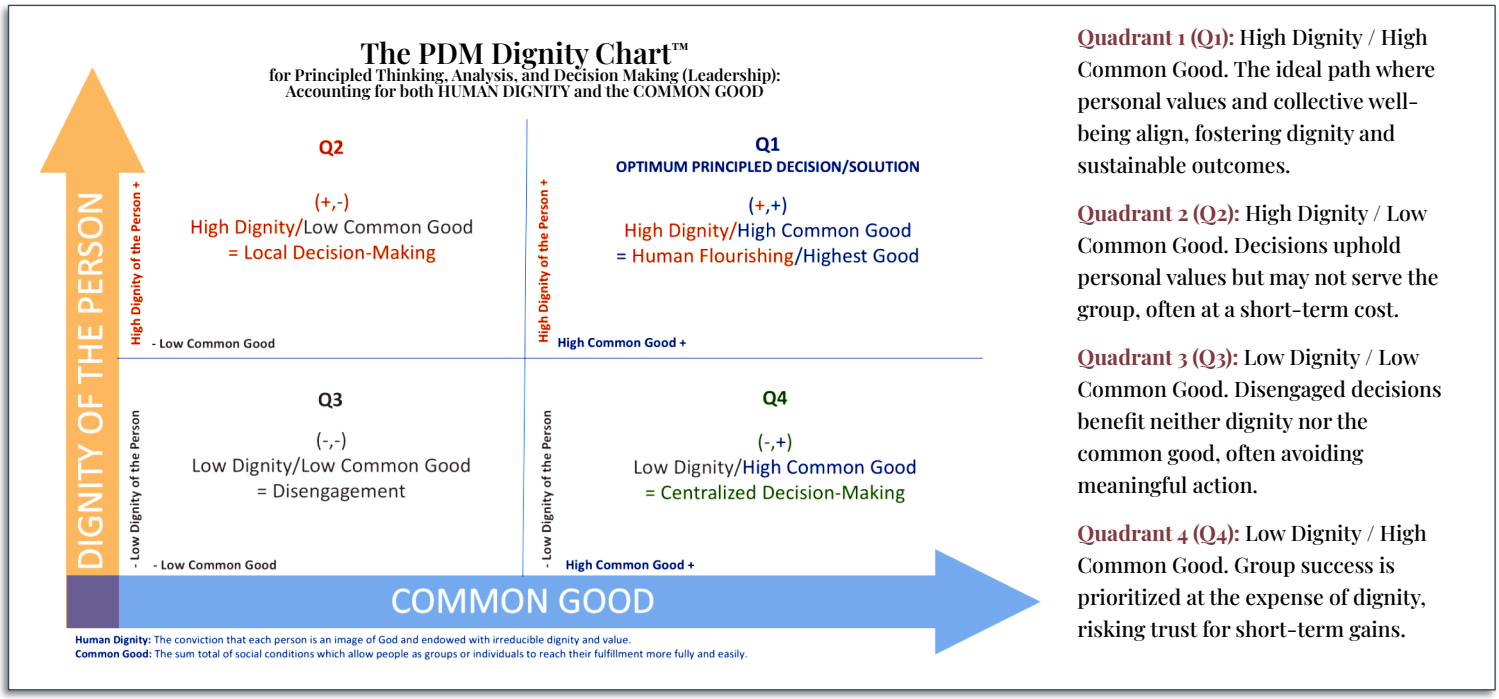
Originally developed in business and science, this quad chart has been adapted to prioritize principled decision-making and pursuing what is possible, rather than succumbing to human nature's tendency to follow a path of least resistance, just to move on to the next task. Principled solutions are better and help us get a little better in the process. Make sense? By using the PDM 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 tool 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 PDM Dignity Chart™?

For most, decisions often align with personal values, but conflicts can make principled choices difficult. The PDM 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:



Quadrant 1 (Q1): High Dignity / High Common Good. The ideal path where personal values and collective well-being align, fostering dignity and sustainable outcomes.

Quadrant 2 (Q2): High Dignity / Low Common Good. Decisions uphold personal values but may not serve the group, often at a short-term cost.

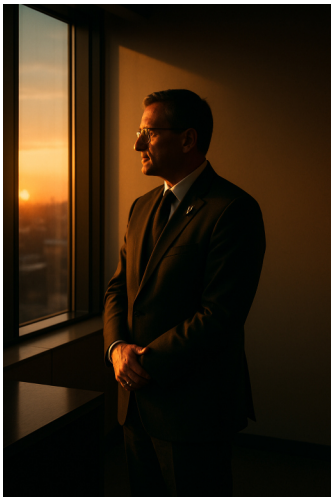
Quadrant 3 (Q3): Low Dignity / Low Common Good. Disengaged decisions benefit neither dignity nor the common good, often avoiding meaningful action.

Quadrant 4 (Q4): Low Dignity / High Common Good. Group success is prioritized at the expense of dignity, risking trust for short-term gains.

When the PDM Dignity Chart™ Becomes Critical

The PDM 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.

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Part 2 - The PDM Dignity Chart™ in Action: **"A CEO's Awakening"**

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Character Profile: Mark Rios

► **Age & Role:** Early 50s, CEO of a thriving technology-services company.

► **Faith Profile:** Raised Catholic; attends Mass regularly, but privately feels a distance from his faith. He's not overly religious publicly, nor consciously pious. Faith is there, quietly in the background—but largely disconnected from his work.

► **Family:** Married, three children. Marriage is solid but showing signs of strain from long hours and unspoken tensions. His family life feels separate from his identity as a CEO, creating subtle but steady stress.

► **Leadership Style:** Strategic, respected, successful by traditional measures (growth, revenue, innovation). Pragmatic, rational, seen as fair and level-headed by his colleagues and subordinates.

► **Inner Life:** Outwardly composed, inwardly restless. Mark doesn't consciously feel fragmented—he considers himself ethical, thoughtful, fair—but he hasn't stopped long enough to examine if his leadership reflects his deeper convictions or just "good business sense."

He embodies the quiet, unnoticed fragmentation of the Divided Life:

► **Externally:** Highly successful, respected, rational, pragmatic.

► **Internally:** A quiet, nagging ache. An underlying dissatisfaction. A vague sense of emptiness he doesn't fully understand yet.

Mark's Problem: "The Gray Contract"

Scenario Background: Mark's firm, **NovaTech**, has been approached by **Equinox, Inc.**, a massive multinational corporation, to become their lead service provider. Landing Equinox would mean financial stability, market prestige, and considerable growth. The board, shareholders, executives, and employees are excited.

But Mark recently learned that Equinox has hidden unethical practices in their overseas operations—practices that exploit vulnerable labor markets and environmental loopholes. They aren't illegal *per se*, but deeply questionable ethically.

The pressures Mark faces:

► **The Board:** Sees the Equinox deal as essential. They remind him of his fiduciary duty: growth, shareholder value, and market positioning.

► **Shareholders:** Publicly traded—expect quarterly gains and see Equinox as a crucial step forward.

► **Executive Team:** Enthusiastic, ambitious, pushing him to "just sign already." They dismiss ethical concerns as naïve or peripheral.

► **Employees:** Counting on the stability and opportunity. They've heard whispers of the deal and are excited.

► **Customers:** Unaware of the situation. Some would care deeply about ethics, others simply want efficiency and results.

The Hidden Conflict—Mark's Fragmentation Revealed: Mark always considered himself ethical—but he's never clearly aligned his professional identity with his deeper, quiet faith. His professional life had run on autopilot—driven by ambition, good intentions, and marketplace norms, not necessarily by deeply held principles.

He suddenly feels torn in a way he's never experienced:

► Is it "just business", or is it something deeper?

► Is this discomfort simply naive idealism or the first clear sign that something's fundamentally misaligned?

► Does he even know where his "red lines" truly lie?

For the first time, Mark realizes there's a gap between what he privately believes and how he's expected to act publicly as a CEO. This decision isn't merely strategic—it feels like it might redefine him.

He also realizes he has no one around him who fully understands this tension. He is entirely isolated at the top.

Why the PDM Dignity Chart™ is Essential:

This scenario vividly exposes Mark's fragmentation—forcing him to recognize that what he does professionally is inseparable from who he is personally and spiritually. He needs a tool to navigate this with clarity, and ultimately, a peer group environment to support him in living and leading as a whole person.

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The Process: Summary of Steps

Core Purpose: The PDM Dignity Chart™ is a structured decision-making tool designed specifically to help leaders make principled decisions—particularly in situations involving complex ethical dilemmas. It provides a clear way to align choices with two central principles:

1. Human Dignity (the respect and worth of every individual involved)
2. The Common Good (the well-being and benefit of all stakeholders)

It emphasizes pursuing solutions that honor these principles even when under pressure from conflicting interests.

The Four-Step Process

Step 1: Define the Problem:

- ► Clearly and concisely state the dilemma or challenge you're facing.
- ► Articulate exactly why it poses an ethical or principled challenge.

Step 2: Identify Individual Stakeholders:

- ► List everyone affected (directly or indirectly).
- ► Clarify each stakeholder's:
  - Role in the situation.
  - Priorities (their main objectives, motivations, concerns).
  - How they are impacted by various decisions—especially in terms of the Common Good.

Step 3: Define Potential Solutions :

- ► Identify and clearly describe all viable options or courses of action.
- ► Evaluate each solution's impact on two critical dimensions:
  - **Short-Term Common Good** (immediate consequences, benefits, drawbacks).
  - **Long-Term Common Good** (lasting outcomes, relationships, trust, integrity).
  - **Human Dignity** (does it honor or undermine individual respect and worth?).

Step 4: Position Solutions in the Appropriate Quadrants

Use the four quadrants to visually categorize and evaluate solutions (per the quad chart on page 1):

Quadrant	Dignity	Common Good	Typical Characteristics
Q1	High	High	**Ideal:** aligns ethics, dignity, collective good.
Q2	High	Low	Upholds dignity, but at a potential group cost.
Q3	Low	Low	Avoids meaningful action; ethical compromise.
Q4	Low	High	Avoids meaningful action; ethical compromise.

The goal: Clearly see the most principled, sustainable decision (ideally in Q1) or how to improve an existing solution to move toward Q1.

Outcome of the PDM Dignity Chart™ Process for NovaTech

The framework clarifies the path forward for the isolated leader at the top—making visible both the risks and rewards of choosing integrity. It doesn't remove the burden of decision-making but equips leaders to:

- See clearly amid complexity.
- Make a choice aligned with their deepest convictions.
- Honor human dignity and the common good simultaneously.

Step 1: Define the Problem

Concise Problem Summary:

> **Mark Rios, CEO of NovaTech, faces pressure to accept a major contract with Equinox, Inc., a client whose business practices overseas—while legal—are ethically questionable.**
>
> The deal promises significant growth, financial stability, and shareholder satisfaction, but Mark privately questions if agreeing to it would compromise his own integrity, undermine NovaTech's values, and negatively impact stakeholders in the long run.

Mark's deeper conflict isn't merely about one deal. For the first time, he's confronting a previously unrecognized division within himself:

- **Externally,** he's a pragmatic and respected leader.
- **Internally,** he senses a quiet but troubling misalignment between his personal values and professional decisions, which until now remained largely unnoticed.

Mark feels isolated at the top, unsure if any peers may share his perspective, increasing the difficulty of navigating this ethical complexity.

Confiding the Defined Problem in his CFO and two trusted board members, Mark uses the PDM Dignity Chart process to determine potential solutions, in the following steps.

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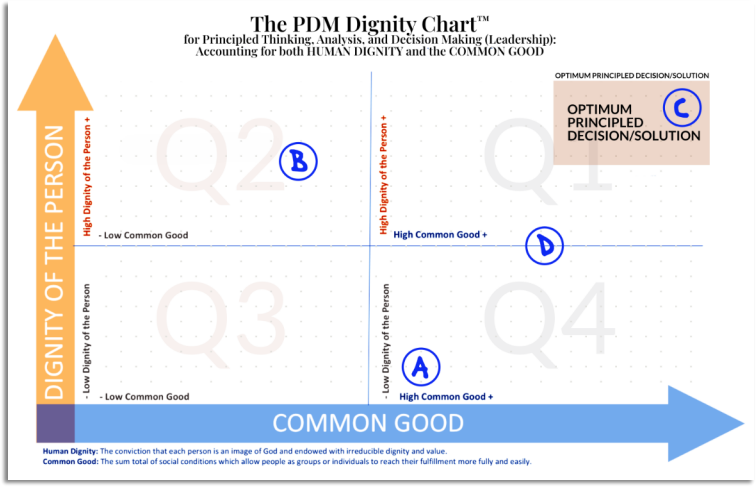
Stakeholder	Role	Priorities / Objectives	Common Good Impact / Other Considerations
NovaTech Board	Governance / Oversight	Profit, shareholder value, growth, competitive position.	Financial rewards prioritized over ethical nuances; reputational risks largely underestimated.
Shareholders/ Investors	Financial Stakeholders	Stock price appreciation, profitability, quarterly returns.	Typically short-term perspective; ethical dimensions secondary or unnoticed.
Executive Team	Leadership & Execution	Meeting growth targets, personal advancement, stability.	Driven by immediate results; may pressure Mark to prioritize short-term wins over ethical considerations.
Employees (Rank & File)	Execution, Workforce	Job security, clear direction, long-term stability.	Unaware of ethical conflict; indirectly impacted by the company's ethical stance through culture and stability.
Customers/ Clients	Consumers / Users	Value, service reliability, competitive pricing.	Unlikely to question ethical implications unless publicly known; reactions mixed if concerns emerge.
Equinox, Inc. (Client)	Major Client / Purchaser	Efficiency, cost-savings, strong service delivery.	Ethical criticisms dismissed as irrelevant or peripheral; contractual expectations fixed and inflexible.
Mark's Family	Personal Support	Mark's emotional well-being, family stability, integrity.	Affected indirectly by Mark's inner conflict; subtle tension and emotional strain at home due to Mark's divided state.
Mark Rios (CEO)	Key Decision-Maker	Integrity, long-term reputation, personal peace of mind.	Central figure bearing the full ethical burden; isolated in leadership; personally facing consequences of his choices.

Step 3: Define Potential Solutions

Solution	Description	COMMON GOOD		Human Dignity	Quadrant
		Short-Term	Long-Term		
A	Accept Contract "as is" Profit-focused, ethically compromised.	High (profits/ shareholders) Low (ethical stakeholders)	Low (eroded trust, ethics, and culture)	Low: Ethical compromise; undermines Mark's integrity	Q4
B	Reject Contract on Ethical Grounds Ethically uncompromising, immediate business risk.	Low (short-term profits) High (ethical clarity)	Medium/High (strengthened ethical culture, trust)	High: Reinforces Mark's integrity, respects dignity	Q2
C	Renegotiate Terms Collaboratively Using Dignity Chart Selective stakeholder dialogue to balance profits and ethics.	Medium (short-term uncertainty/ conflict) Medium-High (if negotiations succeed)	High (clarified values, better ethical alignment)	High: Supports dignity via transparency, collaboration	Q1
D	Decline Contract After Stakeholder Ethical Dialogue Using Dignity Chart Final ethical stand if consensus cannot be reached.	Low-Medium (short-term conflict, lost immediate profit)	High (clear ethical standards, long-term trust/culture)	High: Upheld dignity through principled, collaborative leadership	Q1/Q2

Final Observations:

- **Solutions C and D** clearly reflect the authentic tension inherent in principled decision-making. They realistically recognize that collaborative leadership, especially when openly addressing ethics, carries both risk and reward.
- **Solution C** explicitly seeks negotiation for alignment, representing the ideal path to Quadrant 1.
- **Solution D,** while collaborative, might ultimately rest near the border of Q1 and Q2 if the dialogue leads to declining the contract, due to potentially increased short-term business risk.



Conclusion: Mark's Paradigm Shift

After carefully moving forward with Solution C, Mark Rios initiates a selective, transparent dialogue with a small, trusted circle of senior executives and board members, using the PDM Dignity Chart as their collaborative framework. Together, they negotiate with Equinox—not from a defensive position, but from one of integrity and clarity.



To Mark's surprise, Equinox respects NovaTech's principled stance, recognizing something uniquely valuable about a company willing to stand its ground on values. After weeks of difficult yet productive discussions, an agreement is reached. The partnership moves forward under improved ethical terms that both parties openly endorse.

Whether the long-term results fully justify the risks is yet to be determined, but Mark knows one thing clearly: he made the right decision.

Whatever happens next, there will be no regrets.

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Principled Decision Making

with the PDM Dignity Chart™

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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.

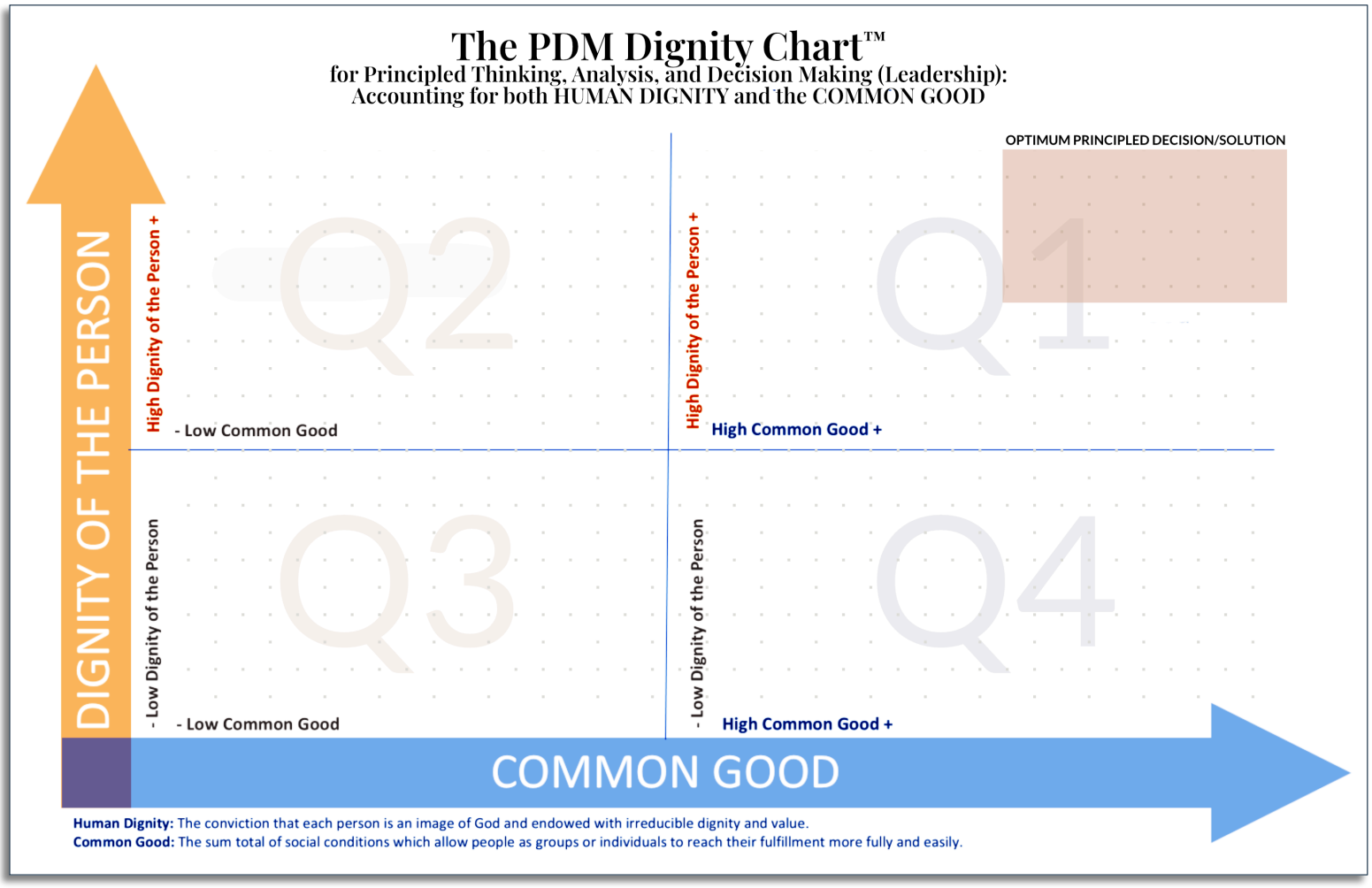
For each solution, describe its approach and evaluate its impact.

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

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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 guaranteed outcomes in leadership or life, the Dignity Chart offers a powerful, principle-based framework to help you make decisions that honor both human dignity and the common good. It brings clarity when stakes are high and helps you align your choices with what truly matters.

Scan this QR code to book your session.

To learn how to apply this tool in your own leadership context, scan the QR code to schedule a complimentary coaching session with Peer Group Steward Darren Smith. In just 30 minutes, you'll walk through a real-world scenario and see how this tool can bring integrity and clarity to the decisions you face every day.

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