



Leadership INTEGRITY

By JUDY W. BELL

Relationships, whether familial or professional, are only as good as the foundation upon which they are built. If you study great leaders, one characteristic that remains constant with each leader is integrity. Great leaders are found doing what is right regardless of the circumstances. In researching great leadership qualities, in each study you will find this common set of characteristics for leadership:

- Stewardship
- Ability to influence others
- Self-knowledge
- Confidence
- Wisdom
- Courage
- Integrity, Character, and Honesty

Providing great leadership is not always easy. Leading with integrity can sometimes be even more difficult. That is why courage and wisdom are consistently included on the leadership inventory list. To quote Theodore Roosevelt, *“To educate a man in mind but not in morals is to educate a menace to society.”* Certainly we have all seen instances where knowledge and wisdom have become dangerous when the integrity piece is missing.

Integrity

Integrity is often defined as a steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code as well as freedom from a corrupting influence or motive. Researchers submit that many people and corporations are living outside of integrity because our society has become much more outer-directed.

Being inner-directed is important in the realm of integrity because it gives a person the stamina and courage to speak out against the crowd. And in corporate and political America it is usually much easier to “go-along to get-along.” Outer-directed people are afraid to be different because there is often the misguided perception of having “safety in numbers.”

Loss of Trust

Perhaps the greatest risk we face when we live as individuals, companies, or a nation operating outside of integrity is the loss of trust. Loss of trust breeds suspicion and cynicism. There is no greater example than in politics today. There are large numbers of people on either side of the political spectrum, and then an even larger number of people within the middle. These are the people whose voices need to be heard but many times they lack the confidence or conviction to speak their truth.

Integrity comes to us over time. It is not something we are born with but is something that develops out of our experiences and influences over time. With this in mind we can determine to experience living inside of integrity as a journey to be taken. Think about some of the most ethical people for whom or with whom you have worked. Think about the traits and skills these individuals possess. Determine to make the most of your life by emulating them and also by mentoring others along the way.

Character

Remember, character does count! Character is many times used to define a person’s integrity, such as, “she has upstanding character”, or “her character is lacking.” Character is actually a set of behavioral traits that define what type of person we are. Most of us were told as children that all we can ever *really have* is our “name” and that we must protect our reputation and integrity at all costs. I think the majority of people still agree with that wise advice.

Ethical decision-making is much larger than the law. Laws are man-made. Being ethical is what you are doing when no one is looking. Before a law is even signed into action, man is already looking for loopholes. Ethics, Integrity and Morality are much larger than the law. These virtues come into play when no one is looking and when there is no chance of being caught. Ask yourself what you are doing when no one is looking.

Reflection...

- Does your behavior mirror your words?
- Do your words mirror your beliefs?
- Are you fragmented within or at peace?
- Do you keep your commitments?
- Do you set high ideals and then determine to live them?

It has been said that when integrity is your referee, your actions and your words will be in agreement.



Judy Bell, PHR, CPBA, CPVA
President, Judy Bell Consulting
SR HR Business Consultant, HRO Partners
judywbell@gmail.com
www.judybellconsulting.com



Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.” ~ Author Unknown