

Integrity is Everything

By

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As the coming political season begins to heat up, we have been and will be further inundated with an overuse of the word leadership. Leadership is a word we hear a lot of in the business world, as traditional management gives way to the new paradigm of manager as leader.

I wonder how many political and business leaders really know the meaning of leadership, and how one develops and displays all the positive characteristics of real leadership. Being a leader today is heady experience, where just studying it, pursuing it and encouraging it can be a dangerous power trip.

Warren Bennis has one of the most direct definitions of leadership: “If the purpose of leadership is to take a stand for what one believes in and to bring it forth into reality, then leaders must keep a check on their ambition. In the leaders we admire, ambition is always balanced with competence and integrity.” He sees integrity, competence and ambition being ever balanced for a leader to be a constructive force in their organization.

Some simple definitions of integrity are as follows:

- Adhering to strict moral or ethical code.
- Conforming reality to our words, in other words, keeping promises and fulfilling expectation.
- Being loyal to those not present.
- Keeping promises to yourself.

Integrity is that which must be present for others to trust. You simply cannot have personal relationships without genuine persona integrity. Having integrity makes it easy for others to know you and what you stand for and for them to build trust in you. When trust is present, people are usually honest, and relationships are carried out in the open with no hidden, hurtful one-sided agendas.

Steven Covey likens integrity as the offshoot of two other important human characteristics: humility and courage. “Humility means that you realize that over time principles or natural laws ultimately govern, not social values or personal whims and desires. You must ‘walk the talk’ and have value systems based on principles.” He adds, “Courage is the quality of every quality at its highest testing point. In other words, will we really do it?” Covey notes that you must have humility and courage to bring forth integrity. With integrity, meaning in your life is integrated around principles and your security comes for within, not from without.

When one has integrity, you maintain the highest level of honesty and credibility in all relationships. Having yourself centered on timeless principles and wholesome values allows the

real person to permeate in all situations and governs all actions and decisions. Integrity delivers other positive results, and helps one continue to grow and develop further in their own life.

Some of the off-spring of integrity are as follows:

- Wisdom, better judgment, improved results
- Unselfishness, teamwork, a sense of belonging
- Respect for all others, mutual trust.

Organizations and people often say they have core values and principles. The question every leader must ask themselves first is, “What are my values, and how will my thoughts and actions manifest in accordance to those very things I value?” If you, as the leader of your life, have a handle on the principle of integrity, then you will attract and display all the other meaningful traits most revered and respected by others.

In our fast-changing world we need to trust others and have open and honest relationships. We will not trust those who deviate from expectations to the sake of mere convenience; shift positions to be more popular; do not come clean when the heat gets turned on; play the actor to accomplish their own agenda for personal gain; throw people away when they no longer serve a necessary function.

“The only real thing we really have is ‘our word’” used to be the norm in business as well in life. As we clamor for more ownership, fame or position many have left their word at home or worse, thrown it in the trash can. As our society becomes more complex, the only thing that well redeems us is our principles, those timeless guideposts hat we all know are of such deep importance. ‘Know Yourself’ is the mantra today, if you want others to know, trust and respect you.

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