

***WALL STREET JOURNAL***  
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**Success Factors**

# THE RIGHT STUFF

Comes  
With a **7-DAY**  
**INTEGRITY  
CHALLENGE**

**WES BERRY**  
keynote speaker | wordsmith

***Business  
Quick  
Reads***  
Series Volume 6



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# THE RIGHT STUFF And 7-DAY INTEGRITY CHALLENGE

By: Wes Berry



# Part 1

## Defining Integrity

*“There is no currency more valuable than  
your character.”*  
— Dana L. Stringer



## **Chapter 1**

### **Integrity in Business**

America's NASA Space Program in the 1960s was of necessity grounded in technical and physical integrity. And that integrity was tested by the events of January 27, 1967. Apollo 1 was running through a launch rehearsal at the NASA complex at Cape Kennedy. The mission was planned to launch on February 21, 1967 and would be the first flight of the Apollo Program, which would eventually land the first men on the Moon. Command Pilot Gus Grissom, Senior Pilot Ed White, and Pilot Roger B. Chaffee were selected to man the mission. These three men were considered the "Best of the Best" after some of the most intensive selection, conditioning, and training that

mankind has ever devised. Yet on that day, the integrity of NASA failed.

It was a failure of engineering and of manufacturing, some poorly constructed electrical system resulting in a fire caused by a spark—a catalyst that ignited the high pressure, pure oxygen atmosphere of the cabin. With no means of escape designed into their space capsule—no emergency evacuation or fire suppression system—it became a death trap. And to top it off, nobody thought pressurized, pure oxygen was a risky idea.

On July 20, 1969, some 30 months after the Apollo 1 fire that took the life of all three of its crew members, a new chapter for mankind was being written. This time it was Apollo 11's turn, and Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Buzz Aldrin traveled 238,900 miles to the Moon. Armstrong and Aldrin landed the lunar module Eagle. Armstrong's first words upon stepping on

the surface were, “One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” NASA had met the challenge, and in the process they restored their integrity.

It could be argued that without the Apollo 1 fire, NASA might never have made it to the Moon. Integrity is a very precious and perishable thing, and like a great love, it requires constant passion.

Jonas Salk, who created the original polio vaccine, was a man of integrity. Today, the creation of a widely-used vaccine like Salk’s would be a cash cow for a pharmaceutical company. Their patents would likely generate significant income for many years to come.

However, Salk refused to patent his creation, passing up the opportunity to make millions of dollars. In his view, the vaccine belonged to everyone. When he was asked who owned the rights to the vaccine, he replied: “Well,

the people, I would say. There is no patent. Could you patent the sun?”

Now, I’m not here to make anyone feel ashamed about profiting off their work. Developing new medicines is expensive, time-consuming work, and much of the money these companies make gets poured into research for the next project.

Still, you have to admit that Salk’s decision to not patent his vaccine and to instead give it to the people is remarkable, and it reveals one of the most important character traits that, sadly, isn’t front and center for many businesses and individuals today.

That character trait? Integrity.

## **What Is Integrity?**



Integrity is one of those words where everyone feels like they know what it means, but when they actually have to define it, it can be tough to put it into the right words. You know it has something to do with doing the right thing, something to do with trust, but for some reason, it's difficult to pin it down exactly.

I think a lot of this is because integrity is an idea. Before we can understand what we mean when we talk about integrity, we have to take a few minutes to unpack everything this dense, important word contains.

The best place to start unpacking is also the simplest: integrity means keeping your promises. When you act with integrity, it means that you've given someone your word that you'll do something and that you follow through on that promise. Just like the U.S. Postal Service, you always deliver on your word, come rain, or snow or gloom of night.

But delivering on your promise or keeping your word to yourself and others isn't just about a simple act of exchange. No, what it's really about is trust. Having integrity is about creating relationships built on trust, which means that people know they can rely on you to not only follow through on your word, but that you'll go out of your way to make sure you keep your promises, too.

Of course, this trust doesn't just happen on its own. It has to be built over time, with each kept promise building on the last, helping you to establish a reputation for trustworthiness. It's a lifetime process, building trust, and the more people come to rely on you, the higher the stakes are raised.

On the flip side, trust can be broken in a matter of seconds. One missed delivery, one small oversight, even a simple misstatement, can take

years to repair. Sometimes, those rifts become permanent.

Not to sound too negative, but this is going to happen to you at some point. It's impossible to be perfect all the time, and sooner or later, there's going to be a slip-up, someone is going to be disappointed, and that trust is going to be shaken. The only way to keep a breach from wrecking your reputation is to continually strive to act with integrity in all aspects of your life.

This goes for both individuals and for businesses. For both, the concept of integrity is multi-dimensional and complex. It encompasses honesty, transparency, accountability, and ethical behavior. Integrity is a fundamental value that shapes the way individuals and organizations interact with each other. It is an essential trait that builds trust, credibility, and reputation, which are crucial for the success of any enterprise In today's

world, where information is readily available, the importance of integrity has become more significant than ever. Thus, integrity is important for both individuals and enterprises, and has a significant impact it has on their performance and success.

Let's take a closer look at Integrity in Business.

### **The Importance of Integrity for Enterprises**

The importance of integrity for enterprises cannot be overstated. In today's highly competitive business environment, trust and credibility are critical for success. Customers, investors, and regulators expect enterprises to operate with integrity and transparency. Enterprises that fail to meet these expectations are at risk of losing customers, investors, and their reputation.

A recent study by EY found that 97% of investors consider ethical behavior to be a crucial factor when making investment decisions. The same study found that 59% of investors have divested from companies due to ethical concerns. These findings demonstrate that enterprises that operate with integrity have a significant competitive advantage over those that do not.

Integrity also plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining talent. Employees want to work for enterprises that share their values and exhibit ethical behavior. A recent survey by PwC found that 77% of millennials consider a company's purpose and values when deciding where to work. Enterprises that fail to uphold high standards of integrity are likely to struggle with attracting and retaining top talent.

Moreover, enterprises that operate with integrity are less likely to face legal and

reputational risks. They are more likely to comply with laws and regulations, which reduces their exposure to legal risks. They are also less likely to face reputational risks, as they are perceived as trustworthy and reliable.

### **A Company Without Integrity**

Enron Corporation was a multinational energy company based in Houston, Texas. Founded in 1985, Enron was one of the largest energy companies in the world, with annual revenues of \$101 billion in 2000. However, in 2001, Enron filed for bankruptcy, and its senior leaders were charged with various crimes, including securities fraud, insider trading, and money laundering.

Enron's collapse was primarily due to its lack of integrity and ethical behavior. The company engaged in a range of fraudulent

activities, including the manipulation of financial statements and the creation of off-balance-sheet entities to hide debt. Enron's senior executives, including CEO Kenneth Lay and CFO Andrew Fastow, were complicit in these activities and misled investors, regulators, and employees about the company's financial health.

Enron's lack of integrity had severe consequences for its stakeholders. Thousands of employees lost their jobs and their retirement savings. Investors lost billions of dollars, and Enron's collapse had a ripple effect throughout the energy industry.

Enron's case highlights the importance of integrity for enterprises. The company's lack of integrity led to its downfall and had severe consequences for its stakeholders. Enron's collapse also led to greater scrutiny of corporate governance and ethics, which resulted in the

passing of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. The Act established new standards for corporate governance and required greater transparency in financial reporting.

So as you can see, integrity can make or break you in the business world. Where profit margins and market dominance often take center stage, the concept of integrity is crucial, shaping not only individual actions but the very essence of organizational culture.

Integrity in business extends beyond the mere adherence to legal frameworks; it encapsulates a holistic commitment to ethical conduct, transparency, and fairness. It is about doing the right thing even when no one is watching, aligning your actions with a moral compass that transcends the boundaries of rules and regulations. In a world where the ethical landscape can be murky, defining business integrity becomes



imperative for organizations seeking a sustainable path to success.

Here is a breakdown of how you can embrace integrity in your organization.

### **1. The Power of Values**

Values are the foundation upon which integrity stands. They are, defined, a person or organizations principles or standards of behavior. You might have heard values called “moral compass” or “moral code”. When hiring individuals into y our workforce, I’d recommend making sure they all have a strong moral compass that aligns with the organization’s mission and values. This synergy fosters an environment where integrity becomes a natural outgrowth of shared principals and helps ensure the success of your company.

These principals, or standards of behavior, are not abstract ideals that change with the wind.

They're powerful influencers that shape behavior in the workplace. They are not some gray area. They should be black and white, clearly defined ideals that are transparent to not only those inside the organization, but those outside who you may influence or have contact with. That leads us to our second point.

## **2. Integrity and Reputation**

Your organization's reputation holds immeasurable value in the business world. It is the perception of trustworthiness and reliability that can make or break an organization. Your ethical conduct, the way you treat others, the quality of your product or service, and your reliability are all factors upon which your reputations built. Integrity transcends mere public relations strategies, permeating every facet of an organization's operations. By consistently demonstrating ethical

behavior, businesses can build a reputation that becomes a shield in times of crisis and a magnet for stakeholders who seek trustworthy partners.

### **3. Trust as Currency**

Trust is the currency that lubricates transactions and fosters collaboration.

Trust is not bestowed; it is earned through consistent actions aligned with ethical principles. Organizations that prioritize integrity create an environment where trust becomes a natural outcome, paving the way for more fruitful collaborations. Trust is built when a business or individual consistently displays transparency, honesty, dependability, and sensitivity towards their clients. Reaching out and keeping in touch before and after the transaction is also a great way to built trust. This might sound like a Hallmark

card, but let them know you care and are there for them if they need you.

#### **4. Integrity as a Competitive Edge**

We live in a competitive world. Integrity is a distinguishing factor that sets businesses apart. Think how often you have used a company or service because you heard good things about them from someone you know? They have built a reputation as being reliable, and thus, people are willing to send their friends to that organization for their products or services. Integrity is a differentiator that resonates with customers, partners, and employees. Everyone benefits when trust is strong.

#### **Conclusion**

Integrity is the glue that holds your business together. There are wonderful things that happen

when you live a life of integrity and run a business with integrity. Be bold and have the courage to tell the truth. Do what is right simply because it is right. Treat people with kindness and respect.

In the end, these will not only help you to become a more successful organization, but a better person.

Now, let's look closer at personal integrity, the foundation for a business run on integrity. A building is only as good as its foundation, after all.

The Right Stuff  
Integrity

Wes Berry

## **Chapter 2**

# **The Foundations of Personal Integrity**

Organizations are made up of individuals, so it only makes sense that integrity is also essential for individuals. Individuals who exhibit integrity in their personal and professional lives are more likely to be respected, trusted, and successful. They are perceived as trustworthy, reliable, and ethical, which enhances their reputation and credibility. They are also more likely to build strong relationships with others, which can lead to new opportunities and collaborations.

Integrity also plays a crucial role in personal development. Individuals who exhibit integrity are more likely to have a strong sense of self and a clear moral compass. They are more likely to make decisions that align with their values and beliefs, which leads to a greater sense of fulfillment and satisfaction.

Moreover, individuals who exhibit integrity are more likely to be resilient in the face of challenges and setbacks. They are more likely to learn from their mistakes and use them as opportunities for growth and development.

### **A Fraudulent Man**

Bernard Madoff was a former stockbroker and investment advisor who perpetrated one of the most significant financial frauds in history. Madoff's investment firm, Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities LLC, was founded in 1960



and was highly respected in the financial industry. However, in 2008, Madoff confessed to running a Ponzi scheme that defrauded investors of over \$65 billion.

Madoff's lack of integrity had severe consequences for his investors. Many of them lost their life savings, and the fraud had a ripple effect throughout the financial industry. Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in prison and became a symbol of greed and corruption in the financial industry.

Madoff's case highlights the importance of integrity for individuals. Madoff's lack of integrity not only had severe consequences for his investors but also had a significant impact on his own life. Madoff's lack of integrity led him to engage in criminal behavior that ultimately destroyed his reputation and his life.

## **Integrity Is More Than a Character Trait**

That's a key point. Integrity is action; it's about what you *do* more than what you say. It's true that talk is cheap. You can promise anything, but it's your ability to follow through that counts. Your word is your bond, but that means nothing if it's not accompanied by actions. But how do you decide which actions are right? How do you determine the right course of action at any given point?

The answer is to establish your own code of values and principles. Values are the deeply embedded ideas that reflect the beliefs and moral attitudes that guide your choices. Principles, on the other hand, are fundamental rules that govern how the world functions. While values tend to evolve over time, or shift as situations change, principles usually remain fixed.

Patience is a good example of a value. It's good to be patient when waiting for investments to pay off, but less so when a critical delivery is several hours late. On the other hand, principles are more universal. Take honesty. If you lie to someone, the only reliable outcome is that you become less trustworthy.

Your guiding values and principles stem from your own belief system, whether you're establishing them for yourself or for your company. You should be willing to consult with other sources, including people, books, articles, and anywhere else you turn to for guidance. But ultimately, your code is yours and yours alone, and it will ideally become the baseline guiding force in all of your decision-making.

## **The Foundations of Personal Integrity**

Let's unravel the essential elements that contribute to an individual's ethical compass. From self-awareness to the development of strong character, this chapter explores the bedrock upon which personal integrity is built and how it, in turn, fosters collaboration in both personal and professional spheres.

### **1. Self-Awareness: Aligning Values with Conduct**

At the core of personal integrity lies the profound concept of self-awareness. Unpacking the importance of self-awareness in aligning personal values with professional conduct is the first step in understanding how individuals can cultivate and embody integrity in their lives. Self-awareness involves a deep exploration of one's beliefs, motivations, and principles.

Individuals who possess a high degree of self-awareness are better equipped to navigate the complex interplay between personal values and professional responsibilities. By recognizing and understanding their core values, individuals can align their actions with their ethical principles, creating a congruence between personal beliefs and professional conduct. In a collaborative environment, self-aware individuals contribute to a culture of authenticity and transparency, laying the foundation for trust among peers.

## **2. Honesty and Authenticity: The Pillars of Personal Integrity**

Honesty and authenticity in fostering personal integrity are the essential pillars upon which ethical behavior rests.

- *Honesty* involves the truthful representation of facts and intentions. It involves telling

the truth, even if it is difficult or uncomfortable. It is, however, possible to be honest without having integrity. For example, someone might admit to unethical behavior openly, but be unwilling to change it. However, honesty is a basic foundation for building trust. Once someone lies, you are never quite sure if you can trust them again or not.

- *Authenticity* encompasses the alignment of actions with one's true self. It is the quality of being “real”. You are what you are, and what you present to the world. It is not possible for a person of integrity to be unauthentic.

When individuals embrace honesty and authenticity, they contribute to an environment where open communication flourishes. In

collaborative settings, the absence of deceit and pretense allows for genuine connections and partnerships. This leads to success.

### **3. Ethical Decision-Making: Balancing Values in Action**

Ethics is not the same as feelings or religion. It's not the same as following the law or culturally accepted norms. Ethics are the oral principals that govern a person's decision making. In business, the landscape is rife with complex ethical dilemmas that demand a thoughtful and principled approach to decision-making. Here is a framework to navigate these challenges.

- a. *Identify the Ethical Issues.* Does this decision involve a “good” or “bad” outcome? Can this decision effect people or the organization in a certain way?

- b. *Gather the facts.* What are the relevant facts? What facts are not known? Who does this decision effect? What creative options have we come up with so far?
- c. *Consider the interests of others.* What individuals or parties have an important stake in this decision? Have the involved parties been consulted? Have we consulted “professionals” on this matter, or even outsiders, to gather facts?
- d. *Evaluate All the Options.* What options are most fair for all involved? What options best serves the “common good” of the most people? What options least hurts others? What options correlates with the type of person I want to be? Does it fit my moral compass?



- e. *Pick an Option and Test It.* How does it work? What do others think? How do you feel about the outcome?
- f. *Follow-up on your Decision.* How did that option work? Would I do it again? Do I need to change it up?

#### **4. The Ripple Effect: Personal Integrity's Impact on Culture**

Your personal integrity influences organizational culture. You, in essence, become a role model for others, and your choices send ripples through the organization, shaping the overall culture. For example, when you share an inspiring story, it can motivate others to take action in their own lives. Similarly, when your employees see you acting with integrity, even at personal cost, it often motivates others to do the same. This can create integrity throughout your organization, and even

extend beyond your business into the outside world as your customers realize how you operate.

## **5. Building Character: The Culmination of Personal Integrity**

Cultivating personal integrity contributes to the development of strong character. As character develops, it becomes a reservoir of strength that sustains individuals through challenges. In collaborative settings, individuals with strong character inspire trust and serve as ethical role models, fostering a collaborative spirit based on shared values. Cultivating integrity helps you build courage and develop compassion, honesty, loyalty and determination. It's a win-win situation for both the individual and the company that they work for.

## **Conclusion**

Integrity is the core that will get you and your organization through tough times. You can take all the classes you want, attend all the workshops, bring in the best professionals, but unless you are a person of integrity, in the end, your company will fall, and fall hard.

As C. S. Lewis says, “Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil.”

The Right Stuff  
Integrity

Wes Berry

# Part 2

## The Foundations of Integrity

*“A building is only as good as it’s  
foundation.”*

—Author Unknown

The Right Stuff  
Integrity

Wes Berry

## **Chapter 3**

### **Building Trust in Business Relationships**

You probably know this already by now, but I'll say it again: Knowing your values and principles is really important! Whether you're focusing on your business or yourself, establishing these basic guiding ideas is critical to making the right decisions at any given time. And these values and principles aren't just for you—they make up the core of the identity you present to the world.

Take Amazon, for example. Founder Jeff Bezos started Amazon in 1994 as an online bookstore operating out of his garage—often delivering packages himself. One year after their IPO in 1997, the company started expanding

beyond books, and while they wouldn't turn a profit until 2003, they eventually became the retailing behemoth they are today.

A huge part of their success has been focusing on the customer experience. From their one-click checkout system to the sheer volume of goods, Amazon is focused on making online shopping as easy and customer-friendly as possible.

This is especially clear in their return policy. Shopping online is fundamentally different than going into a brick-and-mortar store, where you can physically inspect a product before you buy it. Amazon understands this, and they make returning items easy—and usually free for their Amazon Prime members.

Amazon allows customers to return almost anything within 30 days of purchase with no restocking fee. You can print the info and return



the package yourself, or you can drop the item off in an Amazon locker or a partner store, like Whole Foods or Kohl's. Your refund is then automatically processed, making the process virtually painless.

Amazon decided early on that the customer experience was central to their company's values, and they trusted the principle that satisfied customers turn into repeat customers. They embedded integrity into their business model—and you only need to look at the company's ledgers to see how well that's paid off.

Integrity forms the foundation of a successful business relationships. When your customers, clients, and partners trust you to be good with your word, they will come back for more purchases or partnerships, establishing long-term connections that will sustain your organization over the long haul. You want to be the organization that

people can rely on. Here are some key strategies to help you build trust in your business relationships.

### **1. Offer Consistent and Transparent Communication.**

This might involve some hard conversation, such as when the deadline has to be moved or the product you promised isn't working correctly. However, owning up to your mistakes allows others to see that you are honest and not trying to pull the wool over their eyes. Offer frequent communication through:

- *Phone calls*: These seem to be coming less of the norm these days, in lieu of a quick email or text. But it's often easier to communicate over the phone. *Emails* leave room for misunderstanding, as there is no tone of voice, usually no pleasantries during

introduction (such as asking “how are you today?” and often no question about follow-up. All of this can be accomplished in a quick phone call and leave your customer feeling like they are on your mind.

- *Emails*: Emails are shorter than a phone call and offer the customer time to reflect before getting back to you.
- *Texts*: Pretty much the same as emails but even shorter.
- *Video meetings*: these became more of the normal during the pandemic and have continued to be so. These offer the benefits of face-to-face conversation without having to travel. Remember that facial expressions are a big part of communication. Best of all with Zoom, you don’t have to make coffee or bring in donuts!

- *Sit-down, in-person meetings:* You should try to meet with your customer in person, if possible, at least once. Perhaps at the beginning and again at the end of a project. Give them time to ask questions, and actively listen. Respond with thought.

All of these things will lead to a better relationship and less stress.

## **2. Deliver on Your Promises.**

Be reliable and consistent. If you offer them X, then deliver exactly what you offered. Here are some ways to do that:

- *Have a good, concise solid contract in place.* This will help each party to know what those promises exactly are ahead of time. Stick to that, or offer more if you

realize halfway through that can't make it work.

- *Stick to your deadline.* Sometimes customers need something done by a certain date. If you're installing a bathroom update, for example, your customer might be planning to have guests over for the holidays and need you out of there by your finish date.
- *Give them the product they ordered.* If they ordered two dozen red balloons, don't show up at the party with maroon balloons. Close only counts in horseshoes.

### **3. Prioritize Customer Satisfaction.**

The customer comes first. Do what you have to do in order to maintain a good relationship with them. If you fail to deliver results on time, you

may have to offer them a discount or an incentive to stay with you. This might cost something in the present but will possibly go towards them becoming a repeat customer, giving you a good review, or sending more customers your way.

#### **4. Repair Trust.**

Sometimes, even when we have integrity, something goes wrong in our relationships. Trust is broken. Feelings are hurt. You can try to rebuild trust by:

- *Admit your mistake.* Let your customer know that you were wrong. BE specific on how you broke their trust. Did you not deliver on time? Did you increase the price above what you originally promised? Did you fail to deliver the precise product they ordered? Did you lie?

- *Apologize.* Saying “I’m sorry” goes a long way, especially if you offer restitution. Which is our next point:
- *Offer restitution.* What can you do to make this right? Can you give them their money back? Can you replace the broken product with a new one?
- *Be patient.* Rebuilding trust takes time. It may never happen, but you must try if you are a person of integrity. Even if the customer ever comes back, you will have shown that you were willing to try again.

## **5. Showcase Testimonials.**

Collect reviews and testimonials from past customers and put them on your website or someplace prominent for others to see. Word-of-mouth goes a long way towards building trust.

## **6. Don't forget about internal trust.**

Don't forget about the people closest to you. If you mess up, apologize and fix it the best you can. Openly communicate, be transparent, be a person of your word, and apologize if you mess up, apologize and fix it. We often overlook our mistakes with those closest to us, thinking our friends or colleagues will forgive us. That is not necessarily the case. Do what is necessary to keep the peace, and to be the person your mother would approve of.

## **Conclusion**

Trust is vitally important in business. Depending on what type of business you have, it can be the most important thing about your company. If you are a financial planning firm, for example, where you handle people's life savings, you certainly need to be someone they can trust.



The same goes for a funeral director, who will be dealing with clients who are in mourning.

Keep your eyes open and watch for what your customers need. I don't know of any bad things that come from building trust in our relationships, whether they are in business or at home.

The Right Stuff  
Integrity

Wes Berry

## **Chapter 4**

### **Ethical Leadership**

In 2018, Urban Meyer, Ohio State head football coach was faced with an ethical dilemma. His then graduate assistant, Zach Smith, was accused of battery against his wife. Meyer knew the marriage had problems (to what extent is unclear), and Meyer and his wife Shelley sought to get the couple counseling help. Years later, when Zach Smith was Meyer's Assistant Football Coach, Smith was brought up on charges for domestic violence towards his wife. Apparently, this had been an ongoing thing as there were at least 12 reports of domestic violence between Smith and his wife. Meyer later fired Smith but was found guilty of knowing about the earlier charges of Smith and

still keeping him on despite his violent conduct towards his wife. Although Meyer and Smith had become friends, Meyer should have come forward much sooner and removed Smith from the program because of his domestic violence. He was also accused of lying about not knowing about some of the charges, and he was accused of never apologizing to Smith's wife Courtney.

In his leadership position of Head Football Coach, Myer acted unethically in his role. Not only did this hurt him as a role model to so many college-aged men on his team, but he could have brought to light a domestic violence situation much sooner.

When we are in leadership positions, like it or not, we're role models for others. Leadership comes with a lot of responsibility, and we need to be strong people of integrity if we're going to be the leaders we need to be.

How can a leader be sure they are doing the right thing?

## **1. Cultivate the Characteristics of an Ethical Leader**

These are much the same characteristics as we discussed in Chapter 2, The Foundations of Personal Integrity. But there are a few things that ethical leaders will need above and beyond. These are:

- *Self-Reflection:* Regularly assess your values and make sure they are in alignment with your leadership style.
- *Be transparent and open to communication.* It's important for others to know what's on your mind.

- *Keep informed.* Stay updated on trends, and best practices in leadership ethics. Read, attend workshops, and learn.
- *Seek Feedback* from your employees, colleagues, and mentors. Talk to people you trust who will be honest about how you are leading. Offer blind surveys to your employees so they feel free to speak honestly.
- *Be accountable* for your actions. It's not above a good leader to apologize if they are wrong.

## **2. Balance Ethics with Business Objectives**

We're in business to make money, right? Ethical leadership does not mean disregarding our business objectives. Instead, it means making sure that our ethics are in line with our business goals.

This requires creative problems solving. Here are some suggestions:

- *Prioritize long-term goals over short term gains.* Some businesses will use false claims in marketing products. This may lead to quicker and possibly more sales, but in the long term it will only hurt your organization.
- *Define your Social Responsibility.* What impact does your organization have on the environment and the community as well as individual stakeholders, clients and employees? Think of the companies who have poisoned the water supply or raised the price of medications to create an unfair price point. Don't be one of those people.
- *Adopt a Customer-Centric approach.* If you focus on your customer, you will be in good

shape about keeping your integrity. Like a good marriage, when you take the role of servant-leadership, your relationship will improve.

### **3. Be Aware of Bias**

Leaders can have both conscious and unconscious bias. It's important that you are aware of what yours may be. Treat each employee and customer fairly and respectfully.

### **4. Watch for Scandals**

Overall, ethical leadership will keep scandals at bay. Corporate scandals come with a lot of damage, both financial and reputationally, and often legal. Transparency and honesty will go far in keeping you out of these, as will good social responsibility.



### **5. Have Zero Tolerance for Ethical Violations.**

Whether it's employees cutting corners to produce a cheaper (and worse) product, or someone bullying a fellow employee or client, enact a zero-tolerance rule in your organization. This will not only weed out unsavory individuals but will create a safer environment for all.

- *Set a precedence* for acceptable behavior in your organization.
- *Model this behavior* yourself, and expect it in others.
- *Create a set of consequences* for any violations and make sure employees know what they are.
- *If/when violations occur, take* immediate disciplinary action, whether this be suspension, termination, or legal action.

## **6. Measure Leadership Integrity: Metrics for Ethical Evaluation**

How are you doing and how does your organization measure up? Do you have individuals of integrity working for you? You don't have to hook folks up to detector test to see if they are honest. There are now many metrics and indicators for evaluating ethical leadership within an organization . These go beyond subjective assessments.

From employee surveys to tracking key performance indicators tied to ethical conduct, organizations can establish a robust system for evaluating leadership integrity.

- *Overt testing*: these can be things like background checks, urine testing for drugs, and more. The employee knows about them

up front and expects them as part of their job description before they hire on.

- *Covert testing:* These are more subtle and are usually in the form of personality tests. These can show you if you have an employee who is a thrill-seeker, a pacifist, an introvert, and more. Certain personality types lead to certain behaviors. This doesn't mean not to hire the person, but it can certainly give you a head's up on what you're getting into.

While helpful, these tests aren't always the best way to access a personality. They are just a tool I part of the hiring process. Spend time in the interview, getting to know the potential employee. Look at the previous work experience and the background of the person. And above all, trust your instinct.

## **Conclusion**

An ethical leader can be likened to a superhero, someone who is not only a role model but sets expectations for safety and reliability in their organization. Ethical leadership can promote employee engagement, cultivate customers satisfaction, and create long-term success in your business.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Navigating Ethical Dilemmas in Business**

On September 29, 1982, 12-year-old Mary Kellerman woke up in her Chicago home with a cold. Her parents gave her an Extra Strength Tylenol tablet, and within hours, she was dead.

Six more deaths soon followed, and the connecting factor was that all of the people had taken Tylenol just before they died. An investigation revealed that the tablets had been laced with cyanide, a deadly poison.

Suddenly, Johnson & Johnson, Tylenol's parent company, was in the hot seat. Faced with the potential for more loss of life, an impending legal and financial disaster, and a public relations nightmare, they had to act fast. The company's

leadership had no idea how the poison got in the tablets, but they acted quickly, pulling all Tylenol products from off the shelves. This was 31 million bottles worth over \$100 million dollars. They stopped all production. They stopped all advertising. They needed to figure out how this horrible thing had come from their organization.

Their swift action was a customer-centric approach. It cost them millions, but it saved lives. And it is a move that very well saved their company.

Johnson & Johnson cooperated with law enforcement to track down the killer, who, sadly, was never caught. Meanwhile, they developed the first-ever tamper resistant packaging, which we see now on most medication bottles and many food products on our shelves.

Tylenol is still a household name, and their product sells well. The quick, ethical move on the

part of their leadership, their transparency, and putting the safety of the customer first, all helped customer trust in the company to remain intact. This story is a sound, although heartbreaking, example of navigating ethical dilemmas in business.

When you're in business, ethic dilemmas are almost unavoidable. While few will have the impact the Tylenol case did, it's important that you are ready to navigate them when they come. Here's how you can do that.

### **1. Identify Common Ethical Challenges**

Identifying prevalent ethical challenges encountered in the business landscape is the first step in preparing individuals and organizations to navigate the moral minefields of the modern workplace. If you're ready for them when they arise, your chance of survival is far greater than if

you ignore them. Here are some potential challenges that can crop up.

- *Conflicts of interest.* These are when a person's personal interests, such as their financial situation, their family, a second job, or something else, might cloud their professional judgment or decision-making. It's a fundamental ethical concern, especially in fields where public trust is of utmost importance, such as finance, law, or medical fields. It's important for this person to recuse themselves from the decision-making process at this time.
- *Bribery.* Well, we all know what bribery is. It's accepting compensation (money, gifts, power) in exchange for a service. And it's definitely not ethical. Don't do it.



- *Environmental concerns.* Learn about the environmental regulations in your area, as well as do your research before you make a move that could be environmentally unfriendly. Don't dump refuse near water supplies, for example. If you have an oil leak, fix it before it becomes a problem. Do regular maintenance on your machines. A lot of this is common sense, but you might be surprised at how many companies try to cut corners to save money.
- *Social responsibility.* Make good decisions that maximize profits while protecting your community, your customers, and your employees. Profit should never come at the expense of an individual or a group.

Becoming aware of and taking proactive measure in these areas will allow most

organizations to avoid serious legal, financial, or marketing disasters.

## **2. Navigate the Gray Areas**

It's important to provide practical decision-making frameworks to navigate complex ethical dilemmas that may be a bit ambiguous. You, as a leader, and your team should have a good handle on this. Here are a few:

- *Utilitarian approach:* This approach assesses an action in terms of the benefits or outcomes. Businesses should do their best to maximize happiness and eliminate or minimize suffering. One example of this is tiered pricing for customers in flights. Airlines usually offer first-, business, and economy-class seats. Everyone can fly, and

those with more resources can fly with more room and better snacks.

- *Deontological approach.* Deontology is another word for “duty” ethics. This approach recognizes that there are some areas inherently right or wrong based on a set of “rules”. These rules are normally, universally agreed upon by most people. For example, murder is wrong.

Using an Ethical Decision-Making Framework, your decisions should be based on unbiased facts and you should be careful to look for additional or missing information. This should help you to navigate the gray areas of morality.

### **3. Learn from Mistakes: The Growth Mindset in Ethics**

Encourage a culture that learns and grows from ethical missteps and recognizes that mistakes are an inevitable part of the human experience. In a growth mindset, we view errors as opportunities for learning and improvement. We examine failures as valuable lessons. This mindset helps organizations to cultivate an environment that encourages collaboration and ethical resilience.

When we are allowed to make mistakes, it fosters a culture of transparency and trust. Leaders who openly address ethical missteps set the tone for an organization that values accountability and continuous improvement.

### **4. Look for External Guidance**

Ethical Committees and External Advisors can help guide decision making when ethical dilemmas

arise. Often, bringing in an outside source offers an unclouded, unemotional, and unbiased opinion.

External guidance provides a fresh perspective and adds an additional layer of accountability to the decision-making process. Ethical committees, composed of diverse stakeholders, can offer insights that may not be apparent within the organizational hierarchy.

## **Conclusion**

Hopefully, you have some ideas of how to navigate ethical dilemmas in business now that you've read this chapter. It's not if, but *when* they arise, so it's critical that leaders and organizations take proactive approaches to minimize their chances of finding themselves in an ethical dilemma, but if and when they do, to already have a framework in place to handle it.

Next up, let's unpack why transparency is crucial for building trust within and outside the organization.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Transparency as a Pillar of Integrity**

On May 29, 2018, Starbucks' CEO Kevin Johnson closed 8,000 of their coffee shop locations to educate 175,000 employees on racial bias. Talk about transparency!

It all started one day at a Starbucks in Philadelphia. Two African-American men entered and asked to use the restroom. The manager said it was for paying customers only, so the two men sat down to wait for their friend to arrive before they put in their order. The manager then called the police on them, and the police arrested the men for trespassing. Although no charges were filed, the arrest went viral, and soon, Starbucks, who prided

themselves on being an ethical brand, had a mess on their hands.

Johnson fired the manager, apologized to the two men, and closed the stores to incorporate training. Johnson's transparency and quick action saved Starbucks from what could have been a death blow to their brand. Americans knew quite well what Starbucks stood for, and that the company was willing to take a stand when necessary.

Whether you're in a business relationship or a marriage, transparency can go a long way towards eliminating uncertainty, building trust, and strengthening ties.

We will look at some ways you can use transparency in business to strengthen your organization's chances of long-term success. But first, let's have a brief discussion about trust.



## **Defining Trust**

Trust is the bedrock of successful relationships, be they internal among employees or external with stakeholders. Transparency serves as the bridge that connects actions, decisions, and intentions, fostering an environment where trust can thrive.

So what is trust? Trust is a firm belief in someone or something. In your world of business, that translates into your customers feeling that your employees, organization, and product or services are reliable and safe.

With the Starbucks example, it meant that Starbucks were what they claimed to be.

To build trust, it's important that you and your employees are on the same page about vision, values, goals, and more. Open communication—transparency—is an essential factor in trust-building. Here are some strategies to help you

achieve transparency, that will give your organization gold stars in integrity.

### **1. Build Transparent Communication: Strategies for Clarity**

Transparent communication involves sharing information openly, providing context for decisions, and being forthcoming about challenges and successes. How do we do this?

- *Know your audience.* Are you speaking to professionals who understand your field of expertise? Are you writing copy for the general customer market? Are there areas where you need to be sensitive? Topics you need to avoid? It takes time to get to know people, and for deeper things like empathy

and understanding to occur, you may have to be patient.

- *Be clear.* Avoid jargon or words your audience may not be familiar with. Don't use examples that are outdated, like references from the 1980s for millennials.
- *Be concise.* Keep it simple. Sometimes it's helpful to organize your thoughts ahead of time by writing them down or creating a Power Point. Stick to your point. No one wants to listen to an hour-long ramble on anything.
- *Be open and honest.* If you made a mistake, own up to it.
- *Practice Active Listening.* When someone else speaks, listen. It can be helpful to repeat back something they said to be sure you are clear on it. For example, if someone says "I am concerned that the new product color

will turn off some of our customer base,” you can respond with, “I hear that you’re concerned about the product’s new color. I’d like to hear more specific as to how you think it will hurt sales.”

- *Remember Non-verbal Communication.* Folded arms and frowns cause defensiveness and push people away. Keep your posture open, make eye contact, and don’t forget to smile when appropriate. Look engaged. Stay off your phone.

## **2. Nurture a Culture of Openness: Leadership's Role**

As a leader, your role in nurturing a culture where transparency is valued creates an organizational culture where honesty and openness are not just encouraged but embedded in the DNA.

Openness not only leads to success for the organization, but reaps benefits you might never have imagined, including job satisfaction for employees, reduced stress, reduced burnout, better mental health for everyone, increased creativity and innovation, and staff empowerment. Who doesn't want all those good things for their team? Here are some ways to nurture a culture of openness in your workplace:

- *Find a way to communicate regularly.* One way to do this is to hold regular team meetings or town halls. Make sure employees, and when appropriate, customers, have a place to share ideas, voice concerns, and become updated on what's happening.
- *Share metrics with the team.* Sales figures, problems, solutions, customer satisfaction,

reviews. If it pertains to what the people are working for, share it with them. This not only creates trust but offers a complete view of what is going on, thus giving creative minds an opening to work around some of the issues and possibly help out.

- *Be willing to listen to other ideas, even if they differ from your own.* Different backgrounds offer different perspectives. A fresh set of eyes can sometimes see things we are missing. Think outside of the box.
- *Provide training.* If they don't know how to do it, let them learn. Workshops, classes, and even cross-job training are all beneficial to both individuals and the organization as a whole.
- *Address issues promptly.* If an employee comes to you (or your HR department) with a complaint, make sure that it is handled

quickly and efficiently. Don't let anything fester. This empowers employees and leads to more willingness to speak out when trouble arises.

### **3. Showcasing Success Through Transparency: Leading by Example**

Buffer is a company who, on their website, has a large banner that reads, "A Transparent Company Since 2010." The company even lists their employees names and salaries on the website for the world to see! That's what I call advertising transparency! But how well does that work for them?

First of all, what do they do? Buffer is a company that created a social media management software that provides small businesses and individuals with the tools they need to run their social media. This includes scheduling posts,

analyzing the results, and engaging with their customers in different ways. Buffer began as a Startup Sprint company in 2010 with seed money. They now have an annual revenue stream of over \$18 million, which is openly displayed on their website. They call themselves an “open company” and not only share salaries on their website but profit and other metrics as well. The team at Buffer says, “We share openly because we believe in the power of transparency to build trust, hold us accountable to a high standard, and push our industry forward.”

And apparently for them, it has certainly worked.

There is something to be said for total transparency. But you also need to be careful. Not everyone wants the world to know their salary, nor does every company want their competition to know their sales. You can still be transparent in the



important things, without giving it all away. How much you share will depend on the individuals you work with, the business you are in, and how these things reflect your values. That takes us to our final point: how far do you go with transparency?

#### **4. The Limits of Transparency: Balancing Act**

There's a balance between transparency and confidentiality, a fine line that needs to be carefully considered. Openness has its limits. There are a few areas where leaders need to consider protecting information. These are:

- *Sensitive information:* Obviously, transparency isn't appropriate for all situations, especially in fields where discretion is paramount, such as finance, law, and the medial world. Likewise, many

software companies need to keep things confidential due to password protection and storage of personal information. Businesses don't want to give up their trade secrets, like ingredients in special recipes. And of course, proprietary data should be safeguarded.

- *Misinformation:* When giving out company metrics, it's important that they are clear. There shouldn't be room for confusion or misinterpretation of the data. This can lead to unease in the workplace, if someone misunderstands profit but not cost of sales, for example.
- *Personal Preference.* Not everyone wants their salary or work history shared. Be sensitive to individuals before making a workplace-wide decision.

## **Conclusion**

While transparency is often a virtue, there are situations where confidentiality is paramount. Striking the right balance ensures that organizations remain transparent without compromising their strategic advantage or violating legal and ethical boundaries. Leaders should take care to walk the fine line between openness and confidentiality.

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## **Chapter 7**

### **Integrity in Business Operations**

There's a story of a CEO was about to retire. He called in all the young executives, told them about his exit plans and announced that he was going to pick the next CEO of the company from their group. One of them would be running the company in a year.

The CEO handed each of them a seed. He said, "I want each of you to take this seed home and grow it. Bring it back to me in a year, and I will judge the plants and pick my CEO then."

Jim, one of the executives, was very excited. He ran home and he and his wife got a nice pot. He planted the seed and watered it, taking great care of it and watching it each day for a sign of

growth. Every day when he went in to work, all of the young executives were bragging about how well their plants were doing. Jim was despondent. His seed hadn't even sprouted yet.

He tried everything he knew but the seed refused to grow. At the end of the year, it was time to bring his pot in. He was embarrassed and sad about his seed's failure to grow. "My boss will be so disappointed in me," he said. But his wife encouraged him to remain true to himself and be honest. So Jim carried the empty pot into work the next day.

The boss lined all of the pots up together. There was an interesting mix of different plants of different sizes. Only Jim's pot stood empty.

The boss called Jim up to the front of the room. As Jim walked up, fearing he would be fired, he heard the snickers of the other young executives,

and the whispers among them about his failure as a gardener.

When Jim got to the front of the room, the boss had him stand right beside him. Then the boss said, “I want to introduce you to Jim, our new CEO.”

What? there were gasps among the other executives. Jim himself was socked. How did this happen?

“But his plant didn’t even grow!” wailed one young executive.

“Exactly,” said the boss. “What each of you didn’t know was that the seeds I gave you were boiled and dead. None of them were supposed to grow. You all cheated and were dishonest, purchasing plants of other seeds. Only Jim here remained honest. It is he who will lead the company with integrity.”

I've heard this story in a number of different places, so I'm not sure who the original author is. But it's a great and timeless example of integrity in the workplace. Daily, Jim had to make a decision on whether to cheat or not, even when the consequences seemed dire.

We've taken a deep dive into integrity, looking at what it means to both companies and individuals, and how to implement it into your organization in a general sense. Now let's look closer at what it means to have integrity in your *day-to-day* business operations.

In this chapter, we'll explore ethical conduct in transactions, policy implementation, employee training, and the crucial role of internal audits in ensuring ongoing integrity.

## **1. Stay Mission-Focused**



One of the best ways to develop your values and principles into a working format is to use them as part of your mission statement. That statement can then serve as a set of guiderails to help direct your actions.

Setting your company's mission in clear, unambiguous language helps you to establish an identity for your company. When your customers know what you stand for, they know what to expect from your company, not only in terms of products or services, but in how you do business.

If customers know that your business stands for something beyond profit, they're more likely to align themselves with your interests and that can have far-reaching benefits for you.

Keep your mission statement posted someplace in your organization where everyone can see it as a daily reminder of what your company

is about, and also place it prominently on your website.

## **2. Use a Daily Integrity Checklist**

The "Daily Integrity Checklist" is a practical tool that empowers individuals at all levels to navigate the complex waters of business ethics and help keep everybody on track. The checklist encompasses a range of considerations. Your own personal checklist can be comprised of many different things from decision-making processes and communication practices to vendor relations and data management. Here are a few ideas that you can share with your team.

- *Fundamental Practice List:* Identify three (or five, or whatever) fundamental practices that you will check off every day before you leave. These could be as simple as “Arrived

on time this morning.” “Leave office clean,” “Turn off computer at end of work day.” Or they can be more detailed, such as “Read all emails pertaining to Project One before I leave today.” and “Check sales reports at 4 p.m. each day and report to supervisor with numbers.”

- *Task List:* Write down all meetings you need to attend, phone calls you need to return, etc. Check them off as you do them. This keeps you on track and helps keep your mind clear of the clutter that comes from trying to mentally juggle everything.
- *Gratitude list:* This may sound hokey, but it works. Every morning list three things you are grateful for in your planner or a notebook you keep by your desk. This starts your day off positively by looking at blessings instead of problems. There will be

enough problems that crop up during the day, believe me.

You get the idea. There are numerous checklists on the internet for business integrity if you need another place to start. By incorporating a Daily Integrity Checklist into routine business activities, organizations create a culture where ethical behavior becomes second nature.

### **3. Emphasize Fairness in All Transactions**

Emphasizing the importance of fairness and ethical conduct in all business transactions reinforces the idea that integrity is not negotiable. This section navigates the intricacies of fairness, exploring how organizations can embed ethical considerations into their transactions, from

procurement and sales to partnerships and collaborations.

- *Treat all individuals equally.* What if you have a customer who comes in driving an old car and wearing old clothes? Your first thought might be, “They can’t afford me.” But you never know. Maybe they can. And if they can’t, it’s important that you still treat them with respect. They are, after all, giving you their time, and even if they don’t become a client, they may refer you to someone who does. Never should you assume. All customers, regardless of ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, etc. should be treated with respect as a person.
- *Never exercise power arbitrarily.* If you are running a medical facility, for example, don’t use your power as “the professional”

to impose certain rules or impositions on people. Be mindful of the power you wield and wield it graciously.

- *Don't exploit other people's weakness or mistakes for corporate benefit.* This is like blackmail.
- *Follow the law.* Don't hedge on this or cut corners. Your business should uphold all laws and make sure your customers know this if and when they try to find some wiggle room. Don't give up your integrity just to close a sale.

#### **4. Have Policies for Upholding Integrity**

It's always good to have policies in place. You can give these to new employees or potential employees during the interview process. They should be readily available to everyone in your

employee handbook. Along with policies, there should be procedures for upholding them and consequences for failing to uphold them. While you don't want your workplace to feel like overly legalized, most leaders have found that implementing good boundaries offers not only a safety net but clear communication about what is expected behavior and what is not. As mentioned above, creating a mission statement is a good place to start. Once you know your mission, it will be easier to figure out what conduct is appropriate while you are striving to reach your goals.

### **5. Cultivate a Culture of Integrity Through Employee Training**

As Johnson did for Starbucks, sometimes it's necessary to include employee training. A short annual workshop can suffice.

## **6. Run Audits to Safeguard Ongoing Integrity**

Having regular internal audits can ensure ongoing integrity in operations. Audits should cover everything from financial transactions to data security and employee conduct. Periodic evaluations are also helpful in maintaining ethical standards. Audits are a great safeguard mechanism to identify potential lapses and address them proactively.

## **Conclusion**

These strategies need not be overwhelming. Implementing a few into your workplace culture will keep you on a steady path towards integrity, and help your organization uphold the values that makes them strong. These shouldn't necessarily be isolated initiatives, but rather interconnected



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elements that weave a culture where ethical conduct is not just encouraged but expected.

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## Chapter 8

### **Integrity and Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a powerful force that not only aligns organizations with societal values, but also enhances their long-term success. According to Matt Gavin, of Harvard Business School, CSR can be summed up with these words: Do *well* by doing *good*.

Just think about Levi Strauss & Co., a popular and very successful fashion company that specializes in denim jeans. This company was one of the first to work towards a more ethical and sustainable supply chain. Starting in 1991, Levi-Strauss took a look at their working conditions around the globe, and created what they call their

“Terms of Engagement.” These terms established a “code of conduct” for their business. It set standards for workers’ rights, implementing a safe work environment for all. It also implemented an environmentally-friendly production process and rules for their supply chain management. Recognizing that the world is ever-changing, Levi regularly updates its Terms of Engagement.

In 2011, the 20th anniversary of its code of conduct, Levi’s announced its Worker Well-being initiative. They created even more programs focused on the health and well-being of supply chain workers. The organization keeps growing this initiative, and vows to expand it to more than 300,000 workers and produce more than 80 percent of its product in Worker Well-being factories by 2025.

Levi's is a great example of a corporate social responsibility company that also thrives financially.

Running a business is more than just making money. Climate change, economic inequality, social justice are causing more and more companies to turn their eye towards becoming a force for good, while at the same time, effectively running their business.

Let's figure out how we can do both.

## **1. Align Organizational Values with CSR**

CSR is a place where profit is not divorced from ethical responsibility. Through examining alignment with organizational values, balancing profit and ethics, showcasing the role of CSR in fostering integrity, measuring CSR impact, and advocating for the integration of CSR into the organizational DNA, your organization can be a

force for positive change. CSR initiatives are not merely philanthropic gestures but strategic choices that align with the core values of the business.

There are roughly four types of CSR:

- *Environmental Responsibility:* This is one we're usually most familiar with. Practice good business strategies by safeguarding the community you are in. Don't pollute and reduce harmful practices like using too much water or dumping responsibly. Regulate your energy consumption, and if you can, try to offset your environmental impact by planting trees or funding research. Some companies even donate to causes that are within their wheelhouse.
- *Ethical Responsibility:* This brings to mind things like the unnecessary use of animal testing for cosmetics or using child labor.

Your business practices should not bring harm to another.

- *Economic Responsibility.* Your end-all shouldn't just be making profit. Use your resources to impact the lives of your employees and those in the community around you. Some companies, like Home Depot practice profit sharing with their employees. Another act of economic responsibility is seen with pop icon Taylor Swift. She regularly donates food to the communities in which she has concerts.
- *Philanthropic Responsibility:* While many organizations regularly donate to charitable causes related to their business (Pet food companies donating to animal shelters, etc.) some organizations donate to causes outside of their field. Some even go as far as to

create charitable organizations to help others.

## **2. Balancing Profit and Ethics: The Delicate Equation**

It takes both time and money to make money. If you're expected to then take additional time and money to be socially responsible, how do you balance the two?

- *Know your purpose:* This may be part of your mission statement. The first steps is to know what your purpose is and why.
- *Engage others:* Your employees, your customers, all of your stakeholders should know your purpose and what you are trying to accomplish.
- *Prepare for challenges.* There will always be problems with any endeavor. The same



is try when switching to more sustainable practices or setting up charitable giving. Prepare ahead of time so you will be ready.

- *Measure Your Impact.* Keep good metrics of all your profits and expenses, as well as customer satisfaction, employees satisfaction, and carbon footprint. Regularly measure both our success and your cost to see where you are. Metrics should go beyond tracking financial contributions and delve into the social, environmental, and ethical outcomes of CSR initiatives. Measuring will help you define your strengths and weaknesses, and let you see if and where you need to make changes.

Organizations that prioritize integrity in their decision-making processes can find innovative

ways to align profit motives with ethical responsibility. Yes, it can take time to set up, but in the end, it will reap its rewards, and foster collaboration and trust among stakeholders.

### **3. Let CSR Drive the Cultivation of an Ethical Culture**

It doesn't seem like that long ago that businesses to goal was to make money. Or maybe that makes me sound old? While that is still necessary, what organizational leaders are finding is that the more they lean into CSR, the wider impact—and reach- they can have. There are so many benefits to being a CSR company, that it now seems like a crazy idea not to focus part of your business strategy on this. Let me list a few for you:

- *CSR drives innovation.* Employees will need to think of creative ideas and

workarounds to some of the conventional business practices. Creativity sparks creativity, so who knows what else they will come up with in the meantime?

- *CSR expands customer reach.* Think of how many additional people will not only benefit from but hear of your charitable contributions and sustainability practice just because they happen? It also gives you something to share on your social media. While we are sometimes taught to give quietly and without boasting, CSR can be tastefully shared with your audience and used as a positive marketing push. What better way to gain positive publicity?
- *CSR attracts and retains employees.* The feel good vibes and integrity goes a long way in both attracting workers and keeping them for the long haul.

- *CSR builds brand loyalty.* Dawn Dishwashing Soap has branded themselves as the soap to help save baby ducks from oil spills. They use videos of people washing oil off of ducklings in their television commercials and even have a picture of a baby duck on their bottles. They have created a brand that people love and trust (who can be against saving ducklings?), and in turn, they are also helping out wildlife.
- *CSR can serve as a market differentiator:* What better to set you apart from your competition than your charitable giving or sustainable environmental practices.

#### **4. Embed CSR into Organizational DNA**

It takes some planning to build CSR into your organization. Here are some tools that you will need:

- *A forward thinking, growth mindset.* Set your focus on the future and what you can do today to help make tomorrow a better place. Using a growth mindset allows room for mistakes to be made and to turn failures into learning experiences. This not only alleviates stress on your employees, but leaves room for creativity to blossom.
- *Be creative.* It will take some out-of-the-box thinking to figure out ways to reduce emissions or change supply chain issues. Set your best people on the task and watch what they come up with.
- *Communicate your “why”.* Make sure that all team members involved know the reasons behind your CSR actions. Share with them the benefits, both tangible and non-tangible, and make sure they realize

how this will benefit not only the organization, but individuals and the community or world as a whole.

## **Conclusion**

Actor and film director Paul Newman wanted to give back to the world that he had been so greatly blessed in. He started up the Paul Newman Foundation, which gives 100% of profits from his food products to help children with food insecurities and through growth and learning initiatives. His products, ranging from salad dressings to cookies, have become a household name.

Everyone wants to be a part of something bigger. Just knowing that you are running your organization in a way that doesn't hurt, but helps others, can help you sleep better at night. By integrating values into your workplace, you can

initiate system-level change, as well as help make the world a little better for someone else. Organizations that embrace this integration of ethics and business find themselves not only in the pursuit of profit but in the creation of a positive impact on society, fostering collaboration, and building a legacy that transcends financial metrics.

Next time you walk through the doors of your workplace, take the time to consider how you can use your career to make an impact and change the world for the better.

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## **Chapter 9**

### **Integrity in the Digital Age**

In this ever-expanding digital age, the temptation and ease with which one can be someone other than themselves is intoxicating. Game systems are creating avatars where we can dress, play, and work in characters that we dream up, which can be far from our actual selves. A scroll through Facebook, where everyone is postings their kid's accomplishments or their latest vacation photos don't always give us a realistic view of what their life is actually like day-to-day.

We can do nearly everything from behind the safety net of a screen, including shop, bank, meet with colleagues, and chat with friends.

When we're not face-to-face, it's easier to be someone other than our authentic sales. This can carry over into the workplace.

How can we maintain personal and workplace integrity in this fast-moving digital age? Here is a guide for businesses seeking to uphold and enhance their integrity in the digital realm.

### **1. Social Media Impact: The Double-Edged Sword**

Your social media profile represents your brand. Your posts, photos, and interactions with others should always go towards maintaining your values and the mission of your organization. Whether you are posting as an individual, such as an author, musician, chef or other, or whether you are posting as an organization as a whole, what you say and how you say it *matters*.

Gary Vaynerchuk, CEO of VaynerMedia says it best: "Social media is not a media. The key is to listen, engage, and build relationships."

Don't be tempted to lose your integrity on social media. Because you aren't actually "in the room," it's easy to hide behind our digital selves and say things we wouldn't normally say in person. Don't exaggerate or deceive people into believing something that is not true. Don't lie. Don't make your life or your product seem better than it actually is.

Consider the people who post luxury vacations and fancy restaurant meals all the time on their social media. They may lead the world to believe that all they do is live a luxurious lifestyle. What they are not posting is the hours they spent in the hospital with their child's broken arm, or their car in the shop, or at the vet appointment for their

cat's tooth surgery. You get the idea. Be real. Be authentic.

For some people, social media enhances their integrity. It's a way for them to talk about the issues that matter the most to them. They use it as a powerful tool for communication to let their cause be known.

Social media can also be used for reputation management. Some organizations post reviews on social media, and also photos of customer's enjoying their product.

But social media can also be a platform where misinformation and ethical lapses can quickly escalate. Be careful and monitor your social media platforms often.

## **2. Building Digital Trust: Strategies for the Transparent Era**

It's of utmost importance to protect your customer's digital information at all costs. They often share personal information with you that can do great harm to them if it gets into the wrong hands. What if their credit card gets hacked, or their bank account? What if someone gets into their personal information and finds out where they live, targeting them for some reason? Or what if a hacker breaks into their medical file and finds their personal health information or mental health struggles? These things would all be devastating for many people.

When your customers share information with you, or use their credit card on your website, they are trusting you. So how can you build and preserve that digital trust with your customers?

- *Have transparent data practices:* Clearly communicate with your customers on how

their data is collected and used, and protected. Your privacy policies should be easily available and simple to read. Likewise, if your website collects cookies, make sure that's apparent. With a pop-up screen. Many customers will appreciate the chance to choose how many cookies they want to accept, and businesses are often listing what the cookies are used for with an "only accept necessary cookies" button. Never, ever sell your customer's information without their permission.

- *Implement strong fraud prevention measures:* these include firewalls and regular security audits. In the data protection world, passwords and software must be constantly updated. Hackers, bots, spam, and all sorts of unpleasant cyber threats are out there looking for a way in.

Fraud comes in many different forms now, including phishing emails and fake websites. If you have a newsletter list, it's important to safeguard that as well. In his article for Sift website "What is digital trust, and why is it at risk?" Ken Palla says that "a multi-layered defense approach is essential, including robust mechanisms to combat common attack vectors such as phishing attempts, bot attacks, account takeovers, and the illicit use of stolen personally identifiable information (PII). Enhanced authentication methods, particularly for high-risk accounts, add an additional layer of security, making it significantly more challenging for malicious actors to gain unauthorized access.

Embracing transparency in your digital interactions can help you build authenticity, accountability, and open communication with your audience. Securing your customer's data and information is more than just implementing a new software. As we learned, it needs to be embedded into your organization's regular protocol, ever-changing to keep up with the fast-moving digital age.

### **3. Digital Communication and Integrity: Enhancing or Challenging?**

Digital communication channels can either enhance or challenge organizational integrity recognizes in today's world. Embracing integrity is the best way to navigate the digital age, which offers you so many opportunities, while at the same time, also a lot of risks. Like anything, you need to be one step ahead of the game, so that digital communication, including emails, messaging apps,



and collaborative platforms, don't negatively impact organizational integrity.

Organizations need to establish clear guidelines for digital communication that align with ethical principles. There are also training and awareness programs you can offer to ensure that employees understand the importance of maintaining integrity in their digital interactions.

## **Conclusion**

We live in the digital age, where information flows rapidly and reputations can be built or shattered with a click. Organizations who take digital trust seriously will not only secure their future but protect themselves from lawsuits and negative publicity. But while the digital age has its risks, organizations and individuals should learn to navigate it, and have fun along the way. It has a lot to offer.

The Right Stuff  
Integrity

Wes Berry

# Part 3

## A Reputation to Stand On

*“It takes a lifetime to build a good  
reputation, but you can lose it in a  
minute.”*

—Will Rogers

The Right Stuff  
Integrity

Wes Berry

## **Chapter 10**

### **Resilience and Long-Term Success Through Integrity**

Keanu Reeves is one of the most successful actors in American film history. From his early days as a stoner comedian in *Bill and Ted*, to action stardom in movies like *Speed*, *The Matrix*, and *John Wick*, Reeves is one the most recognized film stars in America. However, Reeves has never let his success—and the money that came with it—go to his head.

Instead, Reeves has stayed true to his own personal values and principles. On multiple occasions, he's taken less money in order to hire

the actors he believed would make his movies more successful.

In *The Devil's Advocate*, Reeves insisted they bring Al Pacino on board, cutting millions from his salary in order to make it happen. The same thing happened when he brought Gene Hackman on board for *The Replacements*. He also turned down a lucrative contract for *Speed 2*, believing the sequel would be a pale imitation of the original.

Reeves has also donated a significant portion of his earnings to a number of charities, including several children's hospitals. These donations have helped keep these hospitals running, providing badly needed care to communities. For his part, Reeves prefers to keep these donations quiet—he's more concerned with making sure people get the help they need than in receiving "credit."

Reeves is a great example of someone living a life of integrity. He's guided by his values and principles, even if it results in him making less money at times. He has established values and principles that provide a clear path forward, allowing him to feel comfortable with his choices.

### **Building Integrity**

As I said before, integrity isn't something that just happens overnight. You'll never wake up one morning and think to yourself, "Hey, now I have integrity!" No, building integrity is an ongoing, lifelong process, one that you'll need to live every day.

Ideally, integrity will become a habit. Even then, you'll still need to be aware of how your actions reflect your integrity. Here are just a few more ways you can build the integrity habit into your life and the DNA of your organization.

### **1. Consider the Golden Rule**

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” When you treat people honestly, you inspire others to be honest with you. On the flip side, if you try to deceive others, you’re much more likely to be deceived yourself. The same goes with respect. If you want others to respect you, you need to grant them the same courtesy.

While every person has to establish their own set of principles and values, there are a number of values that should be important to everyone. Honesty, respect, and fairness come to mind, for starters.

### **2. Make—and Keep—Promises**

Keeping your word is central to the idea of integrity, and the only way to prove that you’re trustworthy is to demonstrate it. That means that you have to make promises to people, guarantees



that you'll meet certain performance metrics, however you decide to determine them. But what really matters is that you follow through on those promises.

This is where the philosophy of under promising and overdelivering comes into play. When you're making a commitment to someone, it's important not to overextend your ability to deliver. After all, it only takes one broken promise to damage your credibility. On the flip side, you need to be wary of making promises that are too small—don't completely undermine your abilities.

In essence, it's about finding a balance between stretching yourself to reach new heights without overestimating your abilities. Your integrity depends on finding that balance, and as long as you're true to yourself, then you should have no problem making that assessment.

### **3. Always Be Honest**

If trust is the backbone of integrity, then honesty is the rest of the skeleton. In order for anyone to trust you, they need to believe that you're being honest with them throughout your entire interaction. Even a small fib, one that seems harmless at the time, can come back and cause enormous problems down the road, potentially ruining your credibility.

Honesty starts with your initial promise. As I mentioned earlier, you need to make sure you set realistic but ambitious goals for what you can deliver. Then you need to be able to clearly communicate that promise to others, being sure that both sides understand exactly what is being promised, including deadlines and timelines.

In the event that something does happen, and you can't meet your commitment, you can preserve your integrity by being honest. Problems

are inevitable in all walks of life, and most people will understand if someone makes a mistake.

Instead of trying to cover it up, own your mistake and do whatever it takes to resolve the situation. Sometimes, that honesty can be even more effective in building a relationship of trust.

#### **4. Surround Yourself with Integrity**

There's an old saying: you can tell a lot about a person by the company they keep. When it comes to integrity, this is especially true. You should make every effort to surround yourself with people who hold similar ideals to you, whose values and principles align with those held by you and your company. This holds true not only for the people in our personal life, but the employees we hire.

Your environment matters, and whether you notice it or not, your behavior is influenced by

those you spend time around. The more time you spend around someone who isn't trustworthy, the more tempting it may be to cut corners here and there or to fudge numbers in some accounts.

Instead, cut ties with those whose integrity is lacking, and spend more time with those whose influence will be a positive force in your life.

### **A Priestly Story of Integrity**

Father Mulcahy was the Catholic Priest on the iconic 1970s TV show M\*A\*S\*H. For those of you who haven't seen it, the show took place in a mobile army hospital during the Korean War. It portrayed the daily struggles, both joys and hardships, of people who faced life and death every day. Father Mulcahy was central to the show and was played by actor William Christopher.

In one episode, written by Jim Strain, Father Mulcahy becomes attracted to one of the nurses in

the unit. He's in a lonely place during a difficult time, and the temptation to break his vow of chastity is great. During the episode, he struggles with what to do, but in the end, he sticks to his religious vows and stays true to his calling from God.

When Strain tied to sell the episode, the show's creators didn't like the ending. They asked him to rewrite it to make it more realistic. When he asked them to make it more realistic, they responded that they wanted to guy to get the girl. They felt that the audience would want that, and want him to forgo his vows to the priesthood to be with the woman he was interested in.

Strain refused to change the script, and show's creators finally decided to air it as it was written.

Father Mulcahy was a much beloved character on the show, by both the audience and

the other characters in the series. While popular culture might tell us that we should do what feels good, sometimes it's more powerful to do what is *right*. Not everyone lies, cheats or steals. Some people are true to their callings and hold to their values even during times of duress.

## **Conclusion**

It's tempting to reduce integrity to "doing the right thing." But the problem, of course, is knowing exactly what "the right thing" is. There's no single, universal answer that applies to every person in every situation. But when you take the time to truly understand the values and the principles that you believe should guide your actions, then you've got a good shot at getting it right.

There are some values that are intrinsic to the idea of integrity. Honesty. Equality. Fairness.

Diversity. Respect. Trust. These are all values that should guide your sense of integrity. No matter who you are or where you're from, when you treat others with integrity, more often than not they'll return the favor.

In a recent article in the *Harvard Business Review*, it was found that enterprises with high integrity ratings have a higher return on assets and a lower cost of capital. The study also found that individuals who exhibit integrity have higher job satisfaction and better mental health outcomes.

You can see why it's essential for individuals and enterprises to prioritize integrity in their personal and professional lives. Upholding high standards of integrity is not only the right thing to do, but it is also essential for long-term success and sustainability.

**ALMOST THE END! YOU STILL NEED TO  
COMPLETE THE 7-DAY CHALLENGE!**

The Right Stuff  
Integrity

Wes Berry



# 7-Day Integrity Challenge

## **Why Accept this Challenge?**

If you're seeking personal growth and development, you need to commit to consistent effort. One way to jumpstart this journey is by taking the 7-Day Challenge. To succeed in this challenge, you must dedicate a little time each day to contemplation and reflection on the given topic.

The questions provided are only a starting point. If they don't resonate with your personal experiences, modify them to better suit your situation. This flexibility allows for a more

meaningful and authentic exploration of the subject matter.

When you commit to this challenge, you're making a decision to actively engage with your thoughts and emotions. Writing down your reflections is a powerful tool to solidify your insights and gain clarity on your internal landscape. This daily practice can have a profound impact on your overall well-being.

Approach this 7-Day Challenge with an open mind and willingness to explore. You may uncover aspects of yourself that you weren't previously aware of or gain a deeper understanding of your values and priorities. This challenge's benefits extend beyond the initial 7 days, and the act of carving out time for introspection and self-reflection can become a habit.

Ultimately, this challenge is a powerful tool for anyone seeking to enhance their self-awareness

and personal growth. By dedicating a small amount of time each day to contemplation and reflection, you are taking an important step towards a more fulfilling and meaningful life. Upon completion, commit to re-reading and updating this challenge when you find yourself challenged by this concept in the future.

A 7-day Challenge provides a roadmap for achieving your goals by breaking them down into smaller, achievable tasks. By having a clear challenge, you can stay motivated and focused on your goals. Each day's challenge builds upon the previous day's, creating momentum towards the desired outcome. Additionally, having a plan can help you stay organized and prioritize tasks based on their importance and urgency.

A challenge can help you overcome procrastination and stay accountable. By having a clear outline of what needs to be done, you can

avoid feeling overwhelmed and take action towards your goals. Furthermore, having a plan can help you track your progress and make adjustments as needed.

Overall, a 7-day Challenge is a powerful tool to focus on a particular issue and provide greater insight, bringing an area of concern into your comfort zone.

## **Day 1: Define Your Values**

The first step in achieving and maintaining integrity is to define your values. What is most important to you in life and work? What do you stand for? Once you have a clear understanding of your values, you can use them as a guide for decision-making and behavior.

For enterprises, it is crucial to define the company's values and communicate them to employees, customers, and stakeholders. When everyone is on the same page about what the company stands for, it is easier to uphold high standards of integrity.

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## **Day 2: Be Honest and Transparent**

Honesty and transparency are essential components of integrity. Be honest in your communication with others, even when it is difficult. If you make a mistake, own up to it and take responsibility. Be transparent in your actions, decisions, and communications. When you are open and honest, you build trust with others.

For enterprises, honesty and transparency are crucial for building trust with customers, investors, and regulators. Be open about your business practices, financial performance, and any potential risks or challenges.

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### **Day 3: Uphold Ethics and Compliance Standards**

Ethics and compliance are critical for maintaining integrity. Uphold high ethical standards in your personal and professional life. Follow laws and regulations and be proactive in identifying and addressing potential compliance risks.

For enterprises, it is essential to have a strong compliance program and a culture that values ethics and compliance. Train employees on ethical behavior and compliance standards and hold them accountable for upholding these standards.

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### **Day 4: Build Relationships Based on Trust**

Integrity is closely tied to trust. Build relationships based on trust with others by following through on your commitments, being reliable and dependable, and treating others with respect and fairness.

For enterprises, building trust with customers and stakeholders is essential for long-term success. Focus on building positive relationships based on trust by delivering quality products and services, being responsive to customer needs, and being transparent in your business practices.

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### **Day 5: Lead by Example**

As an individual or as a leader in an enterprise, lead by example when it comes to integrity. Set a positive example for others to follow by upholding high standards of ethical behavior, being honest and transparent, and building relationships based on trust.

For enterprises, leaders play a crucial role in upholding high standards of integrity. Set a positive example for employees by demonstrating integrity in your actions and decisions, and by holding others accountable for upholding ethical behavior and compliance standards.

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### **Day 6: Continuously Evaluate and Improve**

Integrity is not a one-time event but a continuous process of evaluation and improvement. Continuously evaluate your personal and professional behavior to ensure that it aligns with your values and ethical standards. Identify areas for improvement and take action to address them.

For enterprises, continuously evaluate your business practices, compliance program, and culture to ensure that they align with your values and ethical standards. Identify areas for improvement and take action to address them to continuously uphold high standards of integrity.

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### **Day 7: Contemplation and Reflection**

On the last day of the challenge, take some time for contemplation and reflection. Reflect on the past week and evaluate how well you upheld high standards of integrity. Consider the challenges and successes you experienced, and identify areas for improvement.

For enterprises, take some time for contemplation and reflection on your company's commitment to integrity. Reflect on your successes and challenges, and identify areas for improvement to continuously uphold high standards of integrity.

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## **Conclusion**

Achieving and maintaining the quality of integrity is a continuous process that requires commitment and effort. By defining your values, being honest and transparent, upholding ethics and compliance standards, building relationships based on trust, leading by example, and continuously evaluating and improving, you can uphold high standards of integrity both as an individual and as an enterprise.

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Wes Berry is a Keynote Speaker and Workshop Facilitator with the professional skills and real-life experience to deliver on any stage. He works with Fortune 500 companies like Johnson & Johnson to smaller businesses and associations of all sizes that are seeking a breakthrough experience. Wes changes lives and transforms organizations by delivering a Paradigm Shift. He has written sixteen business and success books and is a *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author and TEDx speaker. As an entrepreneur, he built a \$750 million international company that operated in 130 countries.

His business knowledge and communications skills have made him an expert media contributor on many topics, from commercial drone applications to the downsizing of

The Right Stuff  
Integrity

Wes Berry

Sears, resulting in appearances with various media outlets. His many media appearances include NPR, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The London Times*, *Entrepreneur* and *Time* magazines, Fox News, Neil Cavuto, Geraldo Rivera, and John Stossel, to name just a few.

Visit his website at [WesBerryGroup.com](http://WesBerryGroup.com) to learn more.

