

IAN SAYS

## WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN NO ONE'S LOOKING?

INTEGRITY. That would mean choosing to do the ethical thing even when no one is looking over your shoulder. It is a choice that we make daily, and in the long run, could have major repercussions if minor compromises were made along the way – take for example a particular German carmaker, and their recent dieselgate scandal. On the flip side, businesses that have made integrity as a cornerstone – in the way that deals are brokered and operations are run, have seen sustained pre-eminence over decades, if not centuries.

We often expect our own leaders to exemplify integrity and character. However, we ourselves tend to cut some slack, especially if our boss or manager is not displaying perceived ethical standards of the highest order. Daniel Russell in *Be A Leader* reminds us that as followers, we too have a crucial role to ensure that integrity is a reality and not just an ideal upheld by many but lived out by a few. Transparency International developed a citizen's handbook that outlines five areas that followers can do to combat corruption: say no, speak up, ask questions, know your rights, and practise good values.

Sandy Clarke in *Consulting Corner* highlighted the well-known phrase coined by English historian Sir John Dalberg Acton: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." To add on, Sandy has a quote that is both immense and captures the essence of the eternal battle between corruption and integrity: "It's far easier for us to uphold good character and conduct when we are without high status or positions of influence; the less power we have, the fewer opportunities temptation has to present itself and lead us astray." The sway of the corrupt is real and enticing, and lest we remain watchful, any of us could tumble down that slippery slope.

In *Learning From Books*, Tamara Jayne shares from Marcus Buckingham's *Go Put Your Strengths To Work* and outlines six very practical steps on how that can be a reality. One particular step that stood out for me personally was the first one: bust the myths. Another famous myth that most of us have bought into for the longest time is that we will grow the most in our areas of weakness. However, the truth shall set you free, and it is quite the opposite – we will grow the most in our area of greatest strength. To quote Buckingham who sums it up perfectly, "Your strengths are your multiplier. Your strengths magnify you... you will be most inquisitive, most resilient, most creative and most open to learning in your areas of strength."

May the read ahead be as engaging and purposeful for you, as it has been for me.

Till then, have a wonderful, blessed weekend ahead.

Carpe diem,  
**IAN LEE**  
Editor  
Leaderonomics.com

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## WHY INTEGRITY MATTERS

By **LOUISA DEVADASON**  
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*"Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships."*  
– Stephen Covey

LEADERS spend years developing specific skills to win people over – charisma, eloquence, wit, intellect. They spend years becoming experts in one or more areas. In the blurry of achieving and conquering goal after goal, it's easy to overlook core values that lay out the foundation for success and longevity in one's career.

Encoded in the DNA of every effective leader is integrity. Integrity is defined as: "Adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty."

Integrity is the seed that grows into trust. Imagine the uneasiness you feel around someone who has broken your trust. It makes your skin crawl; you cannot wait to withdraw from them and retreat.

Author, chief executive officer, chief information officer, chief technologist, product manager and consultant Enrique Fiallo said, based on his extensive experience, "There are many things you can lack and still steer clear of danger. Integrity isn't one of them. Establish a set of sound ethics policies, integrate them into all business processes, communicate them broadly to all employees, and make clear that you will not tolerate any deviation from any of them. Then live by them..."

### CHARACTER OVER REPUTATION

Leaders with integrity are primarily concerned about the quality of their character than their reputation. Your reputation is merely who others think you are, but character is who you really are, and people can often intuitively tell when you're hiding behind a veil of inauthenticity.

University researchers Robert Moorman and Steven Grover investigated the core reason integrity was pivotal to effective leadership. Their findings were published in the *International Journal of Leadership Studies*. They postulated that leader integrity matters to followers because of the information it communicates to followers that may help them reconcile the inherent uncertainty of follower decision-making.

Integrity makes followers feel comfortable and safe when trying to predict outcomes of trusting a particular leader. It is part of any follower's survival instinct, especially when faced with uncertainty.

As humans have formed complex hierarchies that are often multi-directional, leaders are sometimes followers and vice versa. Hence, integrity is so crucial to function and thrive within any niche or organisation.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Building integrity is simple although not easy. Asking yourself these five questions could be a good start to engage the mindset of integrity leadership.

1. Do I keep my word and my promises?
2. Do I maintain honest communication with others?
3. Do I keep my environment organised?
4. Do I make myself accountable?
5. Do I keep the right company?

As a leader, it is important to be mindful of these questions. By addressing them, you will see your integrity continue to grow and affect progress around you.

■ *Louisa Devadason firmly believes only people of integrity can transform the nation. To know how to build honest communication and integrity in your organisation, email us at [training@leaderonomics.com](mailto:training@leaderonomics.com)*

The opinions expressed in this leadership guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.



### TAKEAWAY of the week

## A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

IT has always been said that there is power in our tongue. It is a double-edged sword which can be used to build up or tear someone down.

Be mindful how words are used in your daily conversations with your peers, bosses or employees.

After watching the video, as shared by Scott Friedman (our Leaderonomics faculty trainer), you'd be reminded the next time to refrain using "deadline" but "finish line" in your vocabulary.

After all, you wouldn't want to see someone "dead" at the end of the line, would you?



Scan the QR code to watch the video. Share with us how you tame your tongue by writing to us at [editor@leaderonomics.com](mailto:editor@leaderonomics.com)



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Sit back and enjoy what we have in store for you!

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