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### Lacking tone from the top? Try tone from the bottom!

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There is no question about the importance of the tone from the top when driving change. The tone from the top is even more important when the change sought relates to culture. We are what we are today, because our parents led us by example since day one of our lives. When we grow old, it is not unusual to hear from close friends or relatives that we became a new version of our parents. Genetics aside, this is the influence coming from the top (our parents) playing a substantial part in who we are today. Tone from the top similarly influences our organizations, communities, societies, and countries.

### How is the tone from the top influencing you?

The truth is, at least in the part of the globe from which I write this article (and, perhaps, in other regions), the tone coming from the top has not been ideal. Government, politicians, top executives, and celebrities are not leading us by positive example, the way many of our parents did. Instead, we are seeing many examples of former presidents, state governors, law makers, executives of big enterprises, and celebrities serving jail time and/or being in trouble with the law for not being a good example to society. The tone set by these influencers—particularly for a culture of compliance and integrity—drives well-documented and unwanted consequences in corporations, countries, and societies. For example:

- A substantial number of former presidents of Brazil from the last three decades are currently defendants and explaining themselves to the law.
- One former Brazilian president is paying jail time.
- Ten Brazilian state governors were sent to jail, including the last four governors from Rio de Janeiro.
- More than 40 top executives from renowned companies (Brazilian and multinational) were condemned during the Federal Police's "*Lava Jato*" (Car Wash) operation.
- An embarrassing number of former ministers, congresspersons, senators, and others are paying jail time or on their way to.
- Brazilian sports and TV celebrities are often in the media for the wrong reasons and not being the role models we expect.

What I find disturbing is the real-life impact of the tone set by these high-profile figures on the actions of day-to-day people. It is not uncommon to hear, "If the congress people are doing it, I can do it too," "My boss does it, so it is OK for me to do it," or, "They are stealing a lot of money, so no problem if I get my small share." With all of these bad examples, the line between being right and being a fool or a sucker becomes very thin. Peer pressure

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does the rest of the damage to make the wrong behavior become the expected (or normal) behavior.

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