

IntegrityWorks: Tools and Skills to Build Integrity Introduction. Why Integrity?

“Integrity isn’t just doing the right thing when no one is looking. Integrity is doing the unpopular but right thing when the pressure is on and everyone is looking.” —Gerry Zack, SCCE & HCCA CEO

“Somebody once said that in looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if you don't have the first, the other two will kill you. You think about it; it's true. If you hire somebody without [integrity], you really want them to be dumb and lazy.”^[1] —Warren E. Buffett, Berkshire Hathaway CEO

Could you believe in a leader with unlimited charisma but who never keeps her word? Would you question the work of an employee who’s known to tell many small, somewhat harmless lies? Or could you trust the advice of a friend who doesn’t critically question the information he reads? Each of these circumstances brings up the question of a person’s integrity—being honest, measured and fair in thought, and true to one’s personal values. If you don’t act with integrity, you will have trouble getting people to believe in you. Few people with integrity will follow or trust you. And you will never be an effective leader, reliable friend, or trusted advisor. It simply kills your character and reputation.

Every person encounters situations both professionally and personally that test their integrity. It’s inevitable, and it will undoubtedly happen throughout your lifetime. It’s something I’ve experienced and seen happen to many compliance and ethics professionals—people who dedicate their careers to promoting and defending ethical behavior. On a daily basis, for example, they have to assess whether or not an accusation against an employee has merit and needs to be investigated, or if it’s just some form of character assassination. And if an accusation does end up being true, they need to have the courage to confront the situation head-on for the benefit of the company as a whole. They have to make ethical decisions like these, even if powerful people’s reputations will be damaged. Compliance and ethics professionals do this often in their careers, but these kinds of ethical situations come up in every organization and in every field, and we all confront difficult circumstances like these in our daily lives.

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