

WHEN INTEGRITY IS ABSENT: RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS

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(Excerpt from *THE LEADERSHIP INTEGRITY CHALLENGE*)

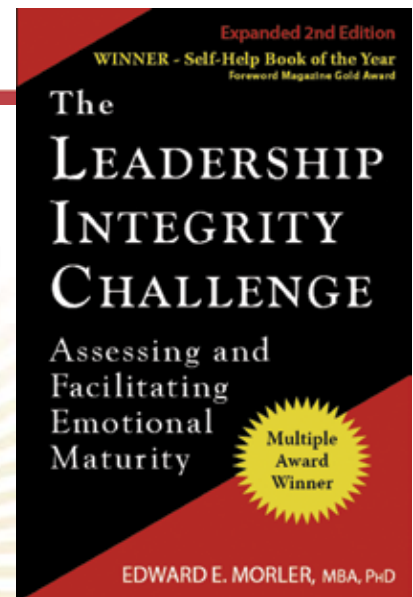
It is essential not to confuse the qualities of integrity with charisma, eloquence, charm, or even bottom-line performance. Those qualities and that performance may be very important, sometimes critical, but they are secondary to the fundamental importance of integrity.

Without integrity, other qualities or achievements will be corrupted and abused. When integrity is not a primary standard for all behaviors, is not highly valued for its own sake, or is considered impractical or unimportant or made into a joke or a nonissue, we can observe the following well-rationalized manifestations:

- Authenticity and candor are lacking, or when present, are often criticized as unrealistic or naive.
- Looking good becomes more important than being authentic.
- Charisma, showmanship, and public relations gimmicks are substituted for leadership.
- Different perspectives, viewpoints or beliefs are “righteously” invalidated and made wrong.



- Short-term performance increasingly becomes more important than long-term growth and sustainability.
- Ability to manipulate people, situations, and stock prices is rewarded over creating honest communication, sincere relationships, and substantive value.
- Competition becomes redefined as “beating the other guy,” rather than a mechanism to bring forth our best.
- Respect for human dignity is ignored and reduced to “taking care of me and only me.”
- Vitality and productivity are replaced with pretense and busywork.
- Compromise degenerates into mediocrity rather than flourishing as a synergy of expanded viewpoints.
- Striving for excellence is replaced with insatiable demands for perfection.
- Vision and leadership wither to a focus on how to have control over bureaucracy and issues.
- Compassion becomes too expensive, impractical, or “not our business.”



- Polls are used to pander for votes rather than to understand viewpoints and the need to communicate or educate.
- Loyalty becomes undiscerning agreement and support rather than forthright devil's advocacy.
- Agreements and commitments are honored only when convenient or enforced.
- The letter of the law is used to subvert justice rather than to aid it.

Without integrity, our self-image and self-esteem become dependent on what other people think. When that happens, we inevitably feel inadequate. We expend enormous amounts of energy trying to compensate for that feeling of inadequacy but pretend otherwise. Decisions and actions become limited, mechanical and trite. We wind up deceiving ourselves as well as others. Our self-confidence degenerates into arrogance or apathy, and our self-respect evaporates.

Without integrity, our character is replaced with political expedience. Concerns about money, power and status dominate and control our actions and life. We lose balance and perspective. Our compassion for and appreciation of the dignity of every human being deteriorates into insincere, self-centered, closed and unloving attitudes and behaviors. Without integrity, our dreams and vision lose their compelling energy. Our goals become mere mechanical objectives without juice. Our passion for life disintegrates into a compulsive, anxiety-ridden, insatiable need for success at any cost or simply deteriorates and dies.

As we view contemporary society, how often do we observe examples of jealousy, envy and greed accompanied by pretense, denial and dishonesty? These are dysfunctional compensations for underlying feelings of insecurity and powerlessness. Alcohol, drugs and overwork are often used to numb those feelings. We see how lack of integrity

precludes authenticity and consequently destroys credibility and trust and devastates relationships and security.

We notice that many of our contemporaries are chronically angry, confused, afraid, defensive, depressed, despairing, apathetic, shallow, work-obsessed, burned out, or wanting to drop out. We see too many who are "leading lives of quiet desperation," and do not have the slightest idea of what to do about it. In fact, these are all symptoms of a lack of integrity. Without integrity, we are unhappy and far, far less than we could be.

When integrity ceases to be a primary standard, the true costs are beyond measure. *Developing social skills and bottom-line abilities can be an important adjunct to, but never a replacement for, acting with integrity.*

The impression forces itself upon one that men measure by false standards, that everyone seeks power, success, riches for himself, and admires others who attain them, while undervaluing the truly precious things in life.

—Sigmund Freud

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Morler is president of Morler International, a management training and development firm specializing



in integrity-based interpersonal effectiveness. His focus is the custom design and delivery of bottom-line, functional skill enhancement programs that simultaneously integrate the principles and dynamics of integrity, emotional maturity, motivation, and leadership. Examples are negotiation, client relations, and leadership development. Dr. Morler conducts trainings for corporations and government agencies worldwide.