

Integrity Matters Broadcast

"Workers require integrity as well"

By James F. Bracher

Question:

You write that leaders need integrity, but what about employees?

Response:

Integrity matters regardless of one's responsibilities. Leaders are important, but without integrity-centered followers, organizations cannot be effective. Organizations need committed followers who think, are self starters, carry out duties with energy and assertiveness, take risks and solve problems independently. Do you and the leaders of your organization proudly and energetically recognize and promote valuable, integrity-centered followers?

Almost twenty years ago, Robert E. Kelley, in the *Harvard Business Review*, described the attributes of legitimate followers. He mentioned that integrity-centered followers are not **sheep** that are passive, uncritical and dependent, lacking initiative. Nor are they **yes people** who appear overly deferential, spending lots of energy building alliances between and among other yes people and insecure managers. Integrity-centered followers are not **passive**, unwilling to challenge leadership. They do not **play it safe**, waiting to see which way the wind blows before making a suggestion or taking action. Integrity-centered followers do not adopt the slogan: "better safe than sorry." Long-term viability requires leaders and followers who are single-minded and hard working.

Effective followers exhibit many admirable qualities. They manage themselves well. They are committed to the organization; its vision, mission and culture. They stand tall and proud in support of the individual whose enterprise they serve. They build their competence and focus their efforts for maximum impact. They exhibit the **Eight Attributes**®: **character, honesty, openness, authority, partnership, performance, charity and graciousness.**

Enthusiasm, intelligence, and self-reliance cause followers to be effective. They are engaged without the need to be the star, always eager to work toward the achievement of organizational goals. Effective followers are motivated to be team players. Upfront about their ambition to get ahead, they desire to earn as they learn.

Effective leaders have the vision to set corporate goals and strategies, the interpersonal skills to communicate enthusiasm, combined with the capability to coordinate different efforts with the desire to lead. Effective followers understand and support organizational vision. They refine their social skills to work well with others and exhibit the strength of character to flourish without heroic status. These productive individuals possess the moral and psychological balance to pursue personal and corporate goals for those they respect and admire.

Perhaps the most reassuring realization about leaders and followers is the similarity between the two. Each exhibits initiative, self-control, commitment, talent, honesty, credibility, courage and integrity. Because you admire those who deliver your products and services effectively, and want them to continue being productive, then let them know. Integrity is essential throughout organizations and is sustained through careful hiring, thorough training. Effective leaders provide public and private recognition.

How well do you measure up as a leader and a follower? What steps are you prepared to take to improve?

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