INTRODUCTION

Stephen Ketola has worked for over 20 years with organizations that promote character. He has been involved with various aspects of Strata Leadership and Character First including finance, shipping, and Human Resources. Stephen currently works in the sales department of Strata assisting account executives.

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

by STEPHEN KETOLA

Many character qualities are demonstrated or revealed in a person’s life in the present. This includes punctuality, responsibility, and diligence. They happen in real time. Other qualities start with a choice today and continue on with the full result not being known until a later time - such as patience, endurance, and loyalty.

While some qualities use, or reference, past experiences (wisdom, discretion, and discernment) to make good decisions now, one quality stands out that balances past, present, and future. This quality is truthfulness.

With truthfulness, an accurate accounting today of what has happened in the past will result in your words and actions being believed in the future.

Knowing the difference between what is true and what is just opinion can be difficult, especially in our culture that is overloaded with information. Who do you listen to? Where do you go for truth? Once you know the facts, however, a choice needs to be made to live accordingly.

If we take it upon ourselves to be truthful in all we say and do, we develop a reputation for dependability. People realize they can trust us, and as a result we may be given additional responsibilities, or relied upon in important situations that can impact our organization, the people we work with, or those in our families.

Being truthful not only benefits those around us, but also adds to our “trust bank account,” as people realize our words paint an accurate picture of what is happening in the world around us.

TELL YOURSELF THE TRUTH

Telling yourself the truth is the first step toward taking responsibility. If something doesn’t feel right, ask yourself why. When someone points out a blind spot, listen to his or her perspective.

- **What can happen when you talk yourself into believing something that isn’t true?** How does that belief affect your actions?
- **When you are “in denial,” you know something isn’t true or right, but you refuse to accept that reality.** How do you prefer people to tell you about what is reality? What words are helpful?
- **Why do you have to be “honest with yourself” before you communicate with others?**

TELL OTHERS THE TRUTH

Honesty is the stuff of trust building, and trust is the “currency” of relationships.

- **When is it difficult for you to tell someone else the truth, even if they are a close friend?**
- **Why is trust important in building relationships?**
- **What are some ways you can approach someone with something they need to hear, but is difficult to say?**
- **What is the difference between reporting the facts and being truthful?**

BE TRUE

A truthful person is loyal to family and friends, keeps commitments, doesn’t cheat on quarterly reports, and takes care of quality issues so that products and services fulfill their promise.

- **What are some ways you can be “true” on the job?**
- **What are some ways you can be “true” to family and friends?**
- **Why is it important to be a person who is known for being “true”?**
- **What are some of the things a truthful person does?**
“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard…”

– John F. Kennedy
September 12th, 1962
“We Choose to go to the Moon” speech.

It is more difficult to consistently be honest than to occasionally “shade the truth.” This is because being honest requires that you to be selfless – that you do the right thing even when it’s the hard thing. But if you will do this, if you will be honest with co-workers, employees, management, and customers, then you will ultimately find that, although it’s difficult, it’s also rewarding.

Why is it hard to be honest all the time? It’s hard because sometimes honesty seems to conflict with other goals we have such as kindness, honoring commitments to secrecy, and even self-preservation. But these goals need not come into conflict with honesty.

The Honest Manager
Most times when we don’t want to be honest, it’s not because we’re protecting someone else. It’s because we are uncomfortable saying something that might not be well received. However, this is oftentimes when it is most important that we are honest. Consider the manager who isn’t honest with his employee. He doesn’t want to be “unkind” or “harsh,” so he doesn’t correct the employee.

In the long run, the employee’s performance suffers, and others recognize that his work isn’t good enough. The employee might miss a raise, promotion, or other opportunity. The team’s work suffers because one person didn’t get the coaching he needed (even if he might not initially enjoy hearing it). If the manager had wanted to be truly kind, he would have found a way to coach the employee and help him improve his performance - rather than avoiding the difficult discussion.

The Honest Co-Worker
The same can be said about being honest with co-workers. If you’ve ever heard the saying “If I did it right tell my boss, but if I messed up – tell me,” then you understand how being honest with co-workers is really being thoughtful of them. Assisting them in spotting and correcting mistakes helps them perform better. This ultimately benefits everyone on the team. If you’re kind and thoughtful in your approach, then they will appreciate your effort.

The Key
Therein lies the key! You must be clear about your motives for being honest. Never use honesty as a pretext for cruelty or harshness. Consider these three things when speaking honestly:

Is it true? Be certain that what you’re saying is accurate and not colored by emotion or second-hand knowledge.

Is it necessary? You don’t always have to speak. Some things can be forgotten or even ignored. Learn how to tell the difference, and speak only when necessary.

Is it kind? Think of the other person. Will hearing these things help him? Will he benefit from the experience? If so, then you can share that as part of your communication. If not, then rethink what you need to say and find a way to say it that’s thoughtful and considerate.

Being honest isn’t easy. Sometimes it is very difficult as it takes thought and effort. But being honest is best. It’s best for you, and it’s best for those around you. Choose to be honest. As John F. Kennedy eloquently said, doing so will “measure the best of our energies and skills.” When you are known as a person of honesty and integrity, people will think of you as courageous and thoughtful of others - and that is a good reputation to have.
LOVE AND TRUST
by DR. GRACE WILSON

There are two foundational needs in every relationship – love and trust. At a most basic level, we need to know that we are loved (and therefore loveable), and that we live in a world that is trustworthy, in relationship with people we can trust. Without these two qualities, relationships often devolve into efforts to force the other person to love you or be trustworthy. For example, you might look for ways to control your partner into being trustworthy, or to withhold love in order to force the other person to declare their need for you.

Unfortunately, these efforts nearly always have the opposite of their intended effects – the relationship ends up destroyed, rather than restored. Working to be loving and trustworthy in relationships (rather than forcing your partner’s love or trust) is a much more effective way to restore important relationships or to protect them from damage in the first place!

Building Trust in Relationships
Much has been written about love and how to love well in relationships, but there is less information about trust. Trust is established in relationships through a balance of each person’s needs being met over time. This requires that both partners take responsibility for consistently meeting one another’s needs in a reliable way.

A key component to building trust is truthfulness. Each person needs to be truthful about his or her own expectations, needs, and desires for the relationship. This allows a solid foundation of trust to form in the relationship by creating a transparency that will set each partner up for success in meeting one another’s needs. It’s nearly impossible to take responsibility for caring for another person when you don’t know what their expectations are!

When You’ve Been Hurt
In addition, although the conversations can be very difficult, partners must be honest about when they have been hurt. When discussing hurt, partners should use “I statements” that take responsibility for their own feelings. For example, one might say “I felt insignificant when your mother said mean things about me and you didn’t defend me,” as opposed to, “You never stick up for me to your mom.” In addition, each person should try to avoid becoming defensive, acknowledging emotions rather than placing blame. Research suggests that holding hands or maintaining physical touch during difficult conversations can help soften responses and reduce defensiveness.

Truthfulness is an important component to establishing trust in relationships, which is foundational for a healthy partnership.

If you’re struggling with the love or trust in your relationship, consider seeking relationship therapy from a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT). An LMFT near you can be found at TherapistLocator.net.
MAKING THE RIGHT CALL
by DR. JASON JONES

Tennis star Andy Roddick was one of the fiercest players to grace the court. He is known for his 155 mph serve and his ability to adjust his game during a match. More importantly, Roddick is known for being a man of character on and off the court.

During the 2005 Italian open, Roddick was playing against an unseeded, yet salty young player named Fernando Verdasco. Verdasco was one set down when he served the ball and it was called out by the umpire, who then announced Roddick as the winner of the set. But something rarely seen in professional sports happened. Roddick noticed that there was a ball mark on the line and he told the official the ball was in. Roddick made the call against himself.

Verdasco went on to win that set and then the two following sets to upset Roddick and win the match. The spectators and reporters were surprised, yet inspired, by the actions of Roddick. He was later asked about the move and he responded humbly to the reporter, “I don’t think I did anything extraordinary.”

Commit to Truth
Many people say that Andy Roddick displayed extraordinary honesty that day, but he displayed something even more powerful. A commitment to truthfulness.

Truthfulness is earning future trust by accurately reporting facts. Truthfulness is not just being honest when asked about a situation. It is a proactive mindset of a commitment to ensure that the truth is known and upheld.

Many people, in the same situation as Roddick, would have overlooked the call since it was in their favor. It happens all the time in our personal and work life. Our natural reaction is to move on and take advantage of the situation. In fact, the act of setting a record straight and showing truthfulness takes effort - effort that only true commitment will motivate. That’s what is so impressive about Roddick’s call against himself. It would have been easy to let the call slide and consider it a good break. But instead, he checked the mark, stopped the match, and informed the umpire.

Truthfulness starts with standing up for the truth and doing what is right even when it goes against your interests. The good news is that, even though it may look like it is against your interests during the situation, you will come out ahead in the long run. Truthfulness displays character and it builds a level of trust with people that is difficult to earn. How do you think the official will respond the next time Roddick questions a call? ◆
FOOL ME ONCE
by DR. VIRGINIA SMITH

“Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.” This age-old saying communicates one of the most important consequences when someone, or some organization, is not truthful. After a friend or a customer discovers that they were misled, or even worse – lied too, it will take a minor miracle for them to trust again.

Have you ever been caught in a lie? Maybe it wasn’t a “big” lie – maybe you just omitted information that misled someone. Perhaps you “fudged a little” on an expense report, or maybe you lied to someone you love. Either way, something you said, or didn’t say – did, or didn’t do – resulted in harm to someone else.

Rebuilding Broken Trust
Is it even possible to restore trust once it has been broken? What can we do to restore a relationship – either at home or at work – that we have damaged by not being completely truthful? Sometimes, it can never be the same, but, sometimes, it can grow back stronger than before. Here are some steps you can take to try to restore a broken relationship.

Come clean. Admit when you have lied, or caused someone to be misled. Not only is it important for the person (whether your boss, coworker, or someone in your family) to hear straight from you that you own your mistake, but it is important for you to realize what you have done in order for you to take the steps necessary to fix the problem.

Acknowledge the pain and damage done. People who have been wronged need to know that you validate their emotional pain. Your boss needs to know that you realize that what you did not only damaged you, but also reflected poorly on him or her and caused problems for your working group or maybe even the entire organization.

Apologize. The apology needs to be real and heartfelt. Saying “If I have done anything that might have misled someone, I am sorry,” isn’t a real apology. Instead, you need to make your admission part of your apology, “I know that when I falsified the inventory report that it caused harm not only to my department, but also damaged the reputation of this company. I am truly sorry.”

Ask for forgiveness. Nothing is more humbling than to have to ask another person to forgive. You literally expose yourself to risk and possible rejection but it is an important step to restoration. Once the other person has forgiven you, then you can begin to rebuild what was broken. It is important to realize that the other person may choose not to forgive. At that point, you need to emotionally “move on.” You have done what you can do, and now it is up to the other person.

Practice accountability. Trust and forgiveness are two different things. Forgiveness is a gift but trust must be earned. You need to realize that rebuilding trust is a long process – something that takes only seconds to destroy can take years to rebuild. By holding yourself accountable, and maybe even asking someone else to help you be accountable, you can begin the process of storing up “successes” that will eventually rebuild the damaged relationship.

We all make mistakes and sometimes those mistakes hurt the people we work with, or the people we love. If we truly value those relationships, we will do what we can to rebuild them when they have been broken.
THE WORST PLAY OF ALL TIME

by DR. NATHAN MELLOR

If you are a football fan, Super Bowl XLIX was one for the ages with the New England Patriots winning at the wire over the Seattle Seahawks 28-24. With over 114 million people viewing, it was the most watched television show in United States history. Although the game highlighted great plays by both teams, the play that will likely be most remembered was the Seahawks’ decision to throw the ball while on the one yard line with 26 seconds to go in the game. Instead of utilizing Marshawn Lynch, their all-pro running back, they chose to throw the ball. Patriots rookie cornerback, Malcolm Butler was able to jump the route and intercept the ball. The rest is Super Bowl History.

“Making a mistake does not mean you are an ineffective leader. Being unwilling to learn from your mistakes, does.”

Setting the Tone

The criticism of the Seahawks coach, Pete Carroll, was immediate and harsh. In the days and weeks following the game, the debate on sports talk shows continues about whether Carroll’s was the “worst Super Bowl play of all time.” In the subsequent interviews, the Seahawks coach has been shockingly truthful about the situation. The reason why he can be so truthful with his players, the fans and the media is because he set the tone of truthfulness long before this moment occurred. To help promote an attitude of learning and openness, Carroll launched a weekly meeting where everyone is able to talk openly about the challenges facing the team. The meeting is the “Tell the Truth Monday Meeting” and it is the forum in which truthfulness is viewed as a positive component of learning from the mistakes of the past, dealing with ongoing concerns, and staying together as a team.

Mistakes are Inevitable

I do not know of any leader who has led for any length of time that does not understand the emotion that Pete Carroll feels when he thinks about how close he was to victory. As a leader, mistakes are inevitable, and there will be times in your life when your mistakes cost the team you love so much a chance at winning the big game. On the other hand, most would point to Carroll’s ability to maximize the potential of every player as the primary reason why the Seahawks were in the Super Bowl in the first place. When faced with the devastation of a personal and professional loss, the first step towards recovery is being honest about how you got to where you are. Building on a foundation of truth and confronting things as they really are can be a painful process, but it is also liberating.

Steps To Build Truthfulness

Developing a culture of truthfulness is a process. In order to get the ball moving in that direction, you can follow these three basic steps:

Be realistic. You are going to make mistakes. It may be an incorrect calculation, trusting the wrong person, or misreading a trend in the marketplace - but you will make a mistake. Making a mistake does not mean you are an ineffective leader. Being unwilling to learn from your mistakes, does.

Own it. Leaders make mistakes too. The great ones redeem their mistakes by learning from them and using them as opportunities to develop and grow.

Move forward. You cannot change the past. Although we daydream about opportunities to go back in time to make things right, the reality is that we cannot. Share what you have learned and make it easy for others to do so as well.
ON THE COVER
A great employee is one who completely and accurately relays the facts of a situation, even when the truth is difficult to hear.

COMING IN MAY - ALERTNESS
Being aware of what is taking place around me so I can have the right responses

TAKE YOUR GAME TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

The ELEVATE program is powered by the Academy of Sports & Character. It provides athletic directors and coaches a step-by-step process to emphasize and reward character through sports.

ELEVATE resources are available in a per-team format, or for an entire athletic program. Designed for junior high and high school coaches, ELEVATE materials were created to encourage and reward students for making great character choices.

There are four seasons of ELEVATE materials available, each season focusing on ten unique character qualities.

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