Mailbox

The Instruction of Integrity

I was pleased that you addressed integrity in leadership in your article "2010: Six Trends That Will Change Workplace Learning Forever" [December 2010]. This is an important issue that must be confronted because an integrity-driven culture makes companies more profitable and leaders more effective. You even reported that CFOs see integrity as the most important leadership trait. That's why I was completely surprised that you would succumb to the "either you have it or you don't" view of teaching leaders how to act with integrity.

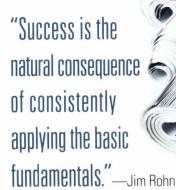
Leadership and organizational integrity are complex issues, but so are inclusiveness and emotional intelligence. And yet, we don't see articles saying that those important competencies can't be taught.

My 20-year experience teaching leaders about the importance of integrity has revealed that most leaders understand basic concepts of honesty, ethics, and integrity, and most want to do what is right. Leaders can learn

- how to make better decisions that balance the dilemmas presented by multiple constituents with differing goals and values
- how to effectively communicate with customers, colleagues, and bosses who don't share their views about what is right in a given situation
- how to communicate with direct reports with appropriate levels of information and in a way that earns and sustains credibility and trust
- how to be more consistent with personal and organizational values
- how to create organizational integrity in products, services, and relationships.
 Integrity is about more than ethics, and it can be taught and reinforced through case studies, simulations, and cognitive strategies that are reinforced with individual coaching.

Leadership development to address integrity is challenging to sell and deliver. No one likes to admit that they don't operate with integrity. Training and development professionals must accept the challenge, however. We can't just identify this as an important topic and fail to address it with proactive learning solutions.





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