



Intellectual Honesty - *The Relationship Builder*



*"I'm afraid I can't treat you, Mr. Fisk.
I have a conflict of interest."*

This topic was suggested by one of my clients who is a senior VP. (A note therefore to all of you – I welcome suggestions for newsletter topics – just email me your ideas, please!)

This client shared with me **how often the lack of intellectual honesty damages the relationships among leaders and team members and does harm to the organization as well.**

So what is intellectual honesty? Based on the conversation I had with this client, it's a whole host of things. Here are some to consider:

1. It's doing what you say you'll do.

When you say you'll do something, others take that as a commitment and they may be relying on your commitment for very critical issues. In health care, for example, your commitment can literally mean the difference between life and death. I don't mean to be terribly dramatic here, but in a health care organization, for example, that can definitely be the case. Others make commitments to clients, to bosses, to customers and other team members within the organization based on expecting you to live up to your commitment to them. If you don't do what you say you'll do, the chain reaction can be a long line of dominoes no longer standing. How



Telling the truth and
making someone cry is
better than



telling a lie and making
someone smile

I read this and thought,
wow, I'll bet this will be
hard for a lot of people to
swallow.

So here's the thing... I've
made people cry and
people have made me cry.
It hurt at the time, but it
was temporary. As a
result, I grew; I became a
better person; I was less
hurtful to others because I
learned ways I wasn't
paying attention to others'
needs; I learned ways I
came across that I didn't
know; I became more self-
aware.

As a result of making
others cry temporarily,
learning took place,
awareness was created,
wisdom resulted and
performance improved.
On both sides of this
equation, anger if there
was any was temporary
and the tears were
temporary, but the
relationship was in every
case stronger, deeper and
more permanent. I have

angry will others be with you then? If you find you can't deliver, let people know as soon as you realize it and work with them to help find a solution or a fix since you can't deliver what you promised.

2. It's being honest when you don't agree.

When you don't think something is wise or a good idea, be tactful and share your perspective respectfully. If you choose, instead, to be a people-pleaser by telling people what they want to hear, you may become known as a yes-person bobble-head – not especially a career-builder. People admire those with the courage to say what others are thinking but are sometimes too afraid to say, particularly if you do it in the right way. Acknowledge the positive aspects, then share your reservations with the word “and” rather than “but”. The word “but” negates everything you said before it, however, “and” is inclusive and gives equal value to what you say before and after the word. Here's an example: “Yes, that sounds like a great idea, but here are the obstacles I see.” OR “Yes, that sounds like a great idea, and here are some obstacles we many need to plan for before moving ahead.” People will ultimately respect you more for your honesty and you'll become the go-to person when they really want honest feedback.

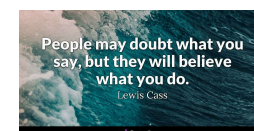
3. It's being ethical.

There are conflicts of interest that can arise in both the world of work and our personal lives. Ethics involves recognizing the conflict and not being a party to the conflict of interest. It usually means removing yourself from the situation. Sometimes, there may be alternative ways to remove the conflict. It means not serving on a board for an organization to which you're selling a product. It means not spending money that others are not aware of when there are no checks and balances in place. It means not taking kick-backs. You might need to back away from a particular client or job and hand it off to a colleague where you have a personal interest at stake that could conflict with your role. Even if you don't misuse your authority or position, people can mistakenly think you did because they either knew of, or later discovered, your conflict of interest.

4. It means balancing the advice I give to promote yourself and your accomplishments, with giving credit where credit is due.

In my speaking engagements, I talk about ways to build your career and make yourself promotable. I

friends, who at the time were only colleagues, but today are lifetime friends as a result of our truth with each other and the trust we didn't know we were building back when we were “just colleagues”.



A number of years ago, a participant in one of my workshops gave me this quote:

**Say what you mean.
Mean what you say.
Don't be mean when you say it!**

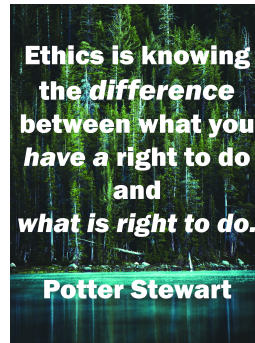
talk about the need to let others know the ways in which you contribute and your successes. If you don't tell people what you've done and the success you have brought to your organization, others often won't hear it from anybody else either. I recently worked with a client who was interviewing for a job. As I role-played with her, she consistently used the term "we". While it is important to recognize the team, in this situation, if she did not use "I" then the interviewer would be unable to differentiate her contribution from that of the team as a whole. The interviewer needs to know what she is individually capable of. So, it is important at times to identify your singular contributions, even within the team. However, if you take credit for things you did in concert with others or worse, for things that were actually others' ideas, you may become known as someone who is willing to step on others to move up the ladder. Once you're up there, you may then find little support from subordinates or peers who have a negative impression of how you got there.

Be recognized for elevating and giving credit to others and it will bring you recognition for doing just that.

5. It means being truthful.

Being truthful, even if it might slow things down or mean less profit, is the ethical thing to do. Once you have lied to someone and they find out, they will never look at you the same way and you may never regain their trust. Being ethical may mean short-term losses, but, in my experience, the long-term gains outweigh any short-term losses and I don't personally know anyone who regrets keeping their integrity in-tact. Be the person others know they can trust.

Let's be honest about lying. Everyone is tempted to lie at one time or another. There are people who will lie right to your face. It is important to acknowledge this reality, lest you be naive, but while you need to have an awareness that everyone is not always truthful, you do not have to accept it from others. To lie or condone lying certainly flies in the face of intellectual honesty. Some may say, "Well, everybody lies". First of all, everybody **does not** lie. Second, lying is **not** "OK". It's hurtful and damaging in a multitude of ways, to individuals, to organizations and to our society. So let's just wipe out the small voice that may be saying, "it's ok; everybody does it."



"It takes 20 years
to build a reputation
and
five minutes to ruin it.
If you think about
that, you'll do things
differently. "

Warren Buffett



Upcoming Newsletters

February

Compare Yourself To
Others or Not?

March

The Secret to
Recognition as a Leader

April

Making the Mental Shift
from Subject Matter
Expert to Manager

6. It builds relationships!

When you are struggling with a decision, and you need a confidant to talk to who will be brutally honest with you, who are you going to go to? Will you go to the person who usually tells others what they want to hear because they're always afraid of hurting someone's feelings or the person who has been willing, in the past, to tell you and others stuff you needed to hear to grow or move forward, even if it was hard for you or others to hear. We build relationships with people when they know they can trust us, with our words, with our commitments and by being ethical and balancing self-interest with the interest of others.

Be the intellectually honest, ethical person and the relationships you build will be lifetime relationships and ones that will serve you well, both personally and professionally. These issues are all delicate and sometimes multi-faceted. If you disagree with something I've said, please reach out to me. I'm happy to discuss it with you. When you're struggling to know what is right and what is ethical, here are some tips. If it's keeping you awake at night, you might not be headed in the right direction. Also, wise people who are too close to the situation, often seek the counsel of other wise people for an objective perspective.

Be open, Be honest, Build growth,



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