

## Workplace Integrity

Written by Steve Marr  
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Integrity is the cornerstone of every thriving business--and the hallmark of every successful employee. If you want your career and your business to flourish, build on a foundation of honesty, dependability, and trust. I think that every Christian would agree that being truthful, consistent, and trustworthy is fundamental to godly obedience, but the workplace is often the crucible where these principles are put to the test. The bottom-line question is this: When the heat is on, will you honor your word?

Effective businesses establish a three-way contract of trust, where customers can have confidence in the company's products and services, employees know what to expect on the job, and management can be confident that the staff will deliver on its promises and commitments. Trust is built upon promises made and kept, and it is preserved by forthright and honest communication.

When trust has been established, it becomes the basis on which people are able to work together effectively. By the same token, when trust is squandered or lost, effective working relationships are destroyed. Just like in a marriage, once trust has been compromised, it is very difficult and time-consuming to reconstruct.

Integrity includes doing what we say we will do--honoring commitments--every time. A store that advertises The Lowest Price in Town! will quickly lose credibility if their claim is found to be untrue. Likewise, if we guarantee delivery on a product within 48 hours, but it takes a week for the customer to receive the shipment, our promises soon lose their value. Unfortunately, it doesn't take much to undermine confidence in the entire organization if, as individuals, we fail to honor our pledges. As Moses instructed the people, "When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said" (Numbers 30:2 NIV).

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The same principle of honoring commitments applies to our responsibility as employers and employees. If we promise our boss that a report will be turned in on Monday, but the deadline slides on by, we lose credibility and create an element of doubt about our integrity. We become what the apostle Paul calls "mere talkers." Similarly, when management fails to follow through on a promise to add more staff to assist with increased business, employee confidence and morale inevitably suffers. We'd all be better off not making promises than to make vows that we cannot or do not keep.

Integrity also involves accepting responsibility for our actions and standing behind our results. As a wise baseball manager once said, "Excuses don't win ballgames." If you make a mistake, offer your boss or your customer an apology instead of a long story, and then work to make the situation right. Readily admitting our shortcomings, and then changing our future behavior, is important for establishing and maintaining trust. "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Proverbs 28:13 NIV).

Two keys for maintaining integrity are to think before you act or speak, and to count the cost of all commitments *\*before\** you pledge yourself. When your customer makes a request and asks for a commitment, first make sure that you understand the requirements and expectations. Take time to clarify specifications and repeat back what you have heard. Faulty assumptions are often the basis for a loss of trust in business relationships. Next, evaluate your schedule, being honest about any conflicts or complications, and only accept the assignment if you can deliver the expected results. Once you have determined your response, follow Jesus' admonition and "simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes, and your 'No,' 'No'" (Matthew 5:37 NIV). Although saying no might be difficult, honest answers are essential for building trust. It is better to lose an *\*order\** today, than to lose a *\*customer\** forever.

"Kings take pleasure in honest lips- they value a man who speaks the truth" (Proverbs 16:13 NIV). What's true of kings is true of customers as well. People appreciate an honest deal, and they will keep coming back for more. Working with integrity is a "value-building" strategy for individuals and businesses alike. The best way to establish job security is to be known as the "go to" guy, the one person who follows through every time. When your boss can depend on you to fulfill your responsibilities consistently, you become more valuable to the organization--and ultimately more promotable. Likewise, every great company, regardless of industry, anchors its reputation and its success in honest dealings, consistent effort, and diligent

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follow-through. Businesses that succeed in establishing trust and integrity inevitably succeed in the marketplace as well.

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