

# VOL

# Voice of Leadership

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## Madiba: What Manner of Character!

By Assegid Habtewold

Jailed for more than 27 years under an oppressive regime, the extraordinary story of Nelson Mandela represents persistence, hope, character, and triumph. Outlasting Apartheid, he witnessed its demise, and most importantly became the leader who made the transition from minority rule to democracy possible and smooth. Mandela left an indelible mark in the history of humanity on how one man's determination and selfless act of courage against evil can change the world.

Mandela is not just a hero to South Africans; he is also a symbol of freedom around the world.

Many institutions awarded Mandela for his extraordinary leadership including the 1993 Noble Peace Prize. President Obama, in his Forward to "Conversation with myself", praised Mandela. Obama wrote, "He has done so much to change his country, and the world, that it is hard to imagine the history of the last several decades without him."



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Right now, Mandela is a 95-year-old veteran leader fighting for his life. South Africans and the whole world are struggling to accept the inevitable, that is, Mandela too is mortal. While he is awaiting his departure, in honor of Madiba, this quarter's VOL editorial features one of this great leader's virtues- Character.

The global recognition Mandela has been receiving isn't just because he was at the front in the fight against Apartheid. In his own words, there were many who sacrificed more than he did including those who died while fighting injustice. Being imprisoned for a very long period of time isn't also the reason for his celebrity status. There are many other prisoners of conscience who spent decades and died in prison. Mandela is passionate and charismatic but that isn't the main reason for his iconic status. John Maxwell said, "It's true

that charisma can make a person stand out for a moment, but character sets a person apart for a lifetime." Mandela has been celebrated and held high as a hero because of his character strength.

Mandela's character was shaped while he was in jail and as he fought injustice. In his autobiography "Long walk to freedom", he wrote, "Character was measured by facing up to difficult situations and that a hero was a man who would not break even under the most trying circumstances" (p. 456). The kinds of oppression, intimidation, and persecution he had passed through both within and outside of prison, rather than breaking him, they molded his character. Jail is a best place to complain and resent. It wasn't the case with Madiba. He came out stronger,

## Madiba: What Manner of Character Cont...

calmer, patient, forgiving, serving, and loving.

Though Mandela is recognized for his strong character, he insisted, "I am not a saint, unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying." He is right. Character isn't about sainthood or perfection. No one is perfect, and if we are looking for perfect leaders, there are none.

The parameters to measure someone's character strength are subjective. And there are numerous character traits. Allow me to use love, integrity, loyalty, and humility to assess Mandel's character.

Love to his family, country, its people, and most importantly toward children are the marks of Mandela. Madiba also loved the leaders of Apartheid (and its supporters), who destroyed his family and adulthood. Rather than despising and seeking revenge against those who tormented, and kept him on an abandoned island for more than 27 years, he chose to forgive, love, and negotiate with his enemies. Not only that, he challenged South Africans to forgive: "If there are dreams about a beautiful South Africa, there are also roads that lead to their goal. Two of these roads could be named Goodness and Forgiveness."

Integrity is about walking the talk and delivering what we promise. Mandela is known to his integrity, a man who kept his words even while in jail. That was why the Apartheid leaders decided to work with him. Against the interest and will of his party and South Africans, Mandela served as President just for one term because he promised to do so.

He was loyal both to Winnie, his comrades, and ANC. When the Apartheid regime lured him to negotiate with him individually, he refused. He only intervened to bring the two parties together for a talk.

Oprah Winfrey interviewed Mandela in 2000. She confessed that he is the most humble person she ever met. In that interview he said, "Humility is one of the most important qualities which you must have because if you are humble, if you make people realize that you're not threat to them and then people will embrace

you. They will listen to you."

Mandela has many more character attributes but we don't have space to discuss them all. I conclude my narration about Madiba's character by quoting the Secretary-General of UN: "Nelson Mandela is a living embodiment of the highest values of the United Nations. He is an exemplary global citizen."

What do you learn from Mandel's story? If your desire is to become a change agent, and leave a legacy, you need character in leadership. But character development is a lifetime process. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Character building begins in our infancy and continues till death". Wherever you're in this spectrum, consciously and strategically work on your character. For example, Benjamin Franklin shared in his autobiography on how he first assessed his character, selected some important character traits, came up with an action plan, and measured his progress on a consistent basis for decades.

Similarly, organizations should not wait until they find themselves in trouble because of the lack of character of some of their leaders. They should enforce some key character traits, empower, and help their leaders develop certain character traits. When they hire and promote leaders, they should take character into consideration. They should also put in place incentives to encourage those who embrace and practice, and penalties of one kind or another to enforce these traits.

In this Issue, we have excellent writers and interviewees who will help us understand the significance of character in leadership, the character traits necessary to succeed in our leadership, steps and measures we should take to develop and upgrade our character...

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Dr. Assegid Habtewold is the Founder of PRO Leadership. He is a Coach, Consultant, Trainer, & Speaker at Success Pathways. This article is an excerpt from his coming book: "The 9 Cardinal Building Blocks for Continued Success in Leadership." To learn more about Assegid, visit [www.successpws.com](http://www.successpws.com)

## Be a PRO

One of the opportunities we would like to offer to our Supporters (PROs) is the opportunity to join one of our PROs Clubs. We pledge to provide empowering atmosphere that enables PROs to grow in their leadership. The Clubs also play a significant role in advancing our tax-exempt mission, and expanding our reach and support base. Forming your own PROs Club is very easy: meet the requirements of PROs Clubs Charter. Through out the process of forming, growing, and nurturing your Club, you have the guidance and support of our Supporters Care Office. You can establish a PROs Club with a minimum of 7 people. You can give your Club a unique name, and decide whether it should be open or close. You can also decide many other aspects of your club such as the frequency and timing of your meetings...

At this juncture, [we are finalizing the launch of the first two PROs Clubs in MD, VA, and another one in DC in the near future.](#) If you live in the metro area and would like to join these Clubs, there may be a few slots available that please contact us. We want our Clubs size to be smaller because every PRO should get enough opportunities to be part of each monthly (or once per two months) meeting. The tentative dates to launch the Clubs in VA and MD are on November 30, and December 07 2013, respectively. There will be door prize. We have limited openings for those of you who would like to join these first two clubs. You may contact [Drs. Paulos Balcha \(202-230-7304\)](#) or [Assegid Habtewold \(703-895-4551\)](#) to check if there're more slots and also learn the time and place. If you're in VA, you may contact [Zebiba Jibreel \(240-604-0065\)](#) or [Kassegne Habtamu \(919-271-8166\).](#)

**For detail, visit this page:** <http://www.proleadership.org/?p=453>

## Interview with Dr. Daryl Green



**PRO Leadership:** What is character? How is it different from other similar terms?

**Daryl:** The bottom line is that character counts in every aspect of our lives. Eleanor Roosevelt put a premium on personal traits: "Only a man's character is the real criterion of worth." From my perspective, character speaks to the value system of each individual. There are many synonyms to this word such as personality, disposition, temperament, and mental makeup. There may be some different distinctions to each of these synonyms. As a practical matter, however, character involves how we live morally.

**PRO Leadership:** Is character relevant in leadership like other leadership attributes such as communication, teamwork, and so on? If relevant, how much relevant compared to other leadership traits?

**Daryl:** Character is very relevant in leadership like other attributes. However, I would say that there are different attributes of leadership that are all necessary for effective leadership. For example, a leader with a poor character has a little chance to transform an organization, but a character driven leader

with poor communication skills will find it equally difficult to transform his organization.

**PRO Leadership:** In your opinion, is character a dealmaker or breaker in leadership?

**Daryl:** That's an interesting question! I would suggest that character is both a deal maker and deal breaker in leadership. Most people follow a leader because they have a great deal of respect of him or her. This speaks to character. James Kouzes and Barry Posner, authors of *Credibility*, explain that most individuals admire leaders who are honest, inspiring, and competent: "Credibility is about how leaders earn the trust and confidence of their constituents." What I can confidently say is that character plays a vital part of any decision making.

**PRO Leadership:** There are two schools of thoughts. There are leaders who believe that character is private while there are those who believe that character is more than a private issue? What are your thoughts on this thread?

**Daryl:** I am from the school of thought that character is more than a private issue. As we watch business leaders and political leaders self-destruct before our eyes due to scandals, we realize that character shows up at all levels. Several years ago, I was shopping for a new health club. In one health club, I met an associate manager. He discussed my membership options. I wanted a non-contract membership. The associate manager provided me with another deal with great price (off of the official record). I turned it down and left. Later, I went back and met with the senior manager. I eventually joined this club. However, I found out later that this senior manager had purposely used the wrong security number in my contract. Was this for my own good? The manager thought he was helping his members, but he was also setting a bad example

for his employees. Therefore, deals are often made or broken due to character attributes.

**PRO Leadership:** What are the most important character traits that are critical for the success of a leader? And why are they important than other character traits?

**Daryl:** Good leadership traits are like the human body; people need all the organs in the body to exist. Therefore, arguing the brain is more important than heart is a pointless discussion. You need them all. In the race for more profitability and in the face of extraordinary competition, some managers believe that you can act unethical because the end supports the means. For me, personal integrity would be at the top of my list for important character traits. Integrity will carry a leader far in an organization because his or her followers see that the leader has a moral compass.

**PRO Leadership:** Do you have some exemplary leaders whose characters you admire? Can you also give us some leaders whose character flaw affected their and their organization's/nation's reputation?

**Daryl:** In my professional life, I have had a number of good managers. However, I have only had a few great leaders in my life. While most managers are often self-serving, the best leaders are really concerned about their people. Exemplary leadership began with my parents, Annette and Edward Elias. It followed with local friends in my Shreveport community. These folks made an impact because they were readily accessible to me. There are many others, including Jesus Christ. Servant leadership is a good component of good leaders. In the Bible, Jesus Christ explains to his disciples, "...the greatest among you should be like the youngest and the one who rules like the one who serves..." In terms of some leaders with character flaws, an individual would

## Interview with Dr. Daryl Green Cont...

simply need to review history with such leaders as Adolf Hitler, Enron executives, and several high profile government executives; their arrogances and pride destroyed them and their organizations around them.

**PRO Leadership:** What are some of the most important steps to develop character in leadership?

**Daryl:** Today's organizations need effective leaders. However, many organizations lose this necessity in their corporate strategy. Therefore, organizations need to make a deliberate action in developing leadership training, developmental opportunities, and mentorship for current and emerging leaders. Many companies are short-sighted because they feel they can save money by not investing in their people through training. This non-action is a mistake. In fact, most organizations won't be successful without good leadership. Yet, good leadership does not happen by accident.

**PRO Leadership:** What kind of steps and measures organizations can take

to help their leaders develop character?

**Daryl:** Many organizations do not discuss the character criteria for hiring. However, character does count. Some employees and their organizations are a bad match. Is it possible that there was no value alignment with the organization when they were hired? I would answer 'yes.' Sadly, many organizations don't care about individual values unless they become a noticeable problem. In fact, an organization may accept bad behavior from their high-performance managers as long as they produce. However, they place a heavy burden on lower ranking employees to carry the ethical cross. Today's employees expect managers to have a high degree of integrity and to "walk the talk." For me, organizations must set the examples of good character in the initial hiring process, followed by ongoing monitoring and training.

**PRO Leadership:** Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

**Daryl:** Today character is just as important as it has ever been. Riddled by scandals and self-interest initiatives,

business executives, government officials, and other individuals in power need to recalibrate their character mechanism. Sadly, many Americans are distrustful of their leadership. Cynicism has spread across our country. Consequently, many people feel that today's leaders lack character and will get ahead at any cost. A leader's credibility depends on the quality of the relationship maintained with followers. Although numerous organizations have extensive ethical standards and regulations, high standards of conduct cannot exist unless there is trust. Trust is earned. Therefore, leaders need to possess the necessary character so that followers will embrace their leadership.

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Dr. Daryl D. Green has done extensive research on cultural issues impacting today and future leaders. He has been noted and quoted in several media outlets including USA Today, Ebony Magazine, and Associated Press, His last book, Job Strategies for the 21st Century: How to Assist Today's College Students during Economic Turbulence, has been rated number one on Amazon.com. For more information, please visit: <http://www.darylgreen.org>

## Contribute

We sought feedbacks from our Leaders, Volunteers, and regular Contributors and decided to feature the following four themes at VOL for the year 2014:

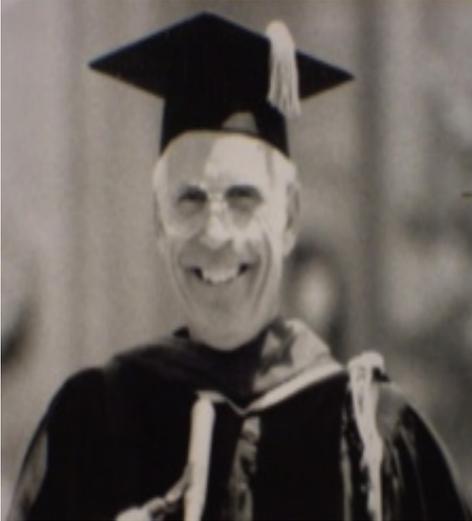
1. Leadership under Adversity, [Deadline January 22, 2014](#)
2. Visionary Leadership, [Deadline April 22, 2014](#)
3. The Place of Growth and Learning in Leadership, [Deadline July 22, 2014](#)
4. Leading Change, [Deadline October 22, 2014](#)

You can contribute:

- Article,
- Story/quote/anecdote,
- Tips for leaders &
- Get interviewed...

To learn more about VOL, visit the Magazine page @ [www.proleadership.org/?page\\_id=128](http://www.proleadership.org/?page_id=128)

## Character Drives Leadership



Character results from a mix of genetics, environment, upbringing and learning that instills in leadership the principles and the values they bring to decision making. Character is the combination of qualities that distinguishes one person from another. Character of a leader is the engine that drives that leader to success or failure. Very simply, good character prevents a leader from slipping into corruption, hypocrisy or self-serving behavior.

Leadership is the most important function of management, regardless of what is being managed. And the most important characteristic of successful leadership is moral leadership.

Those two points are fundamental to the truth that character drives leadership to either success or failure in business, in government, in education, in non-profit organizations and in life.

Why is there so much failure resulting from leadership lacking needed moral, ethical and character standards? The answer is that serious faults in character are often not apparent as individuals rise to higher responsibility. Positive aspects of character become known readily. The negative ones may lie dormant until the individual reaches a level of authority and decision making which is critical to organizational

success.

Moral character has been a subject of scholars since Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) and plays a role in the evolution of most philosophies. It gets priority emphasis in our Kepler Space Institute Space Philosophy described in Article 8 of the Journal of Space Philosophy, Fall 2012. That philosophy is composed of three necessary and sufficient components: 1) Reverence for life; 2) Ethical civilization; and 3) Policy Sciences to implement #s 1 and 2. ([www.keplerspaceuniversity.com](http://www.keplerspaceuniversity.com) click on JOURNAL, then Fall 2012, then article 8).

A specific current example of character driving leadership was summarized by the United States 43rd President, George W. Bush, at the dedication of his Library in Dallas, Texas, on 25 April 2013. His presidential decision-making had been described as based on those principles he felt very strongly were right for America. His address on 25 April 2013 focused on those principles which I summarize as:

- Leaders are defined by the principles they hold;
- Leadership requires vision and principles;
- Expand the reach of freedom for the sake of peace;
- Keep Americans safe;
- The murder of innocent people is evil;
- Create quality education;
- Overcome poverty and disease;
- Empower women;
- Stand behind uniformed service members;
- Belief that our country is brave and noble;
- The human condition matters to the United States
- America's best days lie ahead.

Benjamin Franklin, in his autobiography, describes the method he designed and practiced to make himself a morally perfect person. Putting his methodical, scientific mind to work he compiled a list

By Bob Krone

that, when implemented, would assure he would reach his desired goal. His list included 13 virtues: temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity and humility. Under each heading he included a resolve. Under Humility he wrote, "Imitate Jesus and Socrates." (p.85)

Franklin resolved to concentrate on each virtue for a week at a time, while maintaining the high moral ground he had already achieved. In his autobiography he tells how he created a small book in which he allotted a page for each of the thirteen virtues (p. 86). By his own admission, Franklin's scheme to achieve moral perfection failed. He confessed his efforts ended in "...a kind of foppery in morals..." (p. 91)

His failure to achieve moral perfection is not a surprise. A similar failure awaits the company or person that relies on manuals or policies to assure moral leadership among its employees. Moral values cannot be quantified, legislated nor achieved through discipline alone. Moral leaders are women and men who apply their inner values to every specific situation. Moral leaders are people who have formed within their minds a set of positive values that guide their personal behavior and their decisions.

Values and morals are developed through a long and complicated process. The influences that guide our moral development begin at birth and continue until death. Information, facts and training are not to be minimized in this process but of greater significance are the environment we grow up in and the leaders we choose to follow. This is not to say those who desire to be moral leaders are left without resource or example to guide them as they seek to understand moral leadership and how they themselves can be effective moral leaders. A most effective learning process is to study those whose lives exemplify moral leadership and how

## Character Drives Leadership Cont...

these people apply their values to real world situations and how they respond when life gets tough.

Above are two examples: Benjamin Franklin from the past and George Bush from today.

### Values Analysis is the key to understanding principles and character

But how is character discovered and defined? The answer is through values analysis. The values of an individual, group, community, or society are standards of desirability and evaluation which are largely independent of specific situations. You will find differing definitions for the term "Values" depending on the discipline.

I prefer the following simplified definition: *"Values are principles or things preferred."*

There is a distinction between

"Values" and "Value" that I have found useful to aid in understanding and communication. The word "Value" in business and management is most often used to mean the economic utility of a product or service. Used in this sense "value" means worth (usually in dollars) as compared with something else. This meaning is quite different from "Values" as understood to be a *set of principles or things preferred*.

Values are what humans want and feel to be the reason for existence. They are inextricably linked with beliefs, with justification for choices, life styles, professional commitments – and character.

### A Recommendation for Readers

Success happens for individuals put in leadership roles when their preparation meets opportunity. I suspect the majority of Readers for this Journal are in their 20s or 30s. Your most valuable preparation will flow from how your principles and values have formed your personal character.

Self-evaluation for character is not taught in schools. Few people do it well. If leadership is your goal you must realize that once you

have authority and responsibility your values and character will be powerful influences for your decision making. And your career successes will be linked to the wisdom of your decisions as perceived by others and as they impact your organization's future. Approaching each problem pragmatically is like a ship trying to navigate without a rudder. Take the time to answer for yourself: "What are my basic values and principles independent of particular situations?" When you are satisfied with your answers your leadership style will be established.

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Dr. Bob Krone is the Co-Founder and President of Kepler Space Institute, Inc.; the Editor-in-Chief of The Journal of Space Philosophy, Colonel, USAF (Retired); and Emeritus Professor of Systems Management at the University of Southern California (USC), Los Angeles, California, USA. His complete resume and curriculum Vita can be accessed at: [www.BobKrone.com/node/103](http://www.BobKrone.com/node/103)

## Character traits to look in both poor and good leaders

By Dr. R. Kenny Leblanc



Per Bennis, in Williams' 2006 book *Effective Management* "leaders are people that do the right thing," but what does that really mean? How do we know that a leader is doing the right thing? In today's environment of self-absorption and "me, me, me," followers must think about the direction their organization is going and about the character of the individual or individuals leading that organization. Just because someone is in a leadership position does not necessarily mean that he or she is a good leader, nor does it mean that that person should hold that position either. What we know is that leaders can have both negative and positive impacts on their teams. In other words, not all leaders are created equal. The problem is that many individuals do not have a clear path to recognizing good leaders from bad ones.

To begin, what is character? Character is defined as:

...The assemblage of qualities that distinguish one individual from another. *The traits and values that make up the character of a good business leader are, for the most part, similar to those that make up the character of an outstanding citizen* (Cooper, Santora, & Sarros, 2007).

Good or bad behaviors are indicative of an individual's character. The Josephson Institute (2013), a Center for Youth Ethics, lists Six Pillars of good Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship. We can easily say that it is impossible for human beings to be all those things all

## Character traits to look in both poor and good leaders Cont...

the time, but I can also say that it is possible to conduct your life based on your best effort to become those things guided by the morals and values that you believe. Being the best possible person at all times comes into play because in our daily lives, we tend to encounter individuals of weak or bad character. They tend to be those who might do what is right, but only when they think they can benefit or because there are good chances of being caught, and they wish to avoid any associated consequences or punishment.

Researchers believe that character develops over time, although they do not know how much and how early an individual's character develops. One can claim that character does not change quickly and that a person's observable behavior is an indication of his or her character. For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to remember that the reputation of an organization is based on its culture, which is the organization's equivalent of a person's character; thus, it needs to be modeled after good and ethical qualities because the culture the leader establishes is what employees follow. Good character is not a state of being; it is doing what has been stated. Good character is about being an individual whom others can trust, believe in, and follow.

There are a variety of diagnostic tests, and assessments that offer insights into leadership ability, or lack thereof. Unfortunately, they are not easy to decipher, nor can they be accomplished on site (Cooper, Santora, & Sarros, 2007); thus, they are not very effective due to their analytical, theoretical, and very often biased processes. One quick example is from an article in Forbes magazine by Mike Wyatt (2012) titled, "15 Ways to Identify Bad Leaders." He states that "...if you really want to determine someone's leadership prowess, give them some

responsibility and see what they do with it." But when was the last time employees were able to give leaders responsibilities and wait to see how they performed? With the recent financial debacles, foreclosures, layoffs, and an increase in business closings or downgrading, most employees are too busy doing more with less and hoping the economic pain does not hit them.

Research has shown that extrinsic rewards such as money and compensation are not the only drivers of employees to leave an organization. Two of the main drivers are work environment and character of leadership. Although there are a number of assigned leaders (leaders who were hired externally for a group, not promoted within), some have excelled due to the right combination of skills, training and work environment; others have failed but appeared confident and smug, while internally knowing they are not the best of leaders and that their employees can do better elsewhere. They also believe that the state of the economy will keep their employees from complaining or leaving (Bowes, 2013; Leviticus, 2013). However, employees' disengagement and exit from an organization do not occur overnight; disconnecting tends to be a process that takes months and even years, because employees are always hoping that the situation will be remedied while in reality, the work environment continues to deteriorate until it has become too uncomfortable to stay.

John Hollon of HR News & Trends, Leadership, wrote an article on May 13, 2013, discussing leadership qualities that good leaders should avoid. On his list were judgmental, non-verbal body language; interrupting and interrogating; and being inconsistent. Jill Leviticus (2013) of Demand Media adds: lack of communication, micromanagement, unclear expectations, intimidation, and poor people skills to her list of characteristics of a poor leaders. On the flip side, Kouzes and Posner (2003) researched the relationship between

leaders and followers and found that followers want "leaders who are honest, forward-looking, competent and inspiring"; in other words, they are more influenced by an individual's personal credibility as it is the foundation of leadership. Thus, every person on a team has to make a conscious decision to be a part of that team and be committed to the team's well being and continued growth. Teams frequently have complex dynamics that members need to be aware of from the beginning; thus, it is useful for everyone to delve into his or her own personal character, the character of other team members, and certainly those of their leaders.

I hope that this discussion has provided an idea of what to look for in both poor and good leaders, based on their character, so that followers can have an idea of where and what to look for in dysfunctional teams and then choose to act as they see fit for the situation at hand. I advise all team members to analyze their teams and their leaders and, if possible, try to advise upper leadership in instituting measures or early control in order to prevent bad leadership from wreaking havoc on the employees and the organization. Hopefully, there are communication frameworks and channels in place that will enable employees to address concerns, if and when they do occur.

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Dr. R. Kenny Leblanc, a professor of Communication, Speech and Public Speaking working in the South Florida area. Dr. Leblanc has over 15 years of practice/professional experience in both academia and organizational settings. Her primary areas of research are in strategic planning/foresight and leadership development. Dr. Leblanc, is also the President and Co-founder of Institut Technique Libre, a leadership based foundation in Haiti, launched to development and train professionals and executives.

## Interview with Sharon Green



**PRO Leadership:** What is character and what is not character? How is it different from other similar terms?

**Sharon:** Character is who you are when no one is looking. It is a reflection of a person's heart apart from all of the other external factors of life. Character is what guides your actions, and is ultimately responsible for the results that are seen. It is your true defining self, the sum total of your individual characteristics. Unlike other similar traits, character is revealed from the inside out. Character is not WHAT you do, it's WHAT you are. While reputation is WHAT you are as thought by others.

**PRO Leadership:** Is character relevant in leadership like other leadership attributes such as communication, teamwork, and so on? If relevant, how much relevant compared to other leadership traits?

**Sharon:** My Mentor, John C. Maxwell says that there is nothing more important than the leadership quality of character. Most other leadership attributes relate to a Leader's interaction with others; however, character is a attribute that is related

solely to the person of the Leader. Anything the Leader does, the followers will do in excess; good and bad.

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**PRO Leadership:** In your opinion, is character a dealmaker or breaker in leadership?

**Sharon:** Character is a deal breaker. History consistently reveals how a flawed character eventually renders a Leader ineffective. The Representative can only last for so long, while the Truth always manifest itself in actions, words, or deeds.

**PRO Leadership:** There are two schools of thoughts. There are leaders who believe that character is private while there are those who believe that character is more than a private issue? What are your thoughts on this thread?

**Sharon:** In my opinion, character is definitely not a private matter. People with flawed character traits are flawed in other areas as well. Leaders have others counting on their leadership to produce the right results; therefore, it's an injustice to live a life of a lie when other lives are counting on the truth to make them free (John 8:32). Followers do not have to be made aware of all, but that

which is revealed must be a reflection of the sum total of a person.

**PRO Leadership:** What are the most important character traits that are critical for the success of a leader? And why are they important than other countless character traits?

**Sharon:** Well since I wrote a book about twelve Leadership traits that Great Leaders possess, I'll just start there and name a few. My number one choice is FAITH. Great leaders know how to paint a picture that doesn't exist but makes it clearly visible to his/her followers as if it were their own original thought. DISCIPLINE: Self-discipline presents an atmosphere saturated with confidence, decency and order. INFLUENCE: This quality is the core of leadership and reflects a leaders ability to lead others toward Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) goals that are a reflection of the Leader's vision and mission. My forth choice was Character; however, when I update my book, I plan to add HUMILITY - Strength under control. These character traits are vital to leadership because it's the leaders example that navigates the course. In other words, if the head is out of order the body will soon be off track and/or die.

**PRO Leadership:** Do you have some exemplary leaders whose characters you admire? Can you also give us some leaders whose character flaw affected their and their organization's/nation's reputation?

**Sharon:** My Pastor, Michael Freeman, Spirit of Faith Christian Center, Temple Hills, MD, is an exceptional Leader, who sets the example of righteous and holy living, while fully engaged in his assignment to lead the people of God. Pastor Mike walks by faith, and is always honest and open with the congregation, presenting ANY topic with excellence and integrity. He has a genuine heart for the people that is reflected in and out of the pulpit, and in the fruit-filled lives of his family and the Partners. Another exemplary Leader that I admire is my

## Interview with Sharon Cont...

mentor, John C. Maxwell. As a member of the John Maxwell Mentorship Team, I'm blessed to see another well-liked man of integrity and excellence up-close and in person. John, is a humble man who always esteems others better than himself (Philippians 2:3); yet reflecting a position of leadership that is worthy of honor. He too lives what he teaches and encourages others to do the same.

Opposed to the great qualities of these two exceptional men, I've seen one too many military officer's career come to an end due to personal decisions in and outside of the workplace. The military is less forgiving as lives are at stake.

**PRO Leadership:** What are some of the most important steps to develop character in leadership?

**Sharon:** The most important step to developing character in leadership is to "GET YOU OFF OF YOUR MIND." Believe in yourself and remain engaged in technical, personal and relational training. Great Leaders are learners. Develop mental toughness, able to lead above the opinions of others, knowing that your decisions impact others. Always lead with integrity and excellence, being mentored by another mature Leader. If you're always the smartest person in the room, you become the lid over your organization.

**PRO Leadership:** What kind of measures or approaches organizations can take to help their leaders develop character?

**Sharon:** Subordinate Leaders must have an example to follow, and they must be held accountable to maintaining exceptional character traits as well. Organizations should have a growth plan for its leaders, even if it's nothing more than a quarterly roundtable that facilitates conversation to meet the needs for future Leader development opportunities. Mandatory reading is always a great way to ensure that leaders are developing the right characteristics

within the organization. I personally, like leadership retreats. Retreats are a wonderful opportunity to change the environment, breaking down the barriers and honoring those who honor you. In this type of environment, I've experienced subordinates who open up to receive vision and are motivated to follow through with greater clarity upon returning to the workplace.

**PRO Leadership:** Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

**Sharon:** I've always found, who you are, to be more important than what you do. It's not only a lifestyle that I've reflected in industry, but it's the same principle that I use in my personal affairs. There is a real unseen law in the land: "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest..." Genesis 8:22)

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Sharon D. Green is a service disabled Veteran, now Entrepreneur, Author, Minister, and John Maxwell certified Coach, Teacher, and Speaker. She is a Leadership expert, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Alethes Consulting Group, providing leadership, team building and personal growth consulting.

Sharon has led Service Members and Civilians in financial management-related positions throughout the world for over 23 years. Her efforts have resulted in numerous military awards and decorations.

She is a graduate of Howard University where she earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Accounting, and a Master of Science in Business Administration degree from Boston University.

### Workshop

YEP- Young Ethiopian Professionals requested PRO Leadership to provide a train to its leaders and volunteers on some leadership development topics. Accordingly, on October 26 2013, PRO Leadership's volunteers facilitated a workshop on four themes at the library of Arlington: Who is the leader and what is leadership, Visioning, Communication, and Teambuilding.

To read the full report, check out this link: <http://www.proleadership.org/?p=442>

"Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing."

Abraham Lincoln

"Most people say that it is the intellect which makes a great scientist. They are wrong: it is character."

Albert Einstein

## Does Character Move Your Idea Forward?

By Sylvia Henderson



Rate yourself on all these statements honestly. Go ahead; no one else needs to know how you rate yourself.

1. I always meet my commitments and obligations.

YES - NO - SOMETIMES

2. When I use an idea I garnered from someone else – be it a quotation, article, song, book, picture, or other intellectual property – I acknowledge the source and contact the source to ask permission to use their material and let them know how I'll use it.

YES - NO - SOMETIMES

3. I report my financial activity correctly and honestly for my tax obligations.

YES - NO - SOMETIMES

4. I walk by paper on the floor without picking it up, and leave chairs askew when I leave a meeting.

YES - NO - SOMETIMES

5. I take more than one sampler at food stores, big-box stores, and conference expo tables when there's no one to watch what I do, even though the signs say "Please take one item".

YES - NO - SOMETIMES

6. I take a few minutes longer than I should when I'm on a break, knowing there is an unpleasant phone call or communication waiting for me when I return.

YES - NO - SOMETIMES

How did you do? Did you rate yourself on all six statements? Even the act of doing so says something about your character.

You see, I equate "character" with "integrity". Go to Dictionary.com and search for the word...you'll find 20+ entries! My own take is that character represents what you do when no one is watching you, and not publicizing that you've done it. You just do something because it's the right thing to do in your mind. These values extend to your very core. Character is what you have when you do as Michael Jackson, the late entertainer, says by "talking with the [wo]man in the mirror" and liking the conversation as it reflects the "you" inside.

So how does character relate to implementing ideas? And does having a strong, ethical character (as defined in our general society as well as in the dictionary) help you move yourself and your people forward with your ideas?

Let's go back to the opening statements. Consider that as a leader "of character" (as opposed to a leader of a "bunch of characters"), you are a role model and teacher to the characters you lead. Sidebar: if you caught the nuances of the three uses of the word "character", you get an extra 100 points!

If you always – and "always" is the operative word here – meet your commitments and obligations, which includes letting someone know that you cannot do so within an adequate timeframe so that they can revert to their Plan B, then you can be trusted and depended upon to achieve results. You achieve results when you implement ideas. When you are in action

implementing your own ideas, or leading others to their idea successes, you commit to help others, refer people to each other, and follow-up with to-dos, deadlines, and milestones. You ensure and assure that ideas become reality.

When you acknowledge others for their ideas, the people you lead feel safe and secure in sharing with you knowing you're not going to steal their ideas or pass them on to someone else. They may even hope that you'll recognize them.

If you report your financial affairs truthfully and honestly to meet your tax obligations, even when you end up owing money to a government you may or may not have positive feelings toward, you do so because you feel it is the right thing to do. You exude honesty and trustworthy vibes when your core values include such characteristics. I'm not a touchy-feely feel-my-vibrations person, yet what I do know is that we sense something about each other when we meet and interact with each other. That "something" we sense is a vibe or aura reflecting our core values; we convey who we really are whether we know it or not. When you lead, your followers catch your vibes and your effectiveness with moving them forward professionally and personally is in part a result of how they perceive your vibes. You can study the greatest leadership theories and learn leadership skills all your life, yet how you come across and what people feel from you overrides what you say and quite often, what you do – especially if your actions are incongruent with the vibe they feel from you.

At the risk of getting too metaphysical, let's return one last time to the opening statements and how they relate to leading and implementing ideas.

No one will know that you picked that paper off the floor and deposited it in

the trash can if they did not see you do so. No one will know that you took more than one item if they're not there to observe your actions. And the person at the other end of the difficult communication will have no idea that you took longer to get to them than you could have taken. Yet guess who will know? You. Ask yourself whether you are comfortable with your values that allow you to do those small, seemingly insignificant actions.

I know I do. I can answer "sometimes" to many of those statements, and each time I do I have a conversation with that woman in the mirror. I ask myself, "What I just did (or did not do)...does that reflect who I really am? And if so, what right do I have to ask others to follow me if I don't self-correct, self-reflect, and self-connect

with my core values?"

When we're seeking clarity about, bringing structure to, developing strategies for, and taking action on our ideas, we're leading – and following – the people we need to support our ideas and ourselves. We're moving others to do the same so that their ideas see the light of day. What, and how strong, is your character; moral or ethical quality (dictionary definition #3); your qualities of honesty, courage, or the like... integrity (#4); your reputation (#5); that gives you the right to be that leader and have people count on you to help them realize their idea successes?

Be that leader of ideas!

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Sylvia Henderson, Implementation Strategist, helps individuals and teams get out of their heads and into action with their ideas, for profit and purpose. Clients call her the "Clarity Queen of Ideas". Using her design thinking process called IMPACT©, Sylvia helps you get clear about, develop strategies for, take action on, and be accountable to your ideas. Sylvia is the author of multiple books including "Hey, That's My Idea!", and hosts a cable TV program on implementing ideas. Turn your dreams into dollars, concepts into cash, and ideas into impact with Sylvia's expertise & experience to guide and encourage you.

## A Retirement Party Reveals Character in Leadership

By Steven Honegger



Ah, the elusive search for character in leadership. There are so many ways to look at it, define it, or even...search for it. Why look so hard? I found it in the words expressed by those attending a retirement party of a great, if not too well-known leader. I found it in these from-the-heart insights into real leadership character.

If you search for character in leadership, you may find leaders with strong character. They have a clear vision and strive relentlessly to "get things done", sometimes at all costs. Some of these leaders are groundbreakers and innovators in their industry, and successful leaders of corporations. Sometimes, strong leaders are wanted criminals or are now inmates in our prison systems. Strength is an important part of character for leaders, but it's not enough.

Searching for character in leadership, you may find those who talk about leaders with "good character". What does that mean? Such a subjective term as "good" prompts a plethora of books, articles and webpages defining "good character" in leadership. Why look so hard?

*Waste no more time arguing what a good man should be. Be one. — Marcus Aurelius*

Maybe in those volumes of works and internet searches, you will find what you believe is character in leadership. Maybe

it will be revealed to you in other ways.

I think the modern version of this Marcus Aurelius quote should be:

***Waste no more time arguing what a leader of good character should be. You'll know one when you see one. Now be one too!*** — Steven Honegger

A friend of mine finally decided to retire after years of telling everyone "I'm going to retire next year!" He was a highly regarded VP at his organization with a career spanning nearly two decades. He was a true leader, a strong leader, a good leader. I knew that from the moment I met him. But what made him a strong and good leader? What was his character? I thought I knew, but there was more to be revealed.

That reveal came at his retirement party. (Yes, he did go through with his retirement.) People from his past and present who know him, worked with him, and lived with him willing to say a few words, shared with us the puzzle of his character piece by piece.

The ultimate reveal that brought his character into crystal clear focus for us all was through the words of his son speaking candidly about what his dad taught him. He told of six beliefs his father shared with him that he wanted to pass on to us. I realized after his speech that woven into these six kernels of a lifetime of leadership, was the essence of his character now shared with you.

**1) Always arrive early to work and be the last one out of the door** ("Unless you are meeting family, friends or colleagues for drinks. Then, apparently you can leave at noon")

The people who worked with my now retired friend saw him as a pillar of the organization, always there for the rest of the team and setting a strong work ethic in his actions. From this, he shared his dedication, and tenacity that inspired his entire organization. He knew how to have fun. He also shared his sense of humor and ability to defuse difficult situations with a calming demeanor and a smile.

**2) Love what you do, but love how you do it more**

My friend, even though he was a high level leader in his organization, spent considerable time on small projects. His son said, "But, as I've learned, often times it's the little things that mean the most. So, put time and energy into everything you do, no matter the size, and you will be rewarded."

**3) Life's a journey not a destination, so stop running**

My friend directed this at the generation of millennials, but it easily applies to us all. His son pointed out, "As a young professional it was hard to enter a new job without the passion of wanting to change the world. My father taught me the value of patience and that sometimes the smallest changes can have the largest impact."

**4) Good writing is invisible**

"Like my father says, the best writing in communications is like a pane of glass: it gets you to the information you need without the words and language blocking the way." This quote needs no clarification.

**5) Practice humility**

This is one part of my friend's character that everyone knew. His son offered this advice from his father: "While being acknowledged for great accomplishments is very rewarding, don't go looking for them. Have the confidence to know you're good at what you do without the need for validation from peers and colleagues."

**6) Shut up and listen**

Finally, he offered this sage advice from his father: "The power of listening serves everyone well in their future career - whether it's focusing on what is being shared at a meeting, or understanding the importance of words said in confidence. It's about truly hearing what people are saying, instead of just waiting for your turn to speak."

From these words, the puzzle of leadership character took form for all of us to hear. Ultimately it's not just about strength or good character, but honorable, and ethical character added to the pot to make the perfect blend for real leadership. All of this from a son, honoring his dad at a moment when all could share in what he built all of his life—his character and leadership.

There is one more quality of leadership character that my friend himself conveyed in his thank you speech at the gathering. He said if you think you know what you'll be doing tomorrow, next week or next year, be ready for the possibility that fate may intervene. Accept it and deal with it with grace.

A fitting piece of advice for a man still charting a direction for his life. A fitting piece of advice for all of us. Wisdom then is the final puzzle piece to add to

an honorable, ethical leader of good character. Now you know what one is. You know one when you see one. Now—you know what to do!

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Steven Honegger is an education consultant and a former leader in state government policy and finance with major experience in K-12 and higher education. He's an experienced program leader and researcher in national, international, and local education. Also a seasoned public speaker, presentation coach, and trainer, Steven recently coached policy research staff of a major higher education organization in Washington D.C. for presentations at their 2013 annual conference. To deepen his international expertise, he volunteers as strategist, donor researcher, and grant reviewer at Partners of the Americas. [www.linkedin.com/in/stevenhonegger/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/stevenhonegger/)

**"When you choose your friends, don't be short-changed by choosing personality over character."**

**W. Somerset Maugham**

**"Strength of character means the ability to overcome resentment against others, to hide hurt feelings, and to forgive quickly."**

**Lawrene G. Lovasik**

## Interview with Dr. John E. Betterson, Jr.



**PRO Leadership:** What is character? How is it different from other similar terms?

**John:** I define character as the distinguishing mark of a person's behavior which reveals itself and is often tested during times of adversity or triumph. Character represents the way in which one thinks, and interacts with the world around them. Character is the human signpost which can be developed overtime and serve as a winning instrument to influence others, or an indicator that something is wrong. Put another way, character for some people can serve as "the canary in the coal mine" warning others of potential dangers or red flags as a result of what they've assessed about one's behavior.

What makes character slightly different from other similar terms is the impact. While other traits like personality or reputation are important and does carry some weight in terms of impact, character is far more foundational than the others and in some respects, rests at the core of human behavior.

**PRO Leadership:** What is the relative relevance of character in leadership compared to other leadership attributes such as communication, teamwork, and so on?

**John:** When it comes to communication, teamwork and so on, character often

shapes these very attributes. So when one asks what will a certain attribute look like...character steps in as the hand which provides the narrow or broad strokes of that painting or illustration. Other leadership attributes are important, but many can be developed and function on their own, separate from the others while character touches every other attribute simultaneously and unapologetically.

**PRO Leadership:** In your opinion, is character a dealmaker or breaker in leadership? Please explain.

**John:** Character is the indisputable dealmaker and breaker in leadership. In my opinion, character is to leadership as athleticism is to sports. It won't take long for others to notice and question it. In both cases, one can probably function with a questionable character or lack of athleticism, but will you be effective? If this analogy is accurate, that just as sports agents and recruiters assign value and importance to athleticism in their prospects, character in leadership should be treated and viewed in the same light.

**PRO Leadership:** There are two schools of thoughts. There are people who believe that character is a private matter while there are those who believe that character is more than a private issue? What are your thoughts on this thread?

**John:** I would liken character to competency. If I am hiring someone for a job or to perform a certain task, I would base my decision on that person's competency or skill level to accomplish the work. I would hope that the individual would not keep his/her competency skill level private from the project. It would defeat the purpose. The same holds true for character. If we maintain that a leader's character remain private and somehow separate from how they lead then how can we expect that leader to do the "right thing" make that "right" decision? How do we, in our selection, gauge whether he or she is the "right" person to be the leader? I am live in the camp of those who feel that character in leadership is more than a

private issue. Just ask those leaders of late and past, who have fallen victim to public scrutiny because of "private" decisions.

**PRO Leadership:** What are the most important character traits that are critical for the success of a leader? And why are they important than other character traits?

**John:** If I had to rate them, I would say that integrity is highly significant. People often confuse integrity with honesty but they are slightly different from one another. Honesty is the act of telling the truth or being forthright about a thing, while integrity is the act of doing the right things and being truthful even when no one is looking.

**PRO Leadership:** What are some of the most important steps to develop character in leadership?

**John:** Do not take yourself too seriously. Focus on being others centered and recognize your own fallibility.

**PRO Leadership:** What kind of steps and measures organizations should take to help their leaders develop character?

**John:** Focus on the power of humility.

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John is a retired Air Force veteran who currently works for the NASA Glenn Research Center in Cleveland Ohio as the Equipment Management Officer. He is an active member of Toastmasters International, has served as a club president and is currently serving as an Area governor. He holds an Associate's Degree in Logistics Management, a Bachelor's degree in Business Management, a Masters' of Science Degree in Administration and a Doctorate in Strategic Leadership from Regent University's School of Business leadership. He is a leadership consultant, trainer, speaker and organizational problem-solver.

## Character in Leadership

By Yolanda N. Mullings



There are times in leadership where we should keep in mind how our behaviors and attitudes affect those that are around us. What does leadership mean to you? What is character and how do you apply it to leadership? Moreover how can we strive to have both of these different concepts shine through our ever day actions? My advice to you is to look within! We all have the raw material for greatness and you have the character that it takes to be a great leader.

Firstly, there needs to be a foundation of personal ethics. As a leader, one strives to take responsibility for his or her actions and moral conduct. Leadership is not just theoretical. It is responsible actions adhered to on a daily basis inside and outside of the work environment.

Today, we are plagued with the actions that many of our nation's leaders conduct outside of the work environment. Although it does not diminish their abilities to get the work done, it does change how their constituents view them. Moreover their behavior outside of the working environment highlight their poor moral conduct. Leaders who behave in such a way can have a very negative impact on the work environment as well

as change the culture of the organizations that they represent. These immoral behaviors are strong examples of poor character. Having character does not cease to exist at the end of the business day.

Secondly, personal integrity and ethics are the building blocks of character in a leader. Regardless of the kind of organization a leader is in, their actions reflect on those who they lead. Personal integrity allows a leader to distinguish with what is right and wrong for the business.

Some common integrity issues leaders face in the workplace can be bribes, kickbacks, or knowingly doing bad business for financial gain. Leaders have to be held accountable. Accountability is a very important aspect of character in the leader.

As leaders we must follow up and follow through on any new concept or policy that we implement. We must hold ourselves accountable as well as those that report to us. Through a good display of accountability we can demonstrate to others the character that we have and be a model that they can then follow. It is always a good idea to always do the right thing even when we think no one is looking or listening.

Lastly, it can be argued that character is relative. Character is an individual trait. It is personal and personality driven. To develop others to be leaders with character can be seen as a challenge; however, it is necessary. Working with persons on a team highlight the immense differences in thought processes.

However on a great team of leaders you will find that all of the team members have the same moral tone. They strive to be great leaders with the best interest of the organization at the forefront. While they may all have a different way of approaching challenges and opportunities that the organization faces, they do so in an ethical and moral manner.

To have character in leadership is a practice. By continuing to develop our strengths and diminish our weaknesses, we can apply a positive perspective to the way that we lead others and become leaders at the forefront of change and innovation.

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Yolanda is an Alumnae of Rutgers University, and University Of Phoenix. She is a native of Newark, NJ and loves serving and developing the skills of others. Yolanda works in the healthcare industry as Patient Services Manager. She is also the VP of Membership for the Holy Cross Words Toastmasters club in Silver Spring MD.

**“Character is the only secure foundation of the state.”**

**Calvin Coolidge**

**“A person’s character is what it is. It’s a little like a marriage-- only without the option of divorce. You can work on it and try to make it better, but basically you have to take the bitter with the sweet.”**

**Hendrick Hertzberg**

## Strength of Character: Why It Matters For Leaders

By Mona Singleton

Business organizations, schools, religious institutions, and social communities need people of sound character to remain strong, healthy and resilient. A leader's character is a huge factor in personal and organizational success.

Who would you rather work with? Would you rather work with a person with a particular personality type or a person of good character? What's the distinction between personality and character and why is it important?

Personality and character are different. Each leader has a distinct and unique personality. No two people are alike. Leaders with strength of character can have different personalities and yet share common qualities such as honesty, fairness, respect for self and others, responsibility, integrity, and care and concern for others. Diversity in organizations, including people with different personalities, is great as long as they all possess strength of character.

How do you determine if a leader has good character? Consider the following questions. What are the leader's priorities? Are they solely interested in personal prestige or are they committed to growing themselves and others? Who and what are they loyal to? Does the leader put forth his best efforts, or does he under deliver? Where does she invest her time, energy, and talent? How does he or she treat people? Knowing a person's motives and what they value reveals a person's true character.

Is the leader a learner? No one is born perfect nor can they develop good strong character in an instant. It's important for leaders and those they lead to continually work on character building to progress to their full potential. Is the individual in the progress of becoming a better person? What influence and impact are they having on other people?

How does a leader grow in character? They learn from experience. People of

character view problems and mistakes as learning opportunities. They learn lessons by experiencing positive and adverse situations. Wise people recognize that it's the challenging times that test and develop character. Their attitude, mindset and behavior toward trials and trouble reflect their character. They lean into problems, not away from them. Problems strengthen character. Leaders know that working through the trying times is what develops discipline, patience and perseverance.

How do you discern a person's character? One of the ways to determine the depth of someone's character is to observe him or her during a crisis. Can he or she be professional and resourceful when things go wrong? Does the person step up and press into problems or does he or she run the other way? Is she "all in" and committed to the cause? What does she focus on and think about? Does he follow through on his word or is he unreliable or undependable? It doesn't matter how talented and knowledgeable people are if they can't be taken at their word. Strength of character is determined in part by whether or not a leader follows through on their word.

What causes erosion of character?

There are many factors that can lead to corruption of character. The decline in character can occur slowly over time and without a person being aware of it. Sometimes people lose the good parts of themselves because they are influenced or impacted by deteriorating corporate culture, declining standards or ethics, or societal or cultural influences.

In the business arena, people can lose character because of poor business structure, low standards and low accountability. When a work environment becomes compromised or corrupt, it has a negative impact on people.

From a personal perspective, when greed, a sense of entitlement, or pride sets in

it can overpower a person's will and determination. In addition, associating with "bad company" can also lead to corruption of good character. It matters what type of people a person surrounds themselves with.

How does one develop and support good character? Establishing an ethical work environment is critical. Leaders must invest in people and systems. Business structures and systems can be put in place to ensure transparency and accountability.

It is also helpful for the leader to provide good mentoring and coaching either directly or by bringing in qualified professionals who can serve in those roles. Mentors and coaches help people develop strengths as well as identify weaknesses and blind spots. Becoming self-aware and knowing where work is needed is a big part of the growth process. Character can be strengthened by setting and living up to high character standards. Leaders can help build and reinforce good character by modeling the attitudes and behaviors they would like to see in others.

While much of a person's personality is defined by nature and nurture, people have free will. They have the power to develop the life skills that shape and transform character. In the end, when most people think of the best leaders they've worked with, they are likely to remember people of character. It's usually less about how many projects a person completed, how many accolades they received, how many budgets they balanced, or even their specific personality type or business strategies. People are remembered for who they are as people. Strength of character is of vital importance.

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Mona is a Strategic Interventionist Coach and Consultant. She is the author of "Lead With Your Gifts: Why Who You Are, Not A Title Defines You As A Leader". You can contact Mona by visiting [www.monasingleton.com](http://www.monasingleton.com)

## Interview with Brian O'Brien



**PRO Leadership:** What is character and what is not character? How is it different from other similar terms?

**Brian:** Tough question; character is the sum of all of the attributes which define a person's process. The reason I say "process" is because you can view a particular aspect of character, such as honesty, and make a generalized prediction about their ability to be truthful. However, when you aggregate ALL of the character traits the way a person is....the way they have chosen to be....is defined...their process through life.

**PRO Leadership:** Is character relevant in leadership like other leadership attributes such as communication, teamwork, and so on? If relevant, how much relevant compared to other leadership traits?

**Brian:** I believe that is not an answerable question. Character is made up of a nearly infinite number of character traits. So, when you ask is character relevant to leadership you need to ask (1) which trait, (2) for which audience, and (3) in which situation.

AND, I truly believe that the necessary character traits....and the depth of that trait....is up to the follower(s). No followers....no leader.

It is the aggregate of the traits.... the measure of sufficiency....that the followership uses to determine if the leader is "worthy".

**PRO Leadership:** In your opinion, is character a dealmaker or breaker in leadership?

**Brian:** Again, if the leader hasn't demonstrated a "sufficiency" of character traits, the followership will wander off. Or, worse, require the leader to force the followership into being led. This requires vastly more effort than does a more informed followership.

**PRO Leadership:** There are two schools of thoughts. There are leaders who believe that character is private while there are those who believe that character is more than a private issue? What are your thoughts on this thread?

**Brian:** LOL.....this actually made me laugh out loud. All traits define behavior. Given enough time, the true traits will become apparent. The followership ALWAYS see the real leader. As the mangled paraphrasing goes, "You are always on stage and everyone is always watching".

**PRO Leadership:** What are the most important character traits (for example, integrity) that are critical for the success of a leader? And why are they important than other countless character traits?

**Brian:** They are ALL important, again, depending upon your followership or constituency. I'll reverse the question by asking, which traits are required to be a leader in your home, in your office, on your bowling team, etc.? The situational followership define the measure, the sufficiency, of the relevant traits.

**PRO Leadership:** Do you have some exemplary leaders whose characters you admire? Can you also give us some leaders whose character flaw affected their and their organization's/nation's reputation?

**Brian:** I've had a number of people in my life that I've considered to be honorable and just people. But, again, it was consistent with the situation. My Father was a great Dad, but frankly, a pretty horrible business man. Another gentleman I knew was highly qualified in his field and ran an excellent business.... every employee loved him. But, he literally didn't know a thing about his own kids. I respect Donald Trump's ability to make a high powered deal...but I don't think I'd want to be a daily friend.

Again, it's situational....which situation should I address?

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Brian O'Brien is the President of Myriad Performance Services, Inc., an international training and coaching firm located Frederick, Maryland. Brian has completed projects ranging from Baldrige Quality/ISO assessment to design of training systems used by European nuclear industries. Since 2000, Brian has been working as a corporate coach for business clients and has met the requirements for an MMC and the ICF/PCC. As a UMBC ISD graduate, Brian has utilized his analytical and instructional skills to develop the One Team™ corporate coach training system and The Leadership Suite™, a fresh approach to the development of effective leadership worldwide. Brian isn't a thought leader.... he's too busy thinking.

**"Forming characters! Whose? Our own or others? Both. And in that momentous fact lies the peril and responsibility of our existence."**

**Elihu Burritt**

## Character Is Essential to Good Leadership

By Cornell Jenkins



When I think of character, the first word that comes to mind is integrity. And, I believe that trustworthiness is a direct result of having integrity as a personality trait. However, one cannot turn this trait on and off — it is the essence of who they are. If you are not a trustworthy person, that trait will manifest itself in various areas of your life.

Take, for example, people that are habitually late. Let's assume they show up to work on-time because it is their livelihood. But, if you ask their family and friends and they tell you this person shows up late to family functions, dinner, weddings, etc., you'll soon discover that the character trait of tardiness is prevalent in every other area of their life. Therefore, if someone is untrustworthy, that trait will tend to persist in various areas of their life.

Whether you're a parent, supervisor, business owner, etc., you must have the trust of everyone you're leading. It is difficult to lead someone that doesn't trust you. A hint of mistrust can lead to a disastrous situation. Many times, the situation does not turn for the worse overnight. But months and years of mistrust will erode any relationship.

As a leader, it is your responsibility to gain or maintain the trust of the people you're leading. You could be entering an environment that has been plagued with mistrust. You can tell people you're trustworthy, but actions speak louder than words.

We live in a world where people often say things they don't mean. Several years ago, one of my students told me to "state your case." In the context of the conversation, I knew what he meant. He was telling me to say what you mean, and mean what you say. Mistrust is born out of leaders who have not personally embraced this mantra.

Too often, people speak before they think. Those in leadership roles cannot afford to use words flippantly. If you find yourself doing this, make it known that you made a mistake. Acknowledging your mistake early will go a long way in keeping the trust you have already developed with those you lead. Don't make a habit of using words flippantly.

If you closely examine any dysfunctional team or organization, you will find the underlying issue is a lack of trust and/or respect. In the workplace, there are several things employees need to know:

- (1) you are leading them in the right direction
- (2) you have their best interest in mind
- (3) you will stand up for and defend them

This basic combination of behaviors in the workplace will garner any leader loyalty from their employees. And let's not forget that, to gain trust, people also have to know that you know what you're doing.

Trust in the workplace goes a long way. Conversely, mistrust in the workplace also goes a long way. People will either be loyal or mistrusting. In order to develop character you have to say what you mean, mean what you say, and be willing to

admit mistakes. The strength of character in a leader will determine how successful they will be in the long run.

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**"There is no man so good that if he placed all his actions and thought under the scrutiny of the laws, he would not deserve hanging ten times in his life."**

**Michel de Montaigne**

**"I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber one has some day to cry aloud on the house-tops."**

**Oscar Wilde**

## “Character” In Leadership



By Carla Blue

The goal of any great leader should be to lead with effectiveness and great **C.H.A.R.A.C.T.E.R.**

- **C** – Commitment to excellence;
- **H** – Honesty and integrity;
- **A** – Adaptability and perseverance;
- **R** – Respect for self and others;
- **A** – Attention to details;
- **C** – Care and gratitude;
- **T** – Trustworthiness and loyalty;
- **E** – Ethics and great morals;
- **R** – Responsibility and accountability.

**C.H.A.R.A.C.T.E.R.** in leadership is a strategic blueprint for success. Great leaders like, Mahatma Gandhi, Barack Obama, and Nelson Mandela exemplifies great character, great leadership and great success. Each person is a leader. Whether you are a student, parent, co-worker, etc., the question is, “what kind of leader are you?” We all have the opportunity to become great leaders. To do so requires that we ask ourselves the character question; “Who am I....really?” This question is the beginning of a self-assessment and discovery of much needed honest answers. So remember that character building is a journey, not a destination.

In closing, character in leadership is a matter of the heart and mind as stated in Proverbs 23:7 “For as he thinketh in his

heart, so is he”. Therefore, the responsibility of leadership is too important not to develop great character traits. Here are some recommendations to get started:

- Develop an affirmation for your life; (ex. Today I pledge to be the best possible me)
- Be committed to positive change;
- Dethrone mediocrity and crown excellence as your standard;
- Be honest and trustworthy in all of your dealings;
- Check and challenge your morals to ensure that they are right and just;
- Manage your thoughts and examine your heart.

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### Character in leadership is the distinction between good and bad leadership.

There are numerous examples of effective leaders that wouldn’t pass the “great character test”. Unfortunately, many of the infamous dictators in history exhibited effective leadership without great character. Leadership is the ability to lead and influence others. While, **character answers the question, “Who am I....really”**. Who we are at our core impacts our leadership path and clearly explains our leadership intentions. In life and leadership, our character defines us. Desirable character traits in leadership include: honesty, integrity, fairness, kindness, patience, and compassion, just to name a few. Great leadership requires great character.

## Interview with Kassegne Habtamu



**PRO Leadership:** What is character? How is it different from other similar terms?

**Kassegne:** Even though I use the work character commonly, it is not easy to define. I started to look into some resources and this is what I found - Webster’s II New College Dictionary has nineteen entries under character, as noun, adjective, and transitive verb. Its core meaning as a noun is “the combination of emotional, intellectual, and moral qualities

that distinguishes a person.” Another more inclusive definition of Character comes from H. Jackson Brown Jr., who writes that “Character is what we do when we think no one is looking”. And from the white paper published by the Center for Creative Leadership, I found that, in a leadership context, character is an individual’s pattern of behavior that indicates his or her moral strength, fortitude, and selflessness.

**PRO Leadership:** What are the most important character traits (for example, integrity) that are critical for the success of a leader? And why are they important than other character traits?

**Kassegne:** Among many, the most important character traits for leaders are integrity, bravery, perspective, and social intelligence because these character strengths are defined as positive personal qualities that indicate virtue and human excellence. We can see these character traits individually to see why they are the most important.

**Integrity:** Walk the talk. That is what integrity really is all about. At the heart of integrity is being consistent, honest, moral, and trustworthy. Leaders with integrity are consistent in the face of adversity, show consistency in their words and actions, and are unfailing with who they are and what they stand for (Palanski & Yammarino, 2007). Integrity makes it easier for others to trust a leader, which is likely important as leaders fulfill their duties in networking, consensus-building and relationship management. Integrity is one of the most important and also difficult character traits, here is an example, "You will be confronted with questions every day that test your morals ... Think carefully and, for your sake, do the right thing, not the easy thing." —Former Tyco International CEO Dennis Kozlowski, from his commencement speech at Saint Anselm College. He was indicted for tax evasion 17 days later.

**Bravery:** As the saying goes, it is lonely at the top. Bravery is needed to stand out on your own. Bravery is defined as acting with valor by not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, nor pain; speaking up for what is right even when opposition exists; and acting upon conviction despite facing an unpopular environment (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Leaders who are viewed as brave are evaluated as capable of producing long term sustained success.

**Perspective:** It is important that a leader pays attention and focus on the horizon of opportunities and challenges around

them to make an informed decision that will direct the group they are leading.

**Social Intelligence:** Social intelligence is the awareness of your and others' motives and feelings (you have a sense of what makes you and others tick) and having the agility to adapt your behavior to what the situation dictates (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Leaders use their social intelligence to build alliances, manage conflict, and conduct successful negotiations. Social intelligence is believed to be a key differentiator between successful and unsuccessful leaders.

**PRO Leadership:** Do you have some exemplary leaders whose characters you admire? Can you also give us some leaders whose character flaw affected their and their organization's/nation's reputation?

**Kassegne:** there are a number of leaders whose characters I admire, such as Mahatma Gandhi, visionary, humble, integrity and bravery; Martin Luther King, visionary, wide perspective, social intelligence; Nelson Mandela, visionary, persistent, brave, integrity, humility, perspective and social intelligence; And here are some leaders whose characters flaw affected their and their organization's reputation, Chung Mong Koo of Hyundai Motor – Fraud, embezzlement, allegedly put money away in a fund to bribe officials; Lance Armstrong - Saying he never used performance enhancing drugs with evidence illustrating the contrary; Senator John Edwards – Campaign finance law violation ;David Edmondson of Radio Shack – Falsified résumé.

**PRO Leadership:** What are some of the most important steps to develop character in leadership?

**Kassegne:** Taking the time to go through coaching and leadership development training, being transparent is one way to act with integrity, having a mentor, reading literatures. Also, Leaders should embrace absolute honesty and consider engaging in mindfulness practices such as prayer, meditation, or reflection. Practices that can enhance a leader's bravery include regularly setting aside time to

imagine what would happen if a crisis occurred at work and working out a plan in advance, or modeling the behavior or value system of courageous people. The other key element of character development is an ongoing feedback.

**PRO Leadership:** What kind of steps and measures organizations can take to help their leaders develop character?

**Kassegne:** Set up formal and informal training that focuses on the importance of character, Senior leaders can establish an environment that is open to character development by creating a clear, detailed, practical set of organizational values and by ensuring that everyone in the organization lives those values rather than just goes through the motions, senior leaders should ensure that as part of the overall development process, high-potential employees are given "stretch" positions and assignments requiring them to make difficult choices, which can help them better understand and develop character.

**PRO Leadership:** Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

**Kassegne:** Here is a quick character check that I found interesting – "Ask yourself if the behavior you are about to engage in would be approved by your mother, grandmother or primary school teacher?"

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