

Yesterday's learnings, today's life lessons



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Integrity is often seen as a lofty ideal, something we all agree is essential but perhaps struggle to define in practical terms. For me, integrity has been a guiding principle, shaped significantly by observing my father and honed through my professional experiences.

Integrity wasn't something my father explicitly taught me through lectures or formal discussions. Instead, it was embedded in his actions and behavior. My father served in the United States Marine Corps which I am sure had an influence, and while he never sat me down to explain integrity, his conduct spoke volumes. He embodied integrity through his commitment to doing the right thing, treating people with respect, and always following through on his promises.

One vivid memory from my childhood is when he taught me the meaning of a handshake—a simple gesture that communicated trust and respect. He believed that a person's word and last name were their most valuable assets. This lesson stuck with me, even though I didn't fully understand its significance until much later.



Creating a culture of integrity and inclusion

In my role at Quest Global, I've come to appreciate the universal value of integrity. Regardless of where we are in the world, certain elements of integrity—respect, fairness, and honesty—are widely understood and valued. These principles transcend cultural and regional differences, highlighting our shared humanity. Integrity is often shaped through associations we make and reinforced through our lived experiences.

A significant aspect of integrity is accountability, particularly in moments when things go wrong. It's easy to say we have integrity when everything is going well, but true integrity is revealed in how we respond to our mistakes, own up to the consequences, and learn from them, to strive to do better. This accountability is crucial in maintaining trust and respect within a team.

Nurturing a culture of integrity begins with creating an environment where people feel safe speaking up and admit mistakes without fear of retribution. This psychological safety is fundamental. At Quest Global, initiatives like the Speak Up tool are designed to encourage openness and transparency, ensuring that integrity isn't just an abstract concept but a lived experience.

Integrity forms the basis for how we interact with others and build inclusive environments. That is exactly why inclusion and integrity are deeply connected. Doing right by each other, ensuring fairness, and creating a sense of belonging are all manifestations of our integrity. These values are interwoven into the Quest Global culture, reinforcing the idea that integrity is a cornerstone of our collective identity and engrained in our vision – trusted thinking partner of choice.



Integrity is never found in isolation - human psychology and cultural influences

Human psychology, cultural backgrounds, peer influences, and our environments all play significant roles in shaping our worldviews on integrity as we grow up. While integrity is universally regarded as a virtue, reality is often more complex, and sometimes is seen by people as a malleable behavior dictated by circumstances. Most get to realize through the right associations and life experiences in the long run.

Yet, I must acknowledge the challenge of moral relativism. In different cultures, what constitutes integrity can vary. For example, in some cultures, avoiding direct confrontation is seen as respectful, while in others, it might be viewed as avoiding the truth. This divergence can lead to misunderstandings and ethical dilemmas.

I've encountered situations where the path of integrity might have been more convenient to ignore. In one instance while in a team meeting with former colleagues, a peer referred to a particular group in a derogatory tone. Whether any of us on the call identified with the group and might be personally offended was irrelevant. The point was that we should all take offense. In that moment, I decided to act on what I believed was the right thing to do rather than be a bystander, and explained why the comment bothered me and should bother us all.

Letting it go as “just a joke” might have been the easier thing to do, however integrity is not about doing what is right when it is convenient – it is about doing the right thing even when it is the most uncomfortable for us. In these moments when our integrity is challenged those around us watch to see what we will do to model their own behavior. In this case those who did not speak up immediately initially then followed suit. Sometimes it just takes a single person to speak up for what is right to influence the actions of others who might have thought the same thing.

I do not believe integrity calls for acts of heroism and like to think of it much more simply. It's just about doing right by each other, exercising fairness, and showing respect. Not that different from the platinum rule that states we should treat others as they wish to be treated, our integrity is that inner compass that summons us to make the right decision. It doesn't mean we will get things right every time, but that we will own up to our mistakes no matter the consequence when we don't and get better.



Integrity in the age of sentient systems

As we advance into an era of engaging with sentient systems and generative AI, the angles of ethics and integrity become even more critical. The decisions made by individuals interacting with these advanced technologies can have far-reaching consequences, like the butterfly effect. The discretion exercised by a single person can ripple through the system, impacting countless others and shaping the future in unforeseen ways.

In this context, integrity will be a crucial differentiator for companies, especially in their hiring strategies. Ensuring that employees possess the necessary technical skills, and a strong moral compass is essential. The ability to make ethical decisions in complex scenarios involving AI will define the success and reputation of organizations.

To those entering the workforce, my advice is to reinforce your integrity as much as you enhance your skills. Your technical abilities will get you in the door, but your integrity will determine your long-term success and fulfillment. In a world increasingly influenced by non-human sentient systems, maintaining ethical standards will set you apart and ensure that you contribute positively to the broader societal impact of these technologies.



Organizational and personal alignment

Reflecting on my journey, I realize that integrity is more than just a professional value; it's personal. The alignment between my personal values and the values of Quest Global has been a source of fulfillment and purpose. Integrity, for me, is about doing the right thing, even when it's difficult, and creating an environment where others feel empowered and safe to do the same.

In the end, integrity is a thread that connects all aspects of our lives—personal and professional. It's about being accountable, treating others with respect, and building an inclusive environment. As I continue my journey, I remain firm in my commitment to these principles, striving to embody integrity in all that I do. And I hope to inspire others to reflect on what integrity means to them and how they can live it out every day.



For further information or queries, please reach out to us at info@quest-global.com