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Book Review:
The Integrity Dividend:
Leading by the Power of Your Word
By Tony Simons

Book Review by Donna Karlin

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The Integrity Dividend: Leading by the Power of Your Word

BY TONY SIMONS

BOOK REVIEW BY DONNA KARLIN

OVERVIEW

“Integrity is not a conditional word. It doesn't blow in the wind or change with the weather. It is your inner image of yourself, and if you look in there and see a man who won't cheat, then you know he never will.” - John D. MacDonald

This book brings together a 'place' where humanity (or humanness as I like to call it) and personal integrity meet, mesh and become the framework for building a sustainable leadership culture. Rich with supporting data and research studies, Tony Simons looks at a myriad of perspectives of integrity and takes the reader on a path that defines just what *The Integrity Dividend* is; managing your own behavioural integrity which goes to trust and credibility. He weaves case studies and stories that illustrate the power of personal and organizational integrity, the ripple effect going beyond one's immediate knowing or imagination. Dr. Simons has written the guidebook for building an organization based on its word and the word of its people.

KEY POINTS

The benefit of an impeccable word

Leadership based on personal integrity means you are your word and you live your life by the commitments you make and keep. Tony looks at successful executives, how they attract good people and keep them. It's more than being a respected leader; this book shows you the monetary benefit of keeping and leading by your word. Tony makes a point of showing the difference between the benefit of behaving in a certain manner or the dividend of that behaviour, not the reason behind it.

Where words and actions meet

Trying to rationalize the unacceptable into acceptable goes beyond the grey zone; it goes to how steadfast one is when making decisions. In the world of organizational leadership, one is often faced with making tough decisions and more often than not it isn't about right versus wrong; it could be as subtle as the difference between doing things right or doing the right things. However, the impact of that decision can be far reaching. One of the key points Tony brings up is you behave as if someone is watching, even if

it's only you. Words might be cheap but ultimately very expensive when they're hollow. Words backed with action and consistent action are key.

**Behavioural integrity isn't easy
but the rewards are endless**

Behavioural integrity might not be easy but the rewards are immeasurable. Organizational culture is built on trust. So are staff and client relationships. Inconsistency breaks down trust. Consistent, almost predictable behaviour creates a foundation of trust that becomes the framework of a successful organization.

Organizational integrity is as good as gold. People are attracted to those they can trust. This builds another layer of organizational strength and the foundation on which any organization operates. Integrity means how words and actions fit together as pieces of the puzzle that creates a picture or, in this case, organizational culture as it is seen, processed and measured by others. It's not about rationalizing behaviours or making excuses; it's putting the rubber to the road and setting direction. People take jobs because of people and they leave jobs because of people. Sustainable leadership is critical to the success of an organization. Leadership without integrity has great cost to an organization as replacing people and playing angles to try to win back trust takes a lot of time, effort and money and is not sustainable.

To tie in Tony's overall message and Stephen R. Covey's perspective on behavioural integrity, the latter states:

I'm convinced that we can write and live our own scripts more than most people will acknowledge. I also know the price that must be paid. It's a real struggle to do it. It requires visualization and affirmation. It involves living a life of integrity, starting with making and keeping promises, until the whole human personality, the senses, the thinking, the feeling, and the intuition are ultimately integrated and harmonized. ("Pay the Full Price", interview with Stephen R. Covey, 1994)

Financial rewards, power or influence come and go like the tide, but a person's actions and words cannot be taken back. They are inseparable, connected and identified to his/her personal values and ethics. Organizations are defined by what individuals do and say. So where to start?

Creating a culture of accountability

It's possible to look at what behaviours aren't working in organizations as a clash between right and wrong, good vs. bad, or even right against 'right' when it's a dim line to decipher. Once we realize it's impossible to deny the negative impact the lack of integrity has on an organization, we can look for better ways of

being that help move its people and in turn organizational culture in the direction of authenticity.

Leaders who live from the perspective of personal integrity help us move forward within our own understanding and authentic leadership. They trust us based on our humanness, invite generative dialogue from the position of curiosity and celebration of differences, welcome innovation, nourish us and help us connect all the dots. They trust us and what we can do, and leave us to do it as they know we're doing 'it' right. In turn this grows an organization and creates a community of strong individuals within the organization. This is in the best interest of the organization, its people and their world as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The data in this book is extensive. Surveys and studies illustrate the benefits and costs of level of behavioural integrity. If ever you looked for tangible material to prove these points, this book is definitely the one to have in your library. One can't put a dollar figure on trust but can measure successful organizations which are built on trust. Tony creates the important distinction that financial reward is the result and consequence of operating through behavioural integrity, not the reason for doing so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I highly recommend this book for students in business, rising stars within organizations and as class material in leadership training. In order to make the right choices while evolving into one's level of excellence, one needs to understand the fundamental behavioural integrity dynamics that are present within any organization. Understanding enables better choices.

"Pay the Full Price", interview with Stephen R. Covey, May 1994.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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