

## Four Characteristics For Success

*by Jon Craighead*

*"Winning takes talent, to repeat takes character." John Wooden*

Business transactions, irrespective of form, specialty, size, or location, are a function of people interacting with people for both independent and mutual purposes. Ultimately, business relationships are based on a generally-assumed understanding, and confidence that each party has a shared commitment to the other's best interest. The source of such confidence is based on selected characteristics, including the following:

- Authenticity – being real, genuine; truthful, accurate, original.
- Ethics – distinguishes good and bad as well as what is morally right or wrong.
- Integrity – the quality of being honest and fair; a state of being whole or complete.
- Trust – a reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something in which confidence is placed.

These four characteristics articulate valued behaviors in business and life.

**Authenticity** is being true to oneself with unquestionable reliability. Business leaders recognize that their leadership's success depends on an ability to develop a mutually steadfast relationship with their peers, employees, and customers. It's the foundation of their existence. From the customer's perspective, they must trust that the seller's products and services are what they claim to be and will deliver the promised results. These considerations are an imperative for the business-owner's success and the customer's satisfaction. This is a true test of delivering on one's word consistently and reliably over time. This validates customer confidence and faith in commerce, resulting in the seller's success and the buyer's confidence in the marketplace. Authenticity promotes reliability.

**Ethics** is the branch of philosophy that deals with morality. Ethics is concerned with distinguishing between good and evil in the world, between right and wrong actions among people of good faith. Ethics are the fundamental basis of trusting transactional business relationships. It starts with an assumption that your dealings with another are based on an honorable foundation. This assumes individual conversations, in person or in writing, are truthful and accurately represent what's being spoken or read. These basic transactions were originally validated by a handshake, which constituted one's bond. Today more documentation is required due to the market expansion beyond friendships and neighbors to national and international clientele. All this is a function of our ever expanding and complex market system. Ethics, however, provide a

fundamental transactional platform for good works regardless of economic boundaries and worldviews.

**Integrity** deals with values relating to human conduct. It is a quality of being honest and having strong moral principles, with clarity of rightness and wrongness of motives and actions. Operating in integrity is about having one's speaking and actions be unquestionable, and leaving no task left undone without being fully accountable. Integrity is a system of honor that emboldens character, stimulates sound commitments, and brings quality and purpose to life. A parallel definition of integrity is a state of being whole and complete with no missing parts. This aspect of integrity is not moral or ethical. Rather it is a description of an individual or a system capable of fulfilling a predesignated intent.

**Trust:** In his book [The Speed of Trust](#), Stephen Covey described trust as follows:

*There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organization, nation, economy and civilization around the world — one thing which, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love. That one thing is trust.*

The loss of trust, whether intentionally caused or not, is rarely recoverable to its original state. An architect of mistrust is cynicism. While it is responsible and prudent to validate, it is also possible to overreact cynically, which breeds a distrustful environment. Widespread distrust often results in a toxic and litigious climate. Additionally, trustworthy people tend to be more trusting than cynical people and are frequently recognized and rewarded for their faith in humankind.

Psychologist Howard Gardner states, "The world of the future will demand capacities that until now have been mere options." For those willing to accept this pronouncement for creating a better future, these four characteristics are excellent guidelines for progress. We will need to develop and master our personal characteristics both individually and jointly to make these much-demanded capacities a reality.