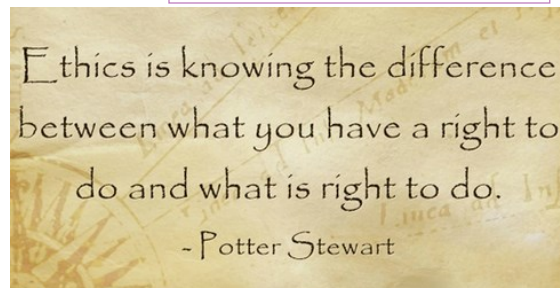## Cultivating Ethical Leadership in the Workplace

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Cultivating ethical leaders in our work place can be a difficult task to accomplish for a multitude of reasons. One of those reasons being everyone has a different definition and idea of what the terms ethical and leadership look like in action. In order to understand and cultivate our co-workers, employees, and employers to act as ethical leaders it is imperative to have a general understanding of both terms. According to the Webster's Dictionary the definition of leadership is: "a position or function of a leader of a group, organization...". Webster's definition for ethics is: "rules of behavior based on ideas about what is morally good and bad." "Ethical behavior, in its simplest terms, is knowing and doing what is right. The difficulty is in defining what is right" (Rabinowitz, 2014). The term ethical leadership can create confusion and disagreements. In this article we will attempt to construct a definition of what ethical leadership is and how to implement it into your working situation.

Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do.
- Potter Stewart

"Ethics refers to the desirable and appropriate values and morals according to an individual or the society... Ethics serve as guidelines for analyzing 'what is good or bad' in a specific scenario" (Management Study Guide, 2013). A leader is an individual who has often-characteristic traits, which makes their behavior appealing and effective. Traits that are often associated with leaders include: intelligent, good communicator, objective, confi-

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Tip of the Month

<u>Tools for determining and measuring community needs</u>.

• *Existing Data* – Using existing statistical data to obtain insights about the well-being of people.

• *Attitude Survey* – Information is gathered from a representative sample of community residents about issues related to their well-being.

• *Key Informants* – Identifying community leaders and decision makers who are knowledgeable about the community and can accurately identify priority needs and concerns.

• *Community Forum* – Public meeting(s) held for community members to discuss issues facing the community, prioritizing needs, and how to address the needs.

• *Focus Group Interview* – A group of people selected for their experience, views, or position are asked a series of questions about a topic or issue to gather their opinions.

• *Asset Mapping* – Identifying resources or things of value (assets) in the community. It is an inventory of the businesses, organizations, and resources that help create a community.

• *Observation* – Systematically selecting, watching, and recording behavior of living beings, objects, or phenomena. Participant observation (taking part in the situation he/she observes) and non-participant observation (watching the situation—openly or concealed—but not participating).

Ethical Leadership
Conduct led by values, vision, voice, and virtue

dent, and approachable. Individuals who are described as ethical leaders are often described with these traits: honest, integrity, respectful, and uses good judgment to make decisions.

Recipe for Ethical Leadership

Serving Size: 1

1-part ethical traits

1-part leadership traits

= Ethical leader

Ethical Leadership

A leadership strategy without ethical clarity produces moral and economic bankruptcy.

- Bill Donahue

Ethical leadership has two elements according to research. The first element is leaders must act and make decisions ethically like ethical people in general. Secondly, ethical leaders must lead in an ethical manner.   Ethical leaders must lead ethically- in the ways they treat people in everyday interaction, in their attitudes, in the way they encourage, and in the directions in which they steer their organizations or institutions or initiatives," (Rabinowitz, 2014). It is important to understand- ethical leaders are ethical all the time and they are consistently ethical over time, proving time and time again that ethics are essential to the perception and framework they use to understand and communicate to the world.

How to practice ethical leadership:

Ethical leaders time after time make decisions that are in the best interest of the greater good rather than making decisions that solely benefit themselves. Being open to feedback, different opinions, and challenges to ideas and actions. Ethical leaders encourage others to become leaders as well as accept responsibility and accountability for their actions. Perhaps most importantly, "ethical leaders understand the power of leadership and use it well--sharing it as much as possible, never abusing it, and exercising it only when it will benefit the individuals or organization they work with, the community, or society," (Rabinowitz, 2014).

Ethical leadership requires a clear and coherent ethical framework which they draw upon in making decisions and taking action. Individuals develop their ethical framework based upon experiences, background, education, and the actions of role models. Your ethical framework essentially is everything that has gone into creating who you are. Leaders of organizations need to have the same ethical framework, vision and mission of the organization. An organization cannot be led effectively by a leader who doesn't share and value the same things as the company (Rabinowitz, 2014). In addition to leading organizations ethically, ethical leaders surround themselves with ethical employees who have a similar ethical framework and are able to support and carry out the mission of the company. Leaders should also celebrate with their employees when positive ethical moments occur. "Managers should talk about what positive ethics looks like in practice as often as they talk about what to avoid. Take time to celebrate positive ethical choices," (Brooks, 2013).

It is recommended that the ethics of an organization and ethics of everyone who are part of it be frequently discussed. Everyone's ethical assumptions, including the leaders', should be open to discussion. "Talk about ethics as an ongoing learning journey, not something you have or don't have. Recognize that the world changes constantly, and that ethical conduct requires that everyone remain vigilant," (Brooks, 2013). Take advantage of these on-going opportunities to talk about ethics to grow and learn and build you organization rather than a yearly mandatory training program.

Other ethical leadership practices include: taking leadership positions seriously, maintaining perspective while keeping a sense of humor. Honoring the golden rule; one should treat others as one would like to be treated. Collaborate often; collaborating helps spread power and responsibility throughout the organization. Work to maintain communication channels and continue to grow and develop interpersonal skills. Finally, the hardest task for most ethical leaders is recognizing when an organization needs new leadership (Rabinowitz, 2014). Just like anything else an organization is a living entity and requires new leaders to help it grow and thrive.

Organizations, big or little, all need ethical leaders to help achieve their goals. Ethical leadership, like any other form of leadership, needs to be consistent and always evolving and growing. The first step to cultivating ethical leadership in your organization begins with finding employees who share and carry out ethical behavior that is in compliance with your organization's ethical code - continue to hold everyone to those ethical expectations (Brooks, 2013). "Like so many other important tasks, maintaining ethical leadership is ongoing, like only a few others, it can last a lifetime," (Rabinowitz, 2014).

Resources

Brooks, Chad. "7 Steps to Ethical Leadership." businessnewsdaily. BusinessNewsDaily., 02 December 2013. Web. 9 Jun 2015. <http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/5537-how-to-be-ethical-leader.html>.

Management Study Guide , . "Leadership." Management Study Guide . Management Study Guide , n.d. Web. 27 May 2015. <http://managementstudyguide.com/qualities_of_a_leader.htm>.

Rabinowitz, Phil. "Section 8. Ethical Leadership "Orienting Ideas in Leadership. 2014.   Print. <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-ideas/ethical-   leadership/main>.