

## In Search of Integrity

Contributed by Rick Weaver  
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{bot\_wrgoogle}More people searched for the definition of integrity than any other word during the year. The searchers were potentially hungering for the days when one's words coincided with their actions under an umbrella of honesty and morality. There was a day when one could trust their supervisor to have concern for their interests and for the heads of the organization to be concerned about the future of the people working for them. You could work for a company your entire life and depend on them in retirement.

Yet in 2005 we saw cuts in pensions for retirees, the threat of double digit pay cuts, and hefty benefit reductions for workers across industries and supply channels. Even former lifelong employers like Ford, Sears, GM, Kmart, and others announced new layoffs while upper management seemed oblivious to the hardships created for their employees.

For Baby-Boomers, integrity in the business world seems to have vanished - evaporated from a glass once half-full.

People want to trust their customers, employees, and employers. At the same time employee theft is on the rise, pension funds are being raided, and customers are increasingly treated as interruptions.

Integrity slips away quietly even under the loud cries of those that inevitably see it happening. Customers complaints silenced by uncaring frontline employees or deaf managers and owners. Leaders isolated from the frontlines of the operations. Employees seeing owners buying beautiful new cars and homes while payroll and benefit deductions are reducing discretionary income.

### A Life Lesson from Kmart

Failed integrity is often the result of good intentions derailed by business needs. While working at Kmart in the mid-1990s there was heavy investor pressure to the number of out-of-stock items in the stores. Wall Street was bitterly complaining about Kmart's slumping market share, blaming the empty store shelves

as a customer turn-off. Anderson Consulting had been brought in to assist in determining a way to get the merchandise on the shelves, especially during ads. At first the program had noble intentions.

A vendor report card would show each manufacturer which shipments were late so that supply chain impediments could be identified and eliminated. Unfortunately red ink was beginning to show on initial balance sheets and the scorecard became a way to generate revenue through penalties. Kmart's president at the time had used the same tactic to save a supermarket chain ad previously led from almost certain bankruptcy. Before long the program was assigned huge income goals which destroyed many longtime vendor relationships.

As the manager of vendor development, I had been the most visible executive on the program in its early days, teaching vendors how to use the scorecard. As pressures built to generate revenue from the scorecard through vendor fines, I resisted. As the face of the scorecard, upper management spun off the compliance program and left the scorecard and training program under my responsibility while a different team was chosen to automate and expand the compliance program. As it grew to a nine figure income stream, my continued training and consulting duties solidified vendor thoughts that it was still my program.

Knowing what I know in hindsight, integrity would have taken me down a different road.

So it is with integrity. People do not judge your integrity by motives or intentions. They discern your integrity by outcomes.

My experience, exhaustive research, and interviews with experts, I developed a concept I call Trust Ball™, a vivid correlation of integrity, honesty, and trust built on the game of baseball. It follows a simple notion that trust is a disciplined game with procedures and rules that make it easier to follow and understand. Just as in baseball, you get to go straight to the batter's box when you first encounter a new individual or team. If your initial impression conveys honesty, integrity, and trust, you get to move to first base. Specific attitudes and actions will allow you to move around the bases, one at a time, until you eventually score a home run. If at any time you break one of the tenets of trust, it constitutes an out and you must return to the dugout. No longer can you simply go to the batter's box, from this point on you must make a stop at the on-deck circle before you can get back into the game.

## Five Important Questions

When you are faced with a new situation, policy, procedure, or opportunity (which I'll refer to singularly as an "event") ask yourself these questions:

1. How does this event apply to my personal belief system?

2. How will others view this in hindsight when the event is over?
  
3. If something goes wrong or is changed/expanded/shifted in mid-stream, how will others in hindsight view me?
  
4. What can I do in advance to prevent a negative impression of my integrity and honesty when the event is occurring and when it is completed?
  
5. Is the price worth it?

Integrity is an essential leadership quality. What are you doing in your day to destroy trust? Are your words consistent with your actions? Do you catch others off guard or do they know what to expect from you? Master integrity and you will build relationships stronger and faster than you ever imagined possible.

Rick Weaver is an accomplished business executive with a wealth of experience in retail, market analysis, supply chain enhancement, project management, team building, and process improvement. Building on a strong retail background, Rick moved to full supply-chain involvement, working with hundreds of companies to improve sales, processes, and bottom-line results.

As Rick's interaction in varied industries expanded, he became troubled as he increasingly noticed that people and companies had untapped or unfocused talent.

Coupled with Rick's passion for training and development, popular style of interactive workshops and seminars, and strong desire for continuous improvement, he founded Max Impact Corporation to be singularly focused on helping individuals and organizations achieve high performance.

Rick is a popular speaker at seminars, workshops, and conferences. He has spoken in 43 states, including Alaska and Hawaii, and in Canada and Puerto Rico. He is available to speak at groups of all sizes.

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