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Introduction

Visualize this, you are walking down the street and you see a stranger drop money. Do you keep it for yourself? Maybe you are really struggling financially and could use the money, to help justify taking it? Or do you tell her and give the money back to her? Situations like these are situations that we as humans face regularly. What we decide to do makes us the kind of person that we are. Our response to these scenarios builds our character, identifies who we are and what we stand for. Ethics is part of our world. Everyday people make decisions, and these decisions can better a person as an individual or worsen her.

The intent of this essay discusses what ethical leadership is and where it can be found. This essay will define what values and best practices make a leader ethical and effective. Furthermore, I will discuss an ethical leader that I admire and respect greatly.

Defining Ethical Leadership

Ethics are the principles, values and beliefs that define what is right and wrong behavior (Van Buren). Leadership is the process of influencing others to achieve goals (Van Buren). "Thus we can define ethical leadership as the process of influencing people through principles, values and beliefs that embrace what we define as right behavior" (Van Buren). Therefore, ethical leadership is extremely important to follow because a leader can influence others, which in the long run can influence society and how society behaves.

Where Does Ethical Leadership Exist?

Ethical leadership can be found everywhere. It can be found in everything that we, as people, do and say. In simple examples, it can be found in a mother teaching her child the difference between right and wrong; or in a CEO being a role model for the company, an example to employees how to act and conduct themselves. It even exists within that individual who saw a stranger drop money and needs to decide to give it back or keep it. Ethical leadership is found everywhere.

Personal Perception

My personal viewpoint on ethical leadership is that it is extremely important to understand and to practice. The fact that someone is in a leadership role, does not mean he or she is a good or ethical leader. People may not realize the impact and influence their actions and behaviors have on other people. If someone sees someone else lying, stealing or cheating, then he or she may be more inclined to lie, steal and cheat. However, if people sees another doing the right thing, by leading by example, giving the money back, helping others and overall doing the right things, people will then do the same. The old sayings go, "Monkey see, monkey do" and "actions speak louder than words." Ethics is central to leadership because leaders can and will influence others and will impact their decision-making. People who follow ethical leaders are more likely to develop and practice those same ethical traits and those traits will continue to be passed down from generation to generation, ultimately making a better society for us all.

In my opinion, ethical leadership is one of the most important qualities our society needs to possess. Ethical leadership is largely important in children. We

must teach our children to behave ethically, to do the right thing. In order to teach children this, we ourselves, must practice what we preach and lead by example, by our doing the right thing. In Kohlberg's theory of moral development, level 1, the Pre-Conventional morality, the moral code is shaped by the standards of adults and the consequences of following or breaking their rules (McLeod). These teachings stay with the children all the way until they themselves become adults and ethical leaders. We teach our future. Implementing ethical behaviors at a young age, the children will become ethically behaving adults.

Companies that conduct ethical behavior are better off. People respect people with good morals and values. People want to see leaders that promote value instead of profit, promote a future generation with success. Many people have suffered because of leaders not making ethical decisions. For example, Enron, WorldCom, Arthur Anderson, were all companies that were leaders in their industries but collapsed because of unethical accounting processes and decision making of their leaders.

Qualities of an Ethical Leader (Values and Practices)

There are numerous qualities that can be found in an ethical leader. "Ethical leaders always know how to do the right thing. It may be difficult to define exactly what "right" is, but a leader who is ethical is not afraid to do what he or she truly believes to be right – even if it is unpopular, unprofitable or inconvenient" ("10 Ethical Leadership Characteristics, Attributes, Traits"). Ten ethical leadership characteristics include justice, respect to others, honesty, humaneness, focus on teambuilding, value driven decision-making, encouraging initiative, leadership by

example, values awareness and intolerance for ethical violations (“10 Ethical Leadership Characteristics, Attributes, Traits”). These are some of the most important values that an ethical leader should have in order to be a good ethical and effective leader.

In order to be a good ethical leader a practice that one should follow to be effective is leading by example. The team looks to the leader to create the atmosphere the leader requires (Kahler). This is showing a strong work ethic, personal accountability, and fairness. Additionally an effective leader is an ethical leader. “Ethics is not simply knowing right from wrong . . . it is choosing, consistently, to do that which is right” (Kahler). Other practices a leader should conduct to be effective, are possessing and demonstrating integrity, fostering potential, communicating properly, having a sense of humor, being confident, having commitment, having a positive attitude and being able to inspire (Kahler). With a leader that performs ethically, everyone benefits. Positive Outcomes can be financial benefits, a better reputation, and happy employees and loyal consumers. Ethical leadership is important because leaders carry out these practices throughout the organization and influence others to do so as well. These qualities are important to have because by promoting ethical behavior we promote a high level of integrity that stimulates trustworthiness and encourages people to act accordingly. Character and integrity provide a strong foundation for other personal characteristics that direct our beliefs, morals, and decisions. Acting in an ethical way leads to a better society.

Respectable Leader Whom I Admire

There are millions of ethical business leaders in the world, each deserving a great deal of respect. A respectable ethical and effective leader in my opinion is Angelina Jolie. She possesses every characteristic that an ethical leader should have. Jolie leads by example by physically going to less fortunate areas in the world to help those individuals. She strives to serve others, puts others before herself; she respects others, is involved, and has individual strength, empathy and compassion for others. She works to help build communities and make a better place for all. Jolie has gone to places like Syria to help the refugees. She stands up against victims of sexual violence. Throughout her time she has helped save lives, provided food, water and shelter to many and worked for justice and fairness.

Angelina Jolie has inspired others to share in her passion for helping and serving others. She has inspired others to get involved and help do great work. She has helped create an ethical climate where she serves as a leader to help establish and reinforce values and morals. Jolie is a true missionary and ethical leader and should be respected and admired by all.

Conclusion

In my opinion, the greatest asset a company or individual can have is an ethical leader. People and companies that practice ethical behavior and ethical leadership can change the world for the better. We all have the ability to be ethical leaders and role models for the rest of the world, but it is up to us to use our voice and behaviors to encourage others to do so as well. Being a leader is more than being in charge; it is about encouraging, inspiring, and preparing others to do their best work.

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