

## INTEGRITY

*Integrity.*

Ask most people what they mean by integrity and they'll likely say "honesty," doing what you say you'll do, being ethical. Look at some of the cognate words that share the same root meaning and integrity comes into sharper focus. *Integers*: Whole number, not split-up into fraction. *Integrated*: Put together. *Integrity* means being whole, put together, being *one* person-the same person on the job or at home with family.

One of the most seductive ideas and dangerous temptation is to believe that you can live by different rules and values in your private life than in your public or professional life.

Business people sometime succumb to this temptation because they've behaved dishonorably under pressure. They bribed to close a deal. Stole secrets from competitors to win a contract. Cut costs by cutting corners. Then they tell themselves that's just the way it is in business; you have to do what it takes. And they tell themselves that they're really good people, though, because they care for their family and help out in the community. It's just that in business, you have to do what's necessary.

If business people sometime seek to overcome professional misconduct with private virtue, politicians often try to have it the other way. They want us to judge them, not by the most recent exposure of their sordid private lives and vices. They want us to believe lust and larceny *after hours* have no bearing on their trustworthiness as public servants. They ask us to admire and respect their public *image* and forgive and forget their private shame. Most of us can't get away with such moral schizophrenia in our own lives. And we shouldn't tolerate it in business or in government.

*Integrity.* Let's secure our own by demanding of ourselves the same high standards on the job that we strive to reach at home. And let's protect our institutions by demanding integrity of those who would manage, govern, or lead us.

For Ethics at Work, this is Gary Edwards

