

CAROLYN TURKNETT: LIVING ETHICALLY



Can one person really make a difference to the ethical culture at work? Carolyn Turknett, co-founder of an Atlanta-based consulting firm, says yes.

In her book *Decent People, Decent Company: How to Lead with Character at Work and in Life*, co-authored with husband Bob Turknett, she argues that if an individual—at any level in the corporate hierarchy—leads with character, that person can create an organization with a culture of decency, respect, and integrity.

Many women, however, find it difficult to disagree with their boss when they observe something wrong at work. They wonder if it's worth the risk to come forward about unethical activity they've seen or heard. They may fear losing their jobs, benefits and financial stability, but recent research reveals that something else may be at stake.

A Turknett Leadership Group study revealed that though female managers rated higher than male managers on 25 of 47 managerial and leadership competencies and as good as male managers on 21 of the 47 categories, the only competency women scored lower on was self-esteem. The study defined this category as a high level of self-worth and confidence.

"Women without confidence tend to stay quiet when they know something's wrong," says Turknett. "If the top brass is ignoring ethical standards of business, they are more likely to reward employees who blow the whistle with permanent vacation rather than bonuses."

Turknett Leadership Group (www.turknett.com) helps major companies like BellSouth, Georgia-Pacific Corporation, American Cancer Society, Hewlett-Packard and Mercer Human Resources Consulting achieve leadership character, an essential ingredient to a profitable and successful company.

"Leaders' mistakes, even enormous ones, can be overcome," she says. "But failures of integrity cannot. Companies must make ethics a priority if they want to be successful."

As public trust in corporate leadership erodes, Turknett says the importance of ensuring that employees at every level maintain integrity at work is the best way to reinvigorate organizations.

Turknett's Top Ways to Work Ethically Every Day

- Don't wait around for others to act ethically. You might wait a

while. Go ahead and take a stand even when others don't. You'll be respected in the long run.

- Take responsibility for your own mistakes. In a successful organization, everyone must take responsibility for and ownership of success and failure. Maintain personal accountability as well as hold others accountable. Don't take everything upon yourself, but be accountable for the things you are involved in. Take responsibility for the success of the collective effort. Humility is concerned with results, not recognition.
- Control your emotions. Believe that you can control your environment and affect change. If you cannot control your emotions, you can't manage others. Maintain emotional responses that are goal producing.
- Remember that every little thing matters. Is there a difference between stealing millions of dollars in company stock or a box of paper clips? In the most fundamental sense, the answer is no. The consequences might be worlds apart, but the action in both scenarios is the same and they're both wrong. Be sure to maintain integrity when no one is watching because someone always is.

