

A QUICK guide to help build character in your workplace...

We all want our places of business and employees to demonstrate good values—and strong character, but good character doesn't just happen. It is up to each of us to lay a solid foundation for character development by providing an environment that teaches right from wrong and by acting as positive role models. OK, so it may not always be easy to teach "character"—but the task is not impossible.

Use the TEAM strategy in your workplace:

TEACH

Teach your employees that their character counts—that their success and happiness will depend on who they are inside, not what they have or how they look. Tell them that people of character know the difference between right and wrong because they guide their thoughts and actions by six basic rules of living (the Six Pillars of Character): trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship. Develop an Ethics Code or Standards of Conduct to promote ethical behavior—not to boost productivity and profits.

ENFORCE

Instill the Six Pillars of Character by rewarding good behavior (praise is usually enough!) and by discouraging all instances of bad behavior by imposing fair, consistent consequences that prove you are serious about character. Demonstrate courage and firmness of will by enforcing the core values when it is difficult to do so. Be certain that your ethic code's provisions are enforceable in terms of union agreements, other regulations and Constitutional rights. Be sure there is a mechanism for enforcement and the resources are available to enforce the code. A credible and efficient process for receiving complaints, investigating charges and determining guilt or innocence is crucial.

ADVOCATE

Continuously encourage your employees (and vendors) to live up to the Six Pillars of Character. Be an advocate for character. Don't be neutral about the importance of character or casual about improper conduct. Be clear and uncompromising: that you want and expect your employees to be trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring and good citizens.

MODEL

Be careful and self-conscious about setting a good example in everything you say and do. Hold yourself to the highest standards by honoring the Six Pillars of Character at all times. You may be a good model now, but remember, you don't have to be sick to get better. Everything you do, and don't do, sends a message about your values. When you slip (and most of us do), act the way you want your employees to behave when they act improperly. Be accountable, apologize sincerely—and do better!