



The way I see it...

BY PAUL KINDINGER

Unscrupulous behavior – a sorry legacy!

FIFTY billion dollars is a large sum of money in almost anyone's book, including Bill Gates or Warren Buffett, yet that is the amount of money another Wall Street fund operator has purportedly stolen from his clients. Day after day we are now bombarded by stories similar to this one where some unscrupulous business scheme has caused untold pain and suffering for others who had placed their trust and faith in the individual, institution or company in question. Politicians are also at the center of such controversies, i.e., the governor of Illinois is the most recent example of self-serving greed gone crazy.

What is going on? It seems as though we have completely lost touch with some of the core values that allow individuals, companies, organizations and even nations to excel and be great. Growing up in a rural area, it was often the practice to do a deal on a handshake and take someone at his or her word. Today it would take a Philadelphia legal firm six months to construct an agreement to do the same deal. With every story or incident like those in the headlines on the six o'clock news, the cost in both time and money increases. When ethics and trust are low, cost and time spent increase, not to mention the damage to our reputation as a person, company, institution or even a nation.

I am especially concerned about the impact of these incidents on younger generations who hear these stories and see this behavior. What kind of message are we sending to them? Will they believe this type of behavior is acceptable? Will they perpetuate the poor ethics and greed that has led us to such a low point in our history? Would you want people with poor ethics and morals working for you?

In my way of thinking, we must act and act now to stem the tide. Sitting idly by and merely accepting this type of behavior is unacceptable. Also, saying to ourselves that since I am not directly affected today, it can be someone else's problem, is not acceptable either. We are all impacted every time a politician or business displays such greed and disregard for others. What can each of us do?

For one thing, we can look at ourselves in the mirror and ask a simple question: Am I a person of high integrity that others would trust? Do I consistently apply the principles of honesty and high ethical standards day in and day out, even when no one is looking? It starts with each one of us reaffirming our core values and making certain they stand up in the light of day.

Next, we can ask ourselves, are we setting the right example for our children or employees? Do we visit with them about how to stand up for what we believe and be true to our core values even when it is tempting not to do so? Our character, after all, will be put to the test and it will be revealed by the decisions we make when faced with a dilemma that tests our core values and beliefs. Are we confident we are equipping those closest to us to do the right thing and make the right decision?

Then what about the others we have contact with, like banks, suppliers, politicians or even friends and neighbors? Do they display the highest ethics and integrity? Do you hold them in high regard and trust them? If not then we must ask why we are associating with them. Even as I write this article, I have to question and reexamine some of the relationships in my span of influence based on the subject we are discussing in this column.

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I realize we all have individual interpretations of what constitutes high ethics, morals and trust, but I also realize that we have to start somewhere to rebuild the character, integrity and trust that is the foundation for greatness. Our system will not endure unless we take steps now to correct the problem and rebuild our confidence in our institutions, businesses and each other.

As I have stated on many prior occasions, I sincerely believe we can and will do what is necessary to reestablish our core values. I am not naïve enough, however, to suggest that the world has not changed and we could go back to the handshake way of doing business. I am convinced, though, that we must get closer to the ethics and trust of those days of my youth – and that's the way I see it. ■

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