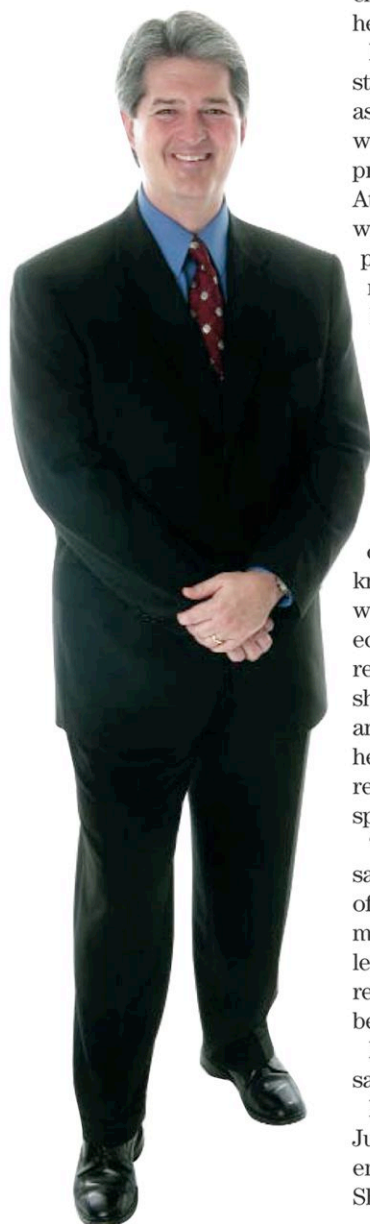


Your greatest asset

BUILD YOUR CHARACTER ON INTEGRITY FOR THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS.



Julie's interview was outstanding. She was bright, articulate and full of enthusiasm over the possibility of joining my team. Although she was relatively young, her resume was impressive. Her first job out of college had allowed her to lead major projects, all of which ended successfully, and now she was ready for a new challenge. The decision to hire her was an easy one.

Early on, Julie surprisingly struggled with the projects assigned to her, but she worked hard and soon proved she could do the job. At the end of her first year, I was preparing to offer her a promotion into a leadership role — one that would bring her increased responsibilities as well as increased income. It was a promotion she had earned but would never receive.

At this same time, I happened to meet an executive from Julie's former company, and I asked if he knew her, mentioning how well she had done as a project manager on my team. I reminded him of the projects she had led at his company and the results described in her resume. Slowly, a look of recognition and concern spread across his face.

"I hate to tell you this," he said, "but Julie didn't lead any of those projects. She was a member of the team, but the leadership role as well as recognition for the results belongs to someone else."

He shook his head sadly and said, "I'm sorry." And so was I.

By the end of that day, Julie was no longer an employee of my company. She tearfully explained that

she had lied on her resume, expanding the description of her former role in order to be given the chance to lead major projects — something she knew she could do.

Tragically, Julie was right. She was a fine project manager. But in manipulating her way into the position, Julie made a devastatingly bad decision: She assumed that her talent and skills were the only requirements and that once they were evident, nothing else would matter. In the process, she damaged her greatest asset: her character.

Throughout your career — and your life — you will be faced with the temptation to take shortcuts, to ignore your values in order to get something you want. In the pressure of the moment, the compromise can seem small and unlikely to be discovered, while the job or the promotion feels like the most important thing in your life. Trust me, it's not.

The next time you are faced with a decision like this, there are two things you must remember:

Ultimately, the truth is always revealed. You need only reflect on today's news for ample evidence that the truth about a person or a situation is ultimately known. But whether the actual facts are made public or the people around you simply sense the inconsistencies between

your image and your actions, your character is evident.

Whenever you make a decision, imagine yourself explaining every aspect of it to someone whom you respect. If you can feel proud of what you did and why you did it, it's likely to be the right choice. This simple test would have saved Julie immeasurable pain and embarrassment.

No aspect of your job is worth compromising your character. I've often wondered how Julie felt each day in her role, knowing she had lied to get it. I imagine she was always afraid that somehow, someone would find out. I'll never know the price she paid in worry and lost energy, but I will never forget the anguish on her face when she realized everything she had lost. In that moment, she would have given anything to go back and make a different choice.

Build your character on integrity. It's the foundation of everything that really matters in your life, whether it's your career, your relationships or your inner sense of who you are.

Every choice to do what's right, every decision to speak a difficult truth and every action taken with integrity, even when no one's watching, strengthens your character. Through the strength of your character and the choices you make, you will determine both your destiny and your legacy. <<

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