

Integrity: The Reality

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Introduction

Emeritus Professor Greg Whateley has presented a collective definition of Integrity that emphasizes Honesty and Principles as its foundation. Furthermore, Integrity is viewed as an Umbrella that encompasses the Value, Rational decision making, and Professionalism of an individual, and it will also form a group behavior and organizational culture in order for Integrity to thrive.

In Thailand, public administration practice promotes Integrity in the form of *Good Governance*, which includes the three main pillars of Participation, Transparency, and Accountability. It is believed that Good Governance will promote Trust in public administration that would in turn would bring about efficiency and effectiveness in public services to the communities.

On the other hand, Integrity is something that is abstract and invisible, nor measurable. It can only be observed from human behavior proving that Integrity does exist within the individual and to what extent.

However, in the management circle, there is a saying that what cannot be measured, cannot be managed. Therefore, given the fact that Integrity is recognized as one of a key success factor in business performance, it is both interesting and challenging to construct a measurement for integrity, in order to capture its standing so as to implement a capacity building program to enhance it - to a desired level.

Human Behavior

Integrity has its influence in driving human behavior to a desired and acceptable standard, as set forth by an individual, family, friends, the work place and the community. However, to understand the *link between integrity and human behavior*, a knowledge of human decision-making process would help illuminate the relationship.

Generally speaking, people make their choice based on the net benefits received from their decision. And normally, before making their decision, people would face a trade-off among different actions that they can take, and each action taken would result in others being left out and considered as a cost, economically known as an *opportunity cost*.

People also prefer more to less and respond to incentive, and will take their action right up until they cannot add further positive net benefits. The above process is considered as a rational decision-making process and mainly based on an economic thinking and consideration.

As a result, there exists a constraint in promoting Integrity, and it remains a to overcome and maximize the returns from the Integrity to a desired level in the work place and community.

Nature vs Nurture

As integrity exists within the mindset of an individual, a question of its existence whether from nature or nurture would be interesting to investigate.

A recent research work in management hypothesized that First Impression is lasting -or not, yielded more than 50% correct response. Impression is mainly influenced by Personality that normally comes by Birth, especially how a person looks - attractive, extrovert, sympathetic, to name a few.

However, Integrity can be framed and trained as normally occurred during the orientation of the newly recruited staff. The level of Integrity would be augmented in correlation with a nurture type program, the time spent and its frequency.

However, the character of the person - or nature - cannot be disregarded and should be an important pre-qualification for certain executive level and the job that requires a contact with customers and team workers. Therefore, a personality development and communication skills program would add value to a company competitiveness.

Trust

Trust is part of Integrity. Trust is broadly defined as what people do and what they say they will do. A Company performs better, when its culture for teamwork is based on Trust. Intuitively, there is a linkage between Integrity, Honesty, and Trust.

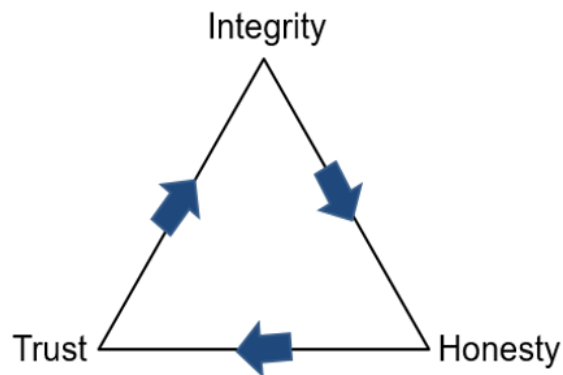


Figure 1: Integrity Triangle

The *Integrity Triangle* shows a linkage between Integrity, Honesty, and Trust. The triangle can be considered as an Integrity portfolio, which includes Honesty and Trust, and a few more characteristics of human behavior.

From a Thai businessman's opinion survey on their key success factor, *Honesty* was cited as number one factor. Honesty is elaborated as, telling the truth about the price and quality of products and services, to their customers.

It can be hypothesized that Integrity relates positively to Honesty, which will lead to Trust. Trust is believed to influence the productivity of the organization's teamwork, which will lead to a satisfactory performance - and sustainability.

Capacity Building Program

Integrity lies within the mind of the beholder. People attach different value to their choice of action that interacts with other people. The outcome of such action may yield satisfaction and create intrinsic value beyond expectation, or no externalities result. A number of research supports a hypothesis that integrity is positively associated with the level of performance.

Figure 2 demonstrates people with different characteristics that relate to their level of behavior and performance.

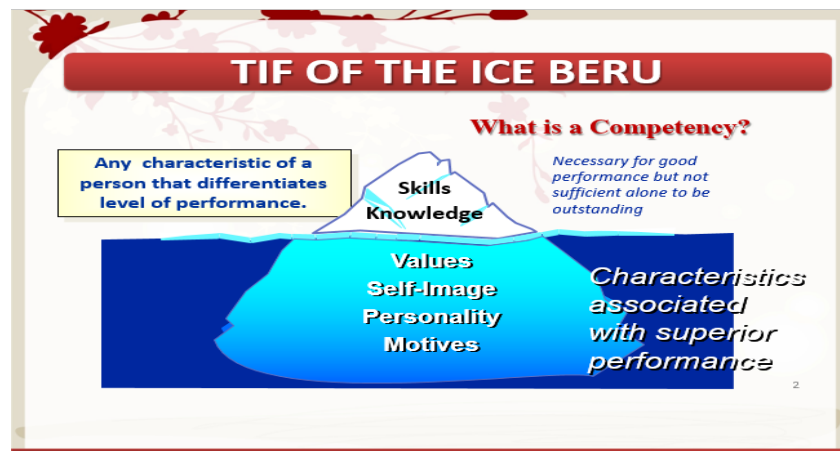


Figure 2: Integrity as a Superior Performance

Values, Self-Image, Personality, and Motivation can be considered as a component of Integrity, Honesty and Trust. The latter three items are more visible from human behavior and measurable than Integrity itself.

With the evident role of Integrity in promoting a company's competitiveness, a strategy to enhance its contribution is justified. The strategy should be initiated, in the form of a Capacity Building Program, for staff to participate - through hybrid delivery.

A Knowledge Management Register should be developed to collect information and case study of the company experiences in the staff misconduct, and use a brain storming workshops to learn and find solutions to mitigate the unfavorable outcome in the future. Role play should be employed for Personality Development, Honest and Trustworthy appearance.

The case of recent misconduct in the company and by others in the similar industry, should be collected and shared continuously among the staff. In this Capacity Building Program, Integrity can be

transplanted, nurtured and thrived for the transparency of operation, satisfactory performance, and the organization sustainability.

In summary

Integrity is a psychological state that exists, when people consider their actions, they agree to interact with another person, because they have positive expectations about how the response would be. Normally people adopt a rational decision-making process, where the net benefits and costs of their action are considered and the best alternative will be chosen.

Integrity, as a state of mind, is abstract and invisible, and untouchable, so a surrogate of Integrity, being **Trust and Honesty**, could shed more light on the topic. It is hypothesized that Integrity is related to Honesty, which in turn relates to Trust. And Trust is believed to be a Key Factor for Business Success. Therefore, Integrity as an influencer of Human behavior, should be recognized and monitored and the organization should initiate a strategy to promote Integrity in the workplace.

A **Capacity Building Program** is suggested to include the Knowledge Management of any misconduct cases from within - and outside - the organization to be learned and brainstormed to mitigate the undesirable outcome in the workplace moving forward.

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