



Character Is an Essential Competence

If you were hiring a new CEO, what are the most important qualities you'd look for? Surely you'd want a high level of demonstrated competence - knowledge and experience, intelligence, vision, communication and relationship skills, and the ability to motivate, manage and solve problems. But what about qualities such as honesty, moral courage, accountability and fairness?

Despite bold rhetoric about the indispensability of good character, many hard-driving organizations are willing to be "flexible" on the character issue to get a person perceived to be exceptionally competent.

Thus, many current scandals - in business, the church and college sports - occurred because organizations compromised their principles by recruiting, retaining or tolerating leaders with serious character flaws that generated costly accusations of wrongdoing and undermined trust, morale, teamwork and loyalty.

I used to tell clients that competence and character were two separate aspects of intelligent employment decisions. Now, I think it's a mistake to separate the concepts. Today, good character is an essential aspect of competence.

Long ago, Samuel Johnson said, "Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, but knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful." Warren Buffett updated the notion. He said, "In looking for people to hire, look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence and energy. And if they don't have the first, the other two will kill you."

Since it's easier to train a person of good character to do a job well than it is to develop character in a skilled but unprincipled employee, if you have to choose, hire for character and train for skills.

This is Michael Josephson reminding you that character counts.

J-3: Character is an essential competence-Michael Josephson-Cindy Bader