

Building CHARACTER

March 2004 Edition

A New Twist on Character

To keep a character emphasis fresh and life-changing, sometimes it must be viewed from another perspective. An Oklahoma manufacturing company has discovered how to help individual workers take a personal stake in their company-wide character initiative.

Cookshack, located in Ponca City, has emphasized character for over three years. At the onset of their endeavor, president Stuart Powell and the management team selected punctuality, self-control, honor, diligence, and responsibility as core values necessary in employees. Each job description also listed five other qualities chosen to help the employee deal with specific responsibilities.

Just this year, however, Cookshack changed their job review process to encourage employees to evaluate each other, instead of having a character emphasis always come from a supervisor or manager.

At quarterly small group meetings, attendees give each other a rating of one through five on specific character qualities that relate to their job responsibilities. They then set two

goals to address defined areas of character growth. Once each employee has worked through this process, supervisors give additional feedback and provide each person with bulletins addressing the qualities they have purposed to build in their personal lives.



The employees at Cookshack have purposed to encourage each other toward a high standard of character.

“It has really brought our employees together and put that challenge out in front of them to develop character,” Powell stated.

Consider trying this approach in your organization, especially in voluntary settings. You may also want to try it with your management personnel before expanding it to all employees. Even if you do not use the same method, take the time to think about how you could take your organization's character emphasis to the next level.

Character

The qualities built into an individual's life that determine his or her response, regardless of circumstances

Aspects of Character:

- Evaluate areas for improvement.
- Take personal responsibility.
- Do your best.
- Praise character in others.
- Make character growth a way of life.

Character and Reputation

Our character differs from our reputation. Similarly, a tree is quite different from the shadow it casts.

In the morning and the evening, a tree's shadow can grow far beyond the tree's actual dimensions. During the heat of the day, the shadow becomes much smaller. At night, the tree's shadow may become almost imperceptible.

Similarly, others can have many different perceptions of us and their opinions will fluctuate dramatically. Our reputation occasionally approximates our character, but perceptions do not always perfectly reflect reality.

Character expresses itself more accurately in our private thoughts and actions. Difficult situations and everyday pressures reveal the character we have already built into our lives and provide opportunities to reinforce what we tend to become.

Thus, every day holds the possibility of positive character development as we respond constructively to the people and conditions around us.

We must make a conscious commitment to clearly understand each quality, to purposefully hold ourselves to the highest standards of behavior, and to demonstrate respect for others by recognizing the character behind their actions.

Good character maintains personal integrity regardless of circumstances and lays the foundation for becoming a better person, spouse, parent, neighbor, coworker, and citizen.

True success is more dependent on how you overcome obstacles than on the recognition you receive. Purpose to overcome challenges with good character, and a good reputation will follow.

Legislating Character

It is true that you cannot legislate morality. However, as many states are discovering, it is quite possible to pass legislation that provides for character development in schools across the country. At least twelve states have passed legislation that encourages character education.



and lists nine general values: human dignity, equity, honesty, courage, freedom, personal and social responsibility, community, justice, and equality of opportunity. Florida and Oregon have laws that encourage the "Character First! Education Series" or a similar program.

Does it matter which program a school eventually chooses to use? There are well over 100 different character education programs. Many are excellent, while others have shortcomings. As you consider emphasizing character, make sure the training focuses on foundational principles, irrespective of age, gender, race, religion, education, financial status, and personality.

To learn more about character education in schools, visit www.characterfirst.com or call the *Character First! Education* office at (405) 815-0001.

"Intelligence plus character—that is the true goal of education."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

While allowing districts to establish their own programs, Arizona law requires "instruction in the definition and application of...the following character traits: Truthfulness, Responsibility, Compassion, Diligence, Sincerity, Trustworthiness, Respect, Attentiveness, Obedience, Orderliness, Forgiveness and Virtue."

California law cites "mounting evidence that well-considered programs in ethics and civic values can be effective in fostering the development of ethical behavior, civic competence, and responsibility"

Laughter and Tears The Rewards of Character

Will Rogers was known for his laughter, but he also knew how to weep. One day he was entertaining at the Milton H. Berry Institute in Los Angeles, a hospital that specialized in rehabilitating polio victims and people with broken backs and other extreme physical handicaps.

Of course, Rogers had everybody laughing; but then he suddenly left the platform and went to the restroom. Milton Berry followed him to give him a towel; and when he opened the door, he saw Will Rogers leaning against the wall, sobbing like a child. He closed the door, and in a few minutes, Rogers appeared back on the platform, as jovial as before.

If you want to learn what a person is really like, ask three questions: What makes him laugh? What makes him angry? What makes him weep?

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Integrity Crisis*.

Thad Allen noticed the benefits of emphasizing character in the Chick-Fil-A® restaurant he operates, and now he helps teachers give Topeka, Kansas, school children a taste of those benefits.

Working with Topeka's school district, Mr. Allen donates meal certificates for teachers and school administrators to present to each child who demonstrates good character.

Rosanne Haberman, coordinator of guidance and counseling in the Topeka Public School District, said they plan to recognize and reward every student in the elementary and middle schools by the end of the school year. "It's been a great asset to our program," she said, noting how the certificates increased the student's enthusiasm for character and made the environment more conducive for teachers and students to learn about character together.

Mr. Allen has donated over 8,000 certificates to the school district for use to "catch" kids in the act of displaying good character.

Mr. Allen's efforts to help children with character development has received widespread coverage in the local media and his restaurant has received positive feedback from people in the community as well. Topeka's City of Character initiative has publicly recognized Mr. Allen's generosity, commending him for his contribution to encouraging character in the community.

Children in Topeka, Kansas, are reaping the rewards of character—in a delicious way.



Upcoming Seminars

[Implementation Seminar](#)

May 25, 2004

August 24, 2004

[Effective Leadership Seminar](#)

August 25, 2004

(405) 815-0001 for more information.

About CTI

The Character Training Institute (CTI) was established to encourage true success in businesses, organizations, schools, communities, and families by encouraging character growth and development. With forty-nine qualities at its center, *Character First!* offers a variety of training and resources to stimulate character growth in individuals from all walks of life.

The Character Training Institute is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization based in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.