

Building CHARACTER

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CHARACTER FIRST! IACC
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF CHARACTER EDUCATORS

www.characterfirst.com

Constructing Character

Character is important. No one debates that point. Companies across the nation are implementing a character emphasis in order to strengthen their employees. But how long does it take to show results? In some cases, not long at all.

"We're in the construction field," says Peggy Sprague, Vice President of Electronic Systems Services, Inc. "There's definitely a need for character in the construction field."

In the six months since this Florida-based direct digital control company began using *Character First!*, there have been clear results. "Employees are taking pride in their work," says Sprague. Increased attentiveness, alertness, and thoroughness have resulted in higher quality work. This in turn reflects well on the company.

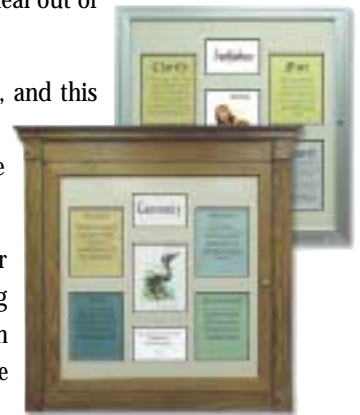
ESSI began their emphasis by sending the managers to a local training with consultant Gerald Petersen, and then jumped into the program. "We began to hold monthly character meetings, passing out the bulletins, and then, two

months ago, started recognizing employees for character on their yearly anniversary."

What's the key? According to Sprague, praising for character. "It has already increased employee loyalty. On the morning of the monthly meeting with employees, there is a feeling of anticipation." Sprague purchased character certificates and special certificate holders. "We also have flashlights engraved for the field employees, and really make a big deal out of the whole thing."

"A lot of our employees are more educated, and this reinforces what they have been doing for a long time, but alone. Now they're not alone anymore."

Gradually, ESSI is raising the standard in their company, and at the same time are impacting their community for good. If all that can happen in six months, it will be exciting to see the effects in six years!



Diligence vs. Slothfulness

Investing my time and energy to complete each task assigned to me

Five aspects of diligence:

- Finish your projects.
- Do a job right.
- Follow instructions.
- Concentrate on your work.
- Do not be lazy.



Dangerous Diligence?

Branches cracked as the tree smashed toward the ground. With a thud the birch tree landed, startling birds into silence. Unconcerned, a furry brown mammal waddled toward the top of the tree and began to gnaw away extra branches.

The expression "busy as a beaver" did not come about by chance. Throughout history, beavers have consistently demonstrated such diligence as they build, repair, and strengthen that they have become a figure of speech.

Beavers' diligence directly affects their life span; they must continue to work or they will die. A beaver's teeth never stop growing, and gnawing trees keeps them worn down. If a beaver stops chewing wood, his teeth grow so large he cannot eat, and he will quickly starve.

Benjamin Franklin was well-known in his time, and is still revered for contributions to American history. Although one successful career is sufficient for most people, Franklin had seven—some simultaneously! He was a scientist, inventor, statesman, printer, philosopher, musician, and economist.

Franklin credited his success to a particular proverb often repeated by his father: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before [ordinary] men." At the end of his life, Franklin could reflect, "I have stood before five kings, and dined with two."

Your diligence in small tasks will directly affect your success in larger responsibilities. A habit of diligence, though difficult to build, is not soon broken, and can make the difference between success and failure.

“I’ve learned that what you see has a lot to do with what you get.”
 —A teacher from Oklahoma

Making Character Visible

When it comes to emphasizing character, don’t forget the importance of visual reminders. Just as architecture, décor, and even music can set the mood of a shopping center or restaurant, so the layout, decorations, and visual appeal of a school can affect the attitude of those within.

One way to develop an atmosphere of character is displaying posters around the campus—in classrooms, hallways, school entrances, cafeteria lines, and even restrooms. In addition to *Character First!* posters, schools may also design customized posters for specific locations. These signs might include a character quality, its definition, and related key concepts. For example, “I will pick up after myself” could be useful in the library and “I will wait without getting upset” at the water fountain. Ask students to think of locations, select a quality, and design a



poster that would be a visible reminder for all who see it to practice good character.

The more attention you give to good character, the more students will understand what is important in life and the standards they are expected to follow. Here are some other ways to make character noticeable in your school.

- Include a regular character column in your school newspaper.
- Play character songs or peaceful music as students arrive and depart from school.
- Display the quality of the month on the school marquee.
- Incorporate “A School of Character” in your next order of bumper stickers or T-shirts.
- Sponsor a character essay contest. Submit winning essays to local newspapers.

Opera

“When I was a boy, my father, a baker, introduced me to the wonders of song,” tenor Luciano Pavarotti relates. “He urged me to work very hard to develop my voice. Arrigo Pola, a professional tenor in my hometown of Modena, Italy, took me as a pupil. I also enrolled in a teachers college. “

“On graduating, I asked my father, ‘Shall I be a teacher or a singer?’ ‘Luciano,’ my father replied, ‘if you try to sit on two chairs, you will fall between them. For life, you must choose one chair.’ I chose one. It took seven years of study and frustration before I made my first professional appearance. It took another seven to reach the Metropolitan Opera.”

When you have a goal, do you press on to the end and complete it no matter what?

Guideposts Magazine

A Salute to Character

“Ladies and gentlemen, please stand for the presentation of the colors.” All the guests rose, and with those words, the International Building Cities of Character Conference commenced.

For two days, delegates from the United States and around the world listened to national and international speakers on topics ranging from “Training in City Government” to “Media Field Reports.” Each session was designed to present a broad overview of available resources, as well as practical examples and ideas.

One of the highlights of the conference was the banquet. On Monday night, the attendees, as well as many from the community, gathered for a formal banquet. Two speakers delivered addresses. Tom Hill, founder of *Character First!* and COO of Kimray, Inc., reviewed how teaching good character is impacting the world. Jane Jayroe, former Miss America and director of tourism for the state of Oklahoma, spoke on the process of Oklahoma’s becoming a state of character.



Attendees left with renewed vision and purpose for the character emphasis in their city or country. From 18 states and 8 countries, one comment was heard over and over. “When will this conference be next year?” they asked. “I want to come and bring others.”

The International Association of Character Cities salutes those men and women who are working hard to have an impact on their community by building good character.

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.

CTI is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization based in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.