



The Virtues Project

# The Five Strategies as a Framework for Excellence

The virtues strategies can be applied as an assessment tool to take the ethical temperature of an organization and build team unity. It is effective to begin with a Virtues Pick for the meeting.

## Strategy 1: Speak the Language of Virtues

What are the Strength Virtues of our organization that support our successes? What are the Growth Virtues we need to develop to be more in alignment with our ethics and mission? What virtues do we want to have more of from each other?

## Strategy 2: Recognize Teachable Moments

What is the Teachable Moment facing our organization now? Without shame, blame or naming names, what virtues do we need to call on to move forward in alignment with our vision?

## Strategy 3: Set Clear Boundaries

How clear are our guidelines and expectations for employees? What justice and human rights issues need to be addressed? What corporate boundaries need to be clearer? How well do our personal boundaries protect our time, energy, and health?

## Strategy 4: Honor the Spirit

Do all of our stakeholders feel treated with dignity? How committed are our people to our standards of service and courtesy? How successfully are we imbedding our values into our environment using virtues language, arts, ceremony, and routines?

## Strategy 5: Offer Companionship

How well do we listen to one another? How effectively have we created a climate of trust? How often do we take the time to ask the right questions? What issues in our organization need to be heard?

Suggested Resource: *Virtues Reflection Cards*



The Virtues Project



## Inspiring Leadership

by Linda Kavelin Popov



## Questions Ethical Leaders Ask

## 5 Strategies for Creating a Culture of Character



*“These times require exceptional leadership...leaders who respect and value people as human beings, trusted leaders that walk the talk and do so with conviction and integrity.”*

*William J. Pesce  
President & CEO, John Wiley & Sons*



The Virtues Project

## Dedication

**This booklet is dedicated to the memory of H. B. Kavelin, a leader who inspired dedication in every employee and trust in every client.**

The Virtues Project was founded in 1991 by Linda Kavelin Popov, Dr. Dan Popov and John Kavelin. It is a global grassroots initiative that inspires the practice of virtues in everyday life. The Project is a catalyst for the renewal of kindness, justice, and integrity in more than 85 countries and was honored by the United Nations during the International Year of the Family as a “model global program for all cultures”.

The Virtues Project has inspired and mobilized many thousands of families, educators, leaders and employees to commit acts of service and generosity, to heal violence with virtues, and to create safe and caring communities.

The Five Strategies are the signature contribution of The Virtues Project. They are based on the virtues that are universally valued by all people and cultures.

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**“..The virtue approach focuses on what we are, believing this will ultimately take care of what we do.”**

– RICHARD HIGGINSON, AUTHOR

## Virtues: The Gifts of Character

Accountability  
Appreciation  
Assertiveness  
Commitment  
Compassion  
Confidence  
Consideration  
Cooperation  
Courage  
Courtesy  
Creativity  
Determination  
Dignity  
Diligence  
Discernment  
Empathy  
Enthusiasm  
Excellence  
Fairness  
Flexibility  
Forgiveness  
Friendliness  
Generosity  
Honesty  
Honor  
Humanity



Humility  
Idealism  
Initiative  
Integrity  
Justice  
Kindness  
Love  
Loyalty  
Moderation  
Orderliness  
Patience  
Peacefulness  
Purposefulness  
Reliability  
Respect  
Responsibility  
Self-Discipline  
Service  
Strength  
Tact  
Tolerance  
Trust  
Trustworthiness  
Truthfulness  
Unity  
Wisdom



# The Five Strategies

**These strategies help us to live more authentic, purposeful lives, to raise children of compassion and idealism, and create a culture of character in our schools, workplaces and communities.**

## Strategy 1: Speak the Language of Virtues

Language has the power to discourage or to inspire. Using virtues to acknowledge, guide, correct and thank awakens the best within us. Encouragement and appreciation are great motivators. Virtues language also allows us to balance discipline with tact.

## Strategy 2: Recognize Teachable Moments

Recognizing the virtues needed in daily challenges helps us to become life-long learners open to the lessons of character. Avoiding shaming and blaming defuses disunity and backbiting. Calling employees to a high level of accountability motivates them to perform with excellence and to make amends instead of excuses.

## Strategy 3: Set Clear Boundaries

Boundaries based on respect and restorative justice create a climate of peace, cooperation, and safety in our homes, schools and communities. People give their best both ethically and energetically when guidelines and parameters are clear, as opposed to the chaos of constantly shifting priorities and agreements.

## Strategy 4: Honor the Spirit

We sustain our vision and purpose by integrating virtues into our activities, surroundings, celebrations and the arts. This strategy is also about nurturing individual dignity at all times. Themes such as the Virtue of the Week highlight corporate values.

## Strategy 5: Offer Companionship

Being deeply present and listening with compassionate curiosity guides others to find clarity and to create their own solutions. It supports healing and growth. Asking *what* and *how* questions allows others to get to the heart of the matter.

# Introduction

Ethics and virtues have risen to the forefront of our awareness, as giants of industry and government fall to their knees for violating the public trust.

There is a vital need to inspire commitment to a code of ethics, rather than merely require compliance. How do we ignite and sustain a spirit of genuine integrity in the workplace?

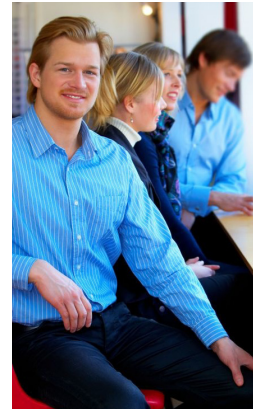
## Virtues at Work

In a world that idolizes celebrity and material wealth, often at the cost of personal integrity and happiness, there is a growing movement to return to simpler ideals. Many of our best and brightest graduates choose opportunities to make a difference over the option to command the highest entry level pay in history. In 2005, 12% of Yale graduates and 120 Harvard seniors chose to work with non-profits such as “Teach for America” to serve inner city children. Enrollment in the Peace Corps is up by 80%. Businesses that value social responsibility, transparency and respect for the environment are far more likely to attract and keep the new idealists.

## Bring Out the Best

People want to do the right thing, but they tend to go with the flow of what is valued by management. They need leaders who value and exemplify ethical excellence, who are just as determined to abide by their own standards and care for their people as to win numerical goals.

Virtues such as honesty, excellence, compassion, fairness and service are the elements of character. They are at the heart of every mission statement. The Virtues Project offers simple strategies that integrate character into corporate culture, and tap our natural desire to do well by doing good.



*Linda Kavelin Popov*

CO-FOUNDER, THE VIRTUES PROJECT





## Questions Ethical Leaders Ask

**“The mastery of integrity comes down to three things: being authentic with yourself, being authentic with others, and doing the things you have said you would do.”**

– GAY HENDRICKS & KATE LUDEMAN

### 1. What is the difference between ethics, values and virtues?

Ethics are agreed upon standards of conduct. Values are whatever people consider of worth, from material success to the importance of ethics. Virtues are simpler and more elemental. They are innate qualities of character. All cultures and beliefs teach that the meaning of life springs from the virtues of our character, such as respect, compassion, excellence, and honor. They may be practiced differently from one culture to another but they are universally valued.

### 2. How can we bring the values of our people into synch with our corporate values?

People are multi-sensory learners. To honor the corporate code, they need to have ownership in either forging it or expressing it. They need to hear it in the way language is used to encourage and appreciate them, and in their performance feedback; see it in visuals displayed on walls and screen savers, and above all, in the actions of managers. They need to experience it personally and emotionally in team practices such as Virtues Picks for meetings. They need to be touched by the passion and compassion expressed in the corporate values. They need to know that ethical excellence is expected of everyone without exception.

### 3. What leverage do I have to motivate my people to be ethical?

Your two greatest tools are your talk and your walk – how you speak to people, and how you live by your virtues. The single most motivating factor in dedication to the job, other than love for the work itself, is appreciation. From our earliest years, we crave approval and recognition. We need to be truly valued.

Virtues language is a tool that enhances authentic self-esteem by expressing appreciation specifically: *“I appreciate the initiative you showed in this project.”* *“That was really helpful.”* *“Thank you for giving 100% excellence to this as usual.”* When correction is needed, ACT with Tact: Appreciate, Correct, and Thank. This “positivity sandwich” allows people to save face and accept the Teachable Moment.

To model the virtues in your code of ethics, you don’t need to be a paragon of perfection. You do need to be an example of humility. When you make a mistake, take personal responsibility for it and make amends, not excuses. Share your victories and your challenges with others. Invite their support. Always be fair. Above all, show that you care. Acknowledge birthdays and births. Walk around and look your people in the eye. Be a world class listener.

### 4. What chance does one organization have against the tide of self-serving opportunism in the wider culture?

A key element that sustains a spirit of commitment is the desire to do something positive for the world. And people want to belong. If you create an island of caring and integrity in a sea of selfishness, people will want to stand with you.

### 5. How do we use our strengths in the area of ethics to attract good employees?

Good people are attracted to an organization that distinguishes itself by its high standards. This includes commitment to environmental sustainability, genuine caring and excellent service to customers or clients, and nurturing strong team unity. Companies that are good corporate citizens and invest employee time in innovative service projects build deep loyalty. People want to be part of something positive, something that inspires hope for the world.

### 6. In a climate where it is difficult to retain talented employees, how do we build their loyalty?

Ethics plays a vital role here. If your organization values fairness, service, honesty and integrity, your managers must practice impeccable integrity in reflecting those values.

When mistakes occur, even at the highest levels, employees need to know they will not be covered up, but rectified. When integrity is the norm, their idealism will remain in tact. If they know they are being compensated fairly and receive additional rewards for exceptional excellence, this builds loyalty as well.

People want to enjoy the workplace, where they often spend the majority of their time. Humor, celebrations, pausing for applause when goals are won, and taking time for recreation together forges meaningful bonds.

### 7. What is an appropriate response to an ethics violation by an employee or manager?

Rather than blaming and finger pointing, treat the action as a Teachable Moment in which everyone involved seeks to discover their own responsibility and fix the problem. Employees will be more likely to feel safe coming forward after an error. Our goal as leaders is not to be tormentors but mentors. Rather than just getting rid of someone who makes a mistake, the goal is restorative justice, with an opportunity to make amends. If someone has a habitual pattern of violating the ethics code, this is a choice not to remain with your organization.