

# AMT EVENTS



INSIDE  
THIS ISSUE:

76

The Formation  
of the  
American Hospital  
Before the  
Twentieth Century

ALSO

78

Communication:  
The Key to Better  
Relationships

Official publication of

# The Business of Kindness – Part 3

## Building Leadership Character Traits

*Using kindness as a driver in business is a proactive approach aimed at enhancing the health and sustainability of the people within our organizations; the influence of a leader in creating this positive and sustainable culture cannot be underestimated.*

**Olivia McIvor**

“  
...character traits  
help us to create a  
kinder workplace

In previous articles [that appeared in *AMT Events* in March, 2007, and September, 2006], I discussed using kindness as a core value and driver.

### Leadership is earned

Leadership is not the right of being born into the role because of tenure or being in the right place at the right time or even less, getting a position because of whom one knows. It is not for the person who looks about the room, points the finger when all isn't going well and says "Why don't they fix this problem?" Rather, it's someone who steps up to the plate to fix the problem without being directed. We are each responsible and capable of developing our own leadership skills and talents, thereby making ourselves accountable for managing our own careers. Our organizations are hungry for individuals who are self-directed, personal growth-oriented, with a propensity toward lifelong learning. In my experience, these are the individuals who succeed at all levels, regardless of the position or pay grade they hold. It is true that there is no security in any job – it's in the person who holds the job.

I used to believe that character was something you either had or didn't, but not something one could cultivate without great struggle. I learned quickly in my career that if this was truly my belief, there was little hope for the humanization of the workplace, and without hope there can be

no change; it is what gets us up every morning to do the best job we can. I have taught literally thousands of individuals leadership skills, and when I say "skills," I mean it, because at the end of the day, that's all that a trainer can do. No one can motivate you but you. We are each responsible for building our own character and then giving it away. Helen Keller defined character as something "that cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved."

English historian James A. Froude suggests to us that we cannot dream ourselves into a character; but instead we must be willing to hammer and forge ourselves into it. So what character traits help us to create a kinder workplace? Here is a look at each theme and the Character Building Traits to support creating a kinder workplace.

### Kindness to Oneself

- Authenticity
- Attitude
- Resilience
- Excellence

### Kindness to Colleagues

- Trust
- Compassion
- Courage
- Friendship

## Kindness in the Community

Service  
Responsibility  
Integrity  
Tolerance

Over the next two installments [in future issues], I will touch on each of the twelve traits everyone is capable of cultivating.

### Authenticity: Honor who you are.

As an authentic person, you are genuine and cultivate awareness of your own behaviors, knowing what you value and living life on purpose. You are not embarrassed to show your humanness toward others. You are consistently genuine and true to yourself, and others feel safe and comfortable in your presence. Cultivate awareness of what is most important to you and allow others to see your true self.

### Attitude: Exercise your power to choose.

When you see someone with a great attitude, you know it. It's in all they do, from being consistently positive to exuding enthusiasm in their actions and words. People with great attitudes approach life as a classroom, with curiosity and humor. They cultivate a belief that they control their life and that they choose their response to their surroundings. Develop an ability to look for the positive lessons in your daily challenges by deciding that you are responsible for choosing your attitude.

### Resilience: Develop strong roots to weather change.

As a resilient person, you have strong reserves of inner and outer strength. You are consistently conscious of seeking new ways to build strong personal foundations so you may weather the storms of life and work. Through increasing your awareness of how to care for yourself mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually, you are able to feel more balanced, accepting change as a natural course of life. Practice a proactive approach to creating a healthy and vibrant lifestyle by examining your own behavior in response to challenging events.

### Excellence: Commit to grow your potential.

Excellence is having a firm commitment to grow your potential through being committed to life-long learning. You believe in stretching and challenging yourself by giving 100 percent of your best in everything you do. Taking pride

in your endeavors both in work and life you recognize that no accomplishment is insignificant but rather a contribution to the whole. Choose to show up, be present and give 100 percent of your best self to everything you do.

### Trust: Practice honesty with consideration.

You are someone in whom others can confide; they know you will listen without judgment. You are firm, friendly and fair and act with the highest of integrity by always giving credit to those who deserve it. You always

strive to be honest, to tell the truth with consideration for the feelings of others. You are known to be reliable and to keep your word. Speak your truth with honesty and integrity by demonstrating you are as good as your word.

### Compassion: Show you care with unconditional acceptance.

You are a confident person who offers support without thought of your own needs being met first. Compassion is not about learning to say the perfect things at the perfect time, but rather about showing consideration for others' pain through listening and caring. You see it in a warm, safe smile, a nonjudgmental look of encouragement, a kind touch, or anything that will lift another person to a place of higher confidence. Practice being nonjudgmental by reaching out to those around you and connecting with empathy.

Watch your thoughts; they become words.  
Watch your words; they become actions.  
Watch your actions; they become habits.  
Watch your habits; they become character.  
Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

— Anonymous

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