

President's Column

by Mara S. Ruff

Leading with Integrity

Integrity is not only a value we hold high at the Decalogue Society of Lawyers but, I believe, one of the most vital characteristics we possess as attorneys. It is at the very core of our being, a value we choose to nurture or ignore. Building character around integrity means being authentic, living a life of honesty and truth, and never compromising. It means choosing your thoughts and actions based on values rather than personal agenda. And, integrity is not something you show to others, but it is how you behave behind someone's back.

The dictionary defines integrity in three parts: 1) the quality of being honest and the firm adherence to a code of strong moral principles or incorruptibility; 2) an unimpaired condition or soundness; and 3) the quality or state of being complete or unimpaired or completeness. Integrity is not built through one defining moment in time, but rather a series of several moments throughout time, small decisions, demonstrating consistency, increasingly strengthening character, and building reputation. This means choosing to build someone up rather than tear someone down. This means choosing to tell the truth even if there are consequences. This means choosing to help others rather than just helping yourself. Integrity makes you a more secure, confident, humble, and self-aware individual.

Integrity is the secret ingredient for a sound, incorruptible, and complete leader. Leading with integrity organically builds trust and respect amongst your peers. Leaders that demonstrate characteristics of high integrity are often thought of as gracious, hardworking, helpful, honest, dependable, supportive, patient, and accountable. As members of Decalogue, we have a choice to follow-through on promises, refrain from gossip, and admit when we are wrong. As lawyers, reputation is everything. We are accountable to our professional code of conduct to lead with integrity by example. Actions always speak louder than words. As lawyers, we are expected to show up on time, tell the truth, be fair, and follow through on our word.

Integrity is the choice between what is convenient and what is right. As lawyers, we are constantly judged on our character. We make decisions every day that define who we are and what we believe in. At Decalogue, we all share the core value of integrity, the foundational leadership quality upon which our character is built. Let's continue to build character together, impacting those around us, leading by example.

I am proud to lead such an esteemed group of lawyers that I have the privilege of calling my colleagues and friends. It has been an honor to serve as your President.

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