

BEING ETHICAL CAN BE PROFITABLE
By Edgar Medina D.

“There's no such thing as business ethics,” says renowned author John Maxwell. “There's only ethics.” That is true – ethics cannot be limited to just one area of life. Unfortunately, it is a subject almost forgotten by institutions and organizations in many parts of the world – especially in an increasingly competitive world that is focused on immediate results. Under such pressure, acting with integrity can seem like a disadvantage. But in reality, it's the opposite: ethics builds trust, and trust is the foundation of every solid and lasting relationship.

In the business world, trust is not built overnight; it is earned over time through consistent decisions, kept promises, and behavior grounded in firm principles. A customer, supplier, or colleague who sees integrity in our actions is much more likely to build long-term relationships, recommend us, and partner with us on future projects. Ethics is not only a moral value but also a strategic one.

This is why, although acting ethically is not always the easiest path, it is certainly the most profitable in the long run. Let's look at some biblical wisdom:

1. **Avoid shortcuts.** There is no shorter distance between two points than a straight line; and no longer distance than a “shortcut.” “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12).
2. **Examine your true intentions.** Human nature often leads us to self-deception; we justify ourselves and lie to ourselves. We must be willing to be held accountable and allow others to speak into our lives. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).
3. **Acknowledge your ethical failures.** No one is perfect. Eventually, we all fall. The real merit lies not in never falling, but in getting up, taking responsibility, and apologizing when needed. “For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes” (Proverbs 24:16).
4. **Pay attention to warning signs.** Lack of integrity never just appears overnight. The real failure is ignoring the signs that threaten our character. “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty” (Proverbs 22:3).
5. **Don't play with fire – you will get burned.** “Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?” (Proverbs 6:27-28).

6. **Seek counsel when making ethical decisions.** Lean on people of integrity. “For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers” (Proverbs 11:14).
7. **Be willing to pay the price.** Ethics is a strength built from small, consistent choices to do what is right. “Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity, and honor” (Proverbs 21:21).

Our ethics are revealed through integrity – being the same person in all settings; doing what is right even if no one else is doing it; and refusing to do what is wrong even if everyone else is doing it. For today’s businesses and business leaders, the most profitable alternative is to become the kind of partner they would want to do business with. The path is called: Ethics.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What is your definition for the word “ethics”? Do you agree with the statement that there is no such thing as ‘business ethics,’ but only ethics that apply to any area of life? Why or why not?
2. In what ways can strict determination to uphold high ethical standards build trust?
3. How can consistent ethical practices prove to be profitable – for an individual, as well as a company or organization? What if decisions guided by ethical convictions result in the loss of a client or an important business deal?
4. Of the biblical principles cited that apply to integrity and ethical behavior, which stands out most prominently for you?

Challenge for This Week

Take some time this week to evaluate your own ethical behavior and standards. It might be helpful to meet with someone with whom you can be transparent – a mentor, trusted advisor, or a small group with whom you feel accountable. Ask their opinion about whether they see you as someone who consistently maintains high ethical standards.

Share with one another your commitment to maintaining ethical principles and pray that God will give you the strength not to compromise, even if it seems expedient to do so.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Proverbs 10:9, 11:1,3, 12:22, 16:11, 19:5, 20:17,25, 21:6; Matthew 6:33

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