



General Schwarzkopf has this quote about leadership:

*Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character.  
But if you must be without one be without the strategy.*

This from a man whose entire role was based on strategy.

Your integrity is essential to your success as a leader, and it will forgive a lot too, especially when you're first starting out.

When I was a new teacher fresh out of college, I was overwhelmed. I was in way over my head and frankly, I wasn't that strong of a teacher yet. I turned to my mother for advice as she was a school teacher too, and she used that saying- *your students don't care what you know until they know that you care.*

And I did care. A lot.

I still do.

And they knew that so it forgave some of that rough first year of teaching but it wouldn't or shouldn't forgive it forever. Because I could only start from the beginning. That's where we all start. But it was up to me to invest the time to become a more effective and confident teacher.

Same when I became a leader.

I wasn't very good at it in the beginning but it was up to me to invest to make sure I was becoming an effective leader, which is part of integrity. When you're in this role, it's up to you to make sure you're doing it well.

So what does integrity mean to you? This is a word that means different things to different people and it looks different to different people.

An important question for you to ask is, are you leading with integrity?

How do you keep yourself in check?

What happens if you cross the line or you're not sure if you crossed a line?

If you're trying to make a really difficult decision and you don't know what the right thing is to do, who in your circle can help you? If you don't have a mentor get one and once you get one get another one and another one.

You can have different mentors for different reasons and it's really helpful if they're not part of your organization so you can separate that piece from it.

You can have someone to turn to when you're not sure if you cross the line, or they can



let you know when you did. They can help you think through really difficult decisions.

Remember as you are building relationships- trust takes time.

My first director position when I was a bull in a china shop I kept saying, 'I know what I'm doing. Why isn't anyone listening to me? I know what I'm doing.' But they didn't know me. I didn't give enough time to build relationships with them. They knew that they could trust me and there is no speeding that up- it just takes time.

You have to show again and again that you're coming and leading from a place of character and integrity. Confidentiality is a huge part of that.

I can't tell you how many supervisors I've had that have complained to me about other members of the team. That really made me see them in a completely different light.

Be extremely conscious of who you're talking about and who you're talking to. Taking accountability for yourself and holding members of the team accountable is central to your integrity.

You need to be aware that one mistake can really ruin it all. Maybe not permanently, but it will take a lot of work to build that trust back up.

Always err on the side of caution, and be extremely diligent and careful about what you're saying and who you're saying it to.

If you have the liberty, talk it through with your team. If you're the one that made the mistake, talk about it. Give them space to share what they're feeling and how it affected them. If it's about something else going on at the organization again, if you're at liberty to talk about it talk about it. It will really help build your relationships with the team.

Now when we talk about words like values, integrity, character, those are all personal.

You want to make sure for your own sake that you're leading from those places that you feel good at the end of the day about the way that you're leading.

When we talk about a shared set of values and beliefs and ways of showing up in the workplace, that's when we're talking about ethics.

Ethics are the professional version of the beliefs and integrity that you have.

So something for you to think about is how, will you use ethics to help your staff make decisions?