The Benefits of Good Character

Overview

Since founding the Police Dynamics Institute in 1998, I have had the opportunity to train thousands of law enforcement officers from around the world. And I have witnessed firsthand the benefits of establishing police organizations based on the principles of good character.

Character can be defined as the inward motivation to do what is right, regardless of the circumstances… and regardless of the cost. It springs from the heart and is revealed by what a person does, even when no one is looking (or maybe especially when no one is looking!).

> "Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without strategy."
> ~ General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

I've heard character described as who you are when no one else is around. I'll go a step further and say that character is who you are when no one else is around… and you don't think you'll get caught!

Character is an individual matter, but your character greatly impacts those around you. The moment-by-moment decisions you make and the effort you put into your job impacts public perceptions, morale, productivity, effectiveness, victim relationships, community relations and workplace excellence – even the crime rate is impacted by your character and that of your agency. At the end of the day, that same character will affect relationships within your family… good or bad.

Character transcends age, position, financial status, race, education, gender, and personality. It affects your decisions, words, attitudes, goals, relationships, and actions. It is only through building character that you can reach your full potential. Good character makes you a better officer, leader, spouse, parent, employee, neighbor, and citizen. Technology advances, information expands, and the world changes but the essential character qualities for producing effective individuals, families, and workplaces do not change.

Character Determines Success

To effectively serve your community, you must first be committed to serve your family, your fellow officers, and your agency. Character provides a basis for this. Investing time and energy into the development of positive character qualities will enable you and your fellow officers to correctly respond to life situations and establish successful relationships in both your professional and personal lives.

Achievement in life is always birthed from effort and discipline. The same is true of character. Basing your focus on character and developing character in the life of your organization will require diligence, vision, commitment and creativity on your part. But the reward of seeing lives change, families draw closer together, and success replace failure more

than compensates for any amount of effort. If you care about your agency, fellow officers, community, and family, you can do no less.

Character Improves the Workplace

Most workplace problems stem from a violation of one or more character-based principles. Generally, they can be traced to a lack of specific character qualities such as alertness, attentiveness, self-control, kindness, forgiveness, and truthfulness. Yet most job-related training programs are competency-based, not character-based. So, many agency leaders are looking for a new, but proven, approach to improving the character of their organizations.

> "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."
> ~ *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Applying character-based principles in a strategic fashion allows you as a leader to address the daily challenges that are character related. Organizations and government agencies currently implementing character initiatives are experiencing up to a 90% decrease in employee turnover, absenteeism, workers' compensation costs and work-related injuries. Citizens are reporting improved satisfaction, excellence of service and a renewed confidence. Officers and employees are demonstrating increased loyalty, enthusiasm, creativity, productivity, personal responsibility, and willingness to serve.

And, when you think about it, it makes sense. By focusing on qualities such as attentiveness, alertness, obedience, responsibility, and respect, the incidence of work-related injuries, theft, false reports, and sexual harassment should go down. And they do!

If your desire is total quality management and workplace excellence, character is the key.

Building Character

Building character is not like building a machine or a product. It is not a task you complete in a day, a week, or a year. Building character takes a lifetime.

Changing one's character requires little more than hard work and commitment. Just as a mountain is constantly being reshaped by weather patterns, your character is reshaped by the choices you make and the principles by which you choose to live. New characteristics are developed by deliberately changing your old patterns of thought and behavior.

By casting a new vision for your organization that clearly defines the standards of acceptable conduct, you provide direction in the

performance of duties, establish guidelines for the exercise of discretion and furnish a blueprint for the future.

Character Motivates Achievement

Character determines performance.   When you demonstrate the character qualities essential for success, you will be successful... period. It's called cause and effect. Improved efficiency, enhanced effectiveness, higher morale and greater accomplishments will flow from internalized standards of attitude and behavior.

Think of achievement as the fruit… and character as the seed that produces the fruit. If you plant a good seed, you will reap a good harvest. And if you plant a bad seed… well, you get the picture.

> "Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, and only character endures."
> ~ *Horace Greeley*

Specifically, a fully-implemented character initiative:

- Identifies the root causes of many chronic problems
- Clarifies employee expectations
- Reduces hiring mistakes
- Develops a moral compass for behavior
- Reduces dependence on policy
- Limits inappropriate behavior and liability
- Defines good behavior
- Provides a common vocabulary
- Instills universally desired qualities
- Creates a good attitude in employees
- Reduces stress on leadership
- Provides a basis for future leadership
- Influences others for good
- Builds a foundation for success in life
- Enhances personal and professional relationships
- Defines and clarifies agency values
- Evaluates performance on good character
- Unifies team members agency-wide

- Fosters accountability
- Reduces silent approval of wrong behavior
- Improves effectiveness
- Cultivates stronger community relations
- Reduces waste
- Increases productivity
- Develops citizen relationships
- Lowers workers' compensation costs
- Reduces employee turnover
- Promotes peaceful communities
- Provides public recognition annually to honor every employee without favoritism
- Helps officers reach their full potential
- Teaches subordinates how to appeal
- Highlights the value of each employee
- Balances personal and professional roles
- Focuses on lifetime goals of significance
- Provides a sense of purpose
- Serves the community
- Strengthens families
- Teaches how to make wise decisions

Character Builds Relationships

Positive character qualities enhance teamwork on the job, strengthen harmony in the family and build trust into relationships. These trust-based relationships are cornerstones for your success in fighting crime and restoring peace in your neighborhoods.

Negative attitudes, on the other hand, break down relationships resulting in tensions from anger, disrespect, disloyalty, dishonesty and lack of initiative. These adverse dispositions have a direct impact on your effectiveness, your professionalism, your reputation and your ability to accomplish the police mission.

Character Increases Health

Research has shown that there is actually a health benefit associated with good character. Positive attitudes reflected in friendly smiles, cheerful words and sincere praise boost the immune system, reduce stress and improve our sense of physical, emotional and spiritual wellness.

There is also the issue of being a good steward of your body. That's why I have now incorporated a wellness component to the Police Dynamics training and published the Dynamic of Wellness website.

Character Reduces Injuries

Character qualities such as Attentiveness, Obedience and Alertness make us less prone to injure yourself or others. Many organizations have reported dramatic decreases in on-the-job injuries after initiating a character program. This is also reflected in striking reductions in workers' compensation claims. Now, that's real money… that can be applied to other things.

Character Protects Against Liability

How many times has a lack of character resulted in liability. Under current law, an agency that does not emphasize character can be liable for negligence in hiring, retention, and training.

It is well established that outbursts of anger, poor judgment, lack of self-control, inattention to duty, deception and prejudice can lead to liability. Vicariously, supervisors and others in authority can be held liable for the negligence of staff members that do not exhibit proper character traits. Therefore, character development provides insulation from a myriad of performance problems including civil and criminal liability.

Character Development Is Wise Law Enforcement

The character-based principles found in the Police Dynamics training program will help you establish common ethical ground on which to build a top-notch law enforcement agency that serves as an example of personal character and professional integrity.

Lasting solutions to organizational problems come when officers and employees internalize positive character qualities. When these qualities are emphasized, required, and recognized, staff members are encouraged and motivated to reach their full potential.

Ray Nash, President

Police Dynamics Institute, Inc.

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About Police Dynamics

The Police Dynamics Institute, Inc. (PDI) has provided character-based law enforcement training on an international basis since 1998. The president of PDI, Ray Nash, has an extensive background in law enforcement leadership, training and human resource development. Ray has been in the profession for 30 years and has been training law enforcement personnel for the last 26 years. He has served as a Police Chief for two different agencies, a trainer, an independent consultant, and three terms as the elected Sheriff in Dorchester County, SC.

Ray has provided consulting and technical services to thousands of law enforcement officials over the years in a variety of topics but specializes in the area of character-based leadership. He has built an organization that calls upon professional law enforcement trainers to present instruction in a variety of disciplines.

The **Police Dynamics™** program is a series of character-based principles, known as "dynamics," that are designed to empower police officers to be more effective in both their professional and personal lives. The dynamics are packaged in a fast-paced and exciting training program that is entertaining, enlightening and relevant to law enforcement today. The principles are universal in their application and pertain to virtually any relationship.

After implementing the **Police Dynamics** program, agencies from around the world have reported an increase in morale and public support coupled with a decrease in crime and citizen complaints.

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