

**Ethics Script for C-Level executive written by Kevin Doell**

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[OPEN ON CEO SITTING AT CONFERENCE TABLE. THERE ARE ASSORTED WORKING PAPERS, *CODE OF CONDUCT*, COPY OF A DOCUMENT OR LEGAL PAD. HE IS READING FROM A BOOK.

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “The time is always right to do the right thing.”

LOOKS TO CAMERA:

And do it we must ... Thank you for joining me today.

Starting with broad strokes ... and continuing with more business-specific detail in the future ... I will be sharing my thoughts on a topic that I believe is of the utmost importance to everyone in our company ... ETHICS.

Some people tend to think that ethics is only about staying out of trouble. Well, simply acting to avoid trouble is no substitute for real ethics. There’s more to it than that. Taking a proactive approach to good ethics is good business.

Now, to understand the true meaning of ethics, you must understand the origin of the word. It is derived from the ancient Greek word *ethos* [EE-thoss], which actually meant character. Thus, *ethics* have to do with the integrity of a person's character, not rules or regulations.

Think about it for a moment.

Integrity and character are the two of the most important assets that you possess as an individual. If someone compliments you on your character, there is no higher honor. By contrast, if someone were to question your integrity, it would be the worst kind of personal affront.

In a business setting, much as in life, ethics have as much to do with the little things as they do with the bigger challenges.

For instance ...

Are you as good as your word?

Do you treat people as you would wish to be treated?

Do you do what's right, or do you settle for the expedient solution?

Have you ever condoned or chosen to ignore unethical behavior?

When you tally up the answers to these questions, the sum total of the parts amounts to your reputation. And folks, there is no gain in business or in life that is worth the risk of losing your good reputation.

Let's take a look at how our individual actions can affect our collective reputation.

First and foremost, how we carry ourselves and how we treat others directly affects how consumers, business partners and investors ultimately view our company.

As a public company, our financial performance is judged by Wall Street and our shareholders every day.

Looking beyond the numbers, it's fair to say that a company's most valuable asset is its reputation. Our reputation is tied directly to the quality of our people, and our people are excellent.

So the more we can personally focus on doing all the little things that reflect well on our character as an organization ... things that will collectively build our "reputational capital" ... then, the greater the return we will realize on our financial capital.

Quite simply, the value of having strong “reputational capital” is demonstrated by the fact that people and companies prefer to do business with other people and companies they feel they can trust. ... Character counts.

I fully realize that when you are faced with difficult questions, the answers don't always come easily. That's why our Code of Conduct is so critically important for us as an organization. It gives us a common platform of understanding that shapes our actions both as an enterprise, and as individuals who work for and represent its business units.

The Code is an essential part of our business operations. It helps us define our culture as an organization:

We believe in what's right and just.

We meet business goals without compromising our core values.

And we encourage free and open communication.

These values are summed up by the guiding principle: “Tell the truth ... Tell it all ... Tell it now.”

[PAUSE]

Obviously, as employees, you are all aware that signing our Code of Conduct is a condition of your individual employment.

On a larger level, the Code of Conduct serves as the foundation of our corporate governance and compliance programs ... a topic I will address in greater detail on another day. Suffice to say, the road to integrity is clearly marked by values such as ethics, honesty and respect.

Personally, I believe that decisions, not conditions, determine your ethics. Ethical people should make good choices regardless of the circumstances. If they make enough good choices, they begin to create better conditions for themselves.

The more people involved, the greater the pressure for conformity. No matter how much pressure there is, you must never allow others to force you into making unethical decisions.

Some people's reaction to an ethical dilemma is to avoid taking any action at all. To that, I would tell you that inaction is also a decision, and a poor one at that.

To me, ethics, character, integrity and values are not just buzzwords. For any organization to succeed, values must be personified at an individual level first.

Corporations don't make the ultimate decisions about ethics. Ethical choices are made by individuals.

Thus, we are all personally responsible for adhering to and incorporating the Code of Conduct into our daily routines.

By operating with a set of uncompromising values as individuals and as a company, we will continue to deliver on the value proposition for which we are responsible to our stakeholders.

With the Code as our foundation, there should be no uncertainty. ...  
**We either do things the right way, or not at all.**

[PAUSE]

I hope my comments have given you a better level of understanding for our commitment to and ongoing focus on ethical behavior at every level of our organization. We have chosen to make ethics and integrity a priority, and I believe we are a better organization for it.

If there's one thing I've learned in my life, it's that if you believe something is important, you need to talk about it. You can't assume everyone else is on the same page as you if you aren't transparent in your words and in your actions. Also, you had better ask for feedback.

So, in closing, I encourage you to answer the one-minute survey that accompanies this video. Also, I welcome any comments or questions you might wish to direct to me personally via e-mail. If you send me an e-mail, please make “Ethics” as your subject line, and I will respond.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to continuing this dialogue in the future.

[END]