

Integrity in the fire house

By Wayne Bailey

A consultant was interviewed about quality control. The consultant said, "In quality control, we are not concerned about the product. We are concerned about the process. If the process is right, the product is guaranteed." William A Foster said: "Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives."

If we substitute the word 'integrity' for the word 'quality', would it mean the same thing? Would the results be the same?

Integrity is important in everything we do. I'm going to share a story with you called: "A very special seed – a story about integrity" from Character Counts in Iowa.

A successful businessman was growing old and knew it was time to choose a successor to take over the business. Instead of choosing one of his directors or his children, he decided to do something different. He called all the young executives in his company together.

He said, "It is time for me to step down and choose the next CEO. I have

decided to choose one of you." The young executives were shocked but the boss continued, "I am going to give each one of you a seed today – one very special seed. I want you to plant the seed, water it and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from the seed I have given you. I will then judge the plants that you bring and the one I choose will be the next CEO."

One man, named Jim, was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly, told his wife the story. She helped him get a pot, soil and compost and he planted the seed. Everyday, he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about three weeks, some of the other executives began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow.

Jim kept checking his seed but nothing ever grew. Three weeks, four weeks, five weeks went by, still nothing. By now, others were talking about their plants but Jim didn't have a plant and he felt like a failure.

Six months went by; still nothing in Jim's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants but he had



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nothing. Jim didn't say anything to his colleagues; however, he just kept watering and fertilising the soil. He so wanted the seed to grow.

A year went by and the CEO asked the young executives to bring their plants to work for inspection.

When Jim told his wife that he wasn't going to take an empty pot, she asked him to be honest about ▶

▶ what happened. Jim felt sick to his stomach, it was going to be the most embarrassing moment of his life but he knew his wife was right. He took his empty pot to the board room.

When Jim arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by the other executives. They were beautiful; in all shapes and sizes. Jim put his empty pot on the floor and many of his colleagues laughed, a few felt sorry for him!

When the CEO arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted his young executives. Jim just tried to hide in the back. "My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown," said the CEO. "Today one of you will be appointed the next CEO!"

All of a sudden, the CEO spotted Jim at the back of the room with his empty pot. He asked Jim to come to the front of the room. Jim was terrified. He thought, "The CEO knows I'm a failure! Maybe he will have me fired!"

When Jim got to the front, the CEO asked him what had happened to his seed. Jim told him the story. The CEO asked everyone to sit down except Jim. He looked at Jim and then announced to the young executives, "Behold your next chief executive officer: Jim!"

Jim couldn't believe it. Jim couldn't even grow his seed. "How could he be the new CEO?" the others said.

Then the CEO said, "One year ago today, I gave everyone in this room a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds; they were dead, it was not possible for them to grow.

"All of you, except Jim, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Jim was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new chief executive officer!"

- If you plant honesty, you will reap trust
- If you plant goodness, you will reap friends
- If you plant humility, you will reap greatness
- If you plant perseverance, you will reap contentment
- If you plant consideration, you will reap perspective
- If you plant hard work, you will reap success
- If you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation

So, be careful what you plant now; it will determine what you will reap later.

Just remember, what we plant is what we reap. If you're constantly planting bad seeds in the fire house, starting false rumors or using social media to bully someone, you're not setting good examples for others to follow and produce bad fruit. You have the ability to stop the act of planting bad seeds and use your integrity to help others plant only good seed. You'll be glad you did. 🔥