

ethikos Volume 32, Number 2. February 01, 2018 Ethical Leadership Principles: A foundation of organizational culture

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You may think to yourself, “I am not the leader; I am the _____.” Fill in the blank. If you are a registered nurse in a small office, you are a leader in the office as well as a nurse. If you are an attorney in a law firm, you are the leader in the practice as well as an attorney. Don’t overlook a potential leader because the word supervisor, manager, director, etc. is not in their job title, just as it may not be in your title. Leaders don’t function within the limitations of a title or job description, but they do their functions under the guidance of ethical principles. Leaders emerge because they demonstrate the emotional intelligence and the principles to create an ethical business culture. The integration of ethical leadership principles into an organization, regardless of the employee’s title, sets a sound foundation for a positive business culture.

In building a solid business culture, it is important to examine leadership soft skills and traits. Leadership is influence. True leaders influence the people they work with, and those people in turn impact the office, practice, or company (collectively, the organization). This influence can either be positive and ethical or negative and destructive to the team and the organization. Ethical leaders practice autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, veracity/fidelity, and justice/fairness. Leaders who positively influence people move at the speed of business, not at the speed of bureaucracy. In today’s internet and information technology-saturated work cultures, leaders need to understand blitzscaling, a term coined by Reid Hoffman at Stanford University. Generally, this means ethical leaders must gather information and data to make and implement quick and accurate business decisions, while considering what is fair and just for the organization. Ethical leaders who move at the speed of today’s business make informed decisions in phases that will positively influence change in themselves and their team.

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