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Six practices that can help foster an ethical company culture

By Sascha Matuszak

In an article for the *Harvard Business Review*,^[1] Robert Chesnut, general counsel and chief ethics officer at Airbnb, former federal prosecutor, and author of the book *Intentional Integrity: How Smart Companies Can Lead an Ethical Revolution and Why That's Good for All of Us*, describes some of the basic yet critical steps companies must take in order to foster an ethical culture.

Chesnut writes that executives, who were once called upon by shareholders to focus solely on profit, are now facing an ethical revolution led by stakeholders demanding more than just a hefty margin. Companies that fail to take ethics into consideration when doing business may fall by the wayside. Chesnut lists six practices he believes can help companies take the right steps forward:

1. "Lead by example."
2. "Make your ethics code your own."
3. "Talk about it."
4. "Make sure people know how to report violations."
5. "Demonstrate the consequences."
6. "Remember that repetition matters."

Companies that can internalize these practices are on their way toward building an ethical culture that values integrity over profit.

"Integrity is a powerful double-edged sword for companies today," Chesnut concluded. "Lapses can spark employee rebellion, customer blowback, and government investigations. But handled correctly, integrity can be a superpower that inspires employees and resonates with today's values-minded consumers."

¹ Robert Chesnut, "How to Build a Company That (Actually) Values Integrity," *Harvard Business Review*, July 30, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3bdCp9t>.

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