

## HONESTY

### What is honesty?

**Honesty is a commitment to being truthful in your dealings, representing yourself and your products and services realistically, and giving the appropriate amount of information necessary for strong and ethical decisions to be made.**

### Why is it important to be honest?

Clients and customers are not going to provide continuing support to your service or business if they sense there is a mismatch between the information they are given about what you are going to do for them and what you are actually deliver. If done consciously, in order to 'score business' for example, this is both misleading and dishonest conduct, and your clients and associates will know about it. Human beings have an acute ability to pick up on incongruence – that is, when words and actions do not match. When we sense this, doubts and uncertainties arise, about both the person in question, and the produce or service they offer, and there is a high likelihood that we will walk away and find another provider in whom we can trust.

On the other hand, if you display honesty in your interactions and dealings with people, they will have increasing trust in you, they will enjoy the experience of doing business with you, and they will want to do interact with you on an on-going basis. This is also the route that leads to our clients and customers becoming advocates and referees for our business and services. So trustworthiness, of which honesty is a big part, is a very valuable asset to cultivate.

It is equally important to practise honesty with ourselves because if we don't, we are operating under false assumptions, which results in us all too often producing undesired or unpredicted results and feeling powerless over our lives. Though kidding ourselves might work as a short term strategy to avoid facing something about ourselves that is less than ideal, in the long run it leads to much greater problems. So self-honesty is just as important as honesty with others.

Honesty generates more positive interactions with people in all spheres in which you operate and, as you practise it every more rigorously, It will become a character or quality naturally associated with you and anything you are affiliated with and, in this way it will build you a solid reputation.

When we are honest with ourselves, even if it means facing things that might be uncomfortable to own up to, it means that we give ourselves the opportunity to get a realistic grasp of where we really stand and which, in turns means we can come up with an appropriate strategy to get us to where we want to be. If we kid ourselves about what's really going on, we rob ourselves of the chance to actually get to where we want to go.

Think about this in terms of a skill; to take a simple example, if we pretend to ourselves that we are an expert user of PowerPoint, we might well start getting angry and frustrated when we can't get the results we want and blame the software and give up. If, however, we own that we really don't know how to use PowerPoint, it becomes really obvious that the next step is to hop onto an online course or get some in person training. To get from A to B in terms of personal and professional

development we simply have to know where A is (our current position) and where B is (where we want to go) which takes honesty with self. Without accurate information about these two points we simply cannot plan our route.

In summary it makes very good business sense to practise honesty with both our clients, colleagues and with ourselves. Honesty has the potential to have a very positive impact on our business bottom line as it acts as cement in relationships – and relationships are the foundation of any thriving business or enterprise.

### Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of honesty?

In contemporary society, our daily lives can easily become hectic and pressurised. We can easily get “caught up” in these pressures without even realising it and we slip into “survival mode” (doing whatever it takes) to meet these demands. If we buy into a survival mode of operating, we are far more likely to be tempted into a degree of dishonesty, in order to meet these needs. Unfortunately, by adopting this ‘instant gratification’ type of behaviour, we are sacrificing behaving with integrity and genuineness, and in so doing are damaging our relationships and reputation. In the long run this simply won’t pay off. We may succeed in getting immediately visible needs met, but we are going into overdraft when it comes to the future.

Another factor is that we may have learnt to portray ourselves in a non-genuine manner in order to appear a certain way in the eyes of others. The motivation for this is often to get the new business. However, once again, this ends up working against us, because people are able to make informed judgements for themselves, as they gain actual experience of working with us. So whatever the initial picture we paint for them, our true qualities will soon show through in how we behave and in the quality of what we deliver. If this is anything less than what we said we would deliver we are going to lose customers.

Because honesty is a relationship builder and relationships are what make our businesses viable. In the long term, it is actually more important than short-term financial gain. Sometimes this can be hard to remember, especially if we’re in the midst of a cash flow crunch. Consider however, that if honesty is something you practice you are building up a different type of credit – the type that might well mean that you can call a supplier, with whom you have built a strong, trusting relationship with, and renegotiate some payment terms. With no such credit in your relationships, this option is not going to be open to you. So, we can begin to see how we can actually increase our ability to achieve financial viability as a consequence of ethical business practices.

We can also slip up in the area of honesty with ourselves in the name of feeling good in the short term. We might kid ourselves about the reality of a situation we have going on, in order to avoid facing our part in it which might be less than ideal, so we paint a different picture for ourselves. What then happens, however is we are operating under false assumptions, which results in us all too often producing undesired or unpredicted results and feeling powerless over our lives. So self-honesty is just as important as honesty with others.

## Characteristics of an honest person

- The person portrays themselves accurately and realistically – which means neither overblown nor belittled.
- If a customer or client asks for something that isn't achievable this is stated up front. Options of what could be done, to meet at least some of their needs, will then be offered.
- If a customer or client asks for something that a person has not done before, however the person genuinely believes that they can achieve what is being requested, they are honest about the fact that this is a new type of request and also honest about the fact that they feel they can achieve the request.
- The person has a trust in the power of honesty because they see it as a foundational relationship builder and the quickest method of charting a course from A to B and arriving at the desired destination.
- Straight forwardness in how they speak; this doesn't mean bluntness, simply a clarity that is a delight to work with.
- Honest people carry a sense that it's OK not to know something and to simply say they don't know when they don't know. Beneath this tends to be a solid sense of self-worth.

## Evaluate your own honesty

Using these evaluation questions you may find some insight on your level of honesty.

- How honestly do you communicate the features and benefits of your products, services and abilities?
  - On a scale of 1 – 10, 1 being completely dishonest and 10 being completely honest, what score would you give yourself?
- How honest are you in realistically allocating your time to complete tasks to a satisfactory, or better than satisfactory, level?
  - On a scale of 1 – 10, 1 being completely dishonest and 10 being completely honest, what score would you give yourself?
- Do you consistently do/deliver what you say you will do/deliver?
  - On a scale of 1 – 10, 1 being completely dishonest and 10 being completely honest, what score would you give yourself?
- How honest are you in the commitments you make to others in terms of your ability to meet these commitments?
  - On a scale of 1 – 10, 1 being completely dishonest and 10 being completely honest, what score would you give yourself?
- How honest are you with yourself about your skills set and abilities?

- On a scale of 1 – 10, 1 being completely dishonest and 10 being completely honest, what score would you give yourself?
- How honest are you with yourself about your ability to meet deadlines and timelines?
  - On a scale of 1 – 10, 1 being completely dishonest and 10 being completely honest, what score would you give yourself?
- If you realise you are not going to be able to meet a commitment or a deadline how honestly do you handle this situation?
  - On a scale of 1 – 10, 1 being completely dishonest and 10 being completely honest, what score would you give yourself?

### Improve your honesty

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- Notice how it makes you feel when others are honest and what effect their honesty has on your feelings about your relationship with them (be that a business or personal relationship). Allow this insight to provide added motivation and inspiration for you to commit to becoming exceptional in your own level of honesty.
- When circumstances come between you and your commitments, ensure that you make contact with the other party as quickly as possible and be honest about the reasons for your tardiness. Be genuine and ask for understanding and renegotiate a revised deadline that is realistic – be honest with yourself as well as with the other party.
- If you work in retail or customer service, make it your habit to be honest in the ways you can help or offer assistance and if, in order to be honest, you have to say that you are not able to do something a customer is requesting then try to immediately follow this with an alternative suggestion about a way in which you can help them.
- If you find yourself embellishing your abilities or attributes, rather simply than give yourself a hard time, actually stand back and think about what it is driving you to do this. It is likely because you have hit an area in which you feel inadequate (and we all have some of these!) so the best course of action is to take steps to increase your confidence in this area; it might mean some training in the relevant area, or working with a coach, or picking up a book. The point is to do something constructive to upgrade in the areas in which you feel inadequate.
- Seek out a person (or persons) who you believe consistently demonstrate honesty. Interview them and ask them questions about their own development process to get to where they are now. Consider that this is a mentoring session where it may be expected that you will make a commitment to this person at the end of the interview and that it'll be necessary for you to follow through.

## Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of honesty, the following books, courses and consultants may be worth considering. Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources, the list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- <http://www.mindtools.com/> is a site High Ideals often refers people to as it is an incredible resource to assist people in developing their own professional skills regardless of whether they run their own business or work for someone else.
- <http://www.selfgrowth.com/> is a site High Ideals often refers people to as it offers both personal and professional self-development information and resources. You can type in any search word you want, such as “sustainable decision making” and you’ll get a list of articles, blogs, resources and links to other sites which could assist you in your own development.
- <http://www.high-ideals.com> – Check out the Member Directory section for High Ideals members who offer services which could support you, such as coaching, mentoring or consulting on High Ideals criteria/values.

## Author and editor acknowledgement

**High Ideals** would like to acknowledge and thank Narelle Holland for her work on this document. Narelle is the Victorian State Membership Manager of High Ideals, a life coach, consultant and trainer and assessor. To find out more about Narelle, please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

## Disclaimers and Other Important Information

**High Ideals Pty Ltd** is committed to ensuring that all of our services, products and information we share is foremost designed and delivered in a manner which has the potential to support others. Our values are focused on giving, being supportive and making a positive difference in the world. We are also dedicated to ensuring that we are at all times ethical demonstrating integrity at all levels. Therefore this Disclaimers page is necessary to provide clarity on a number of key points, as follows:

- All **High Ideals Pty Ltd** documents are for information purposes only.
- Clients and all who read these documents are responsible for their own decisions and **High Ideals Pty Ltd** will never provide advice or direct you what to do. Our services include sharing these resource documents, which are focused on assisting clients to raise their own awareness, by which they can make their own decisions and be responsible for their own actions. It is the responsibility of anyone who receives an **High Ideals Pty Ltd** resource document, whether they are a direct client of ours or were forwarded this document from a third party, to read our full terms and conditions available on our website: [www.high-ideals.com](http://www.high-ideals.com)
- The client and/or reader of this document are responsible for engaging in their own research, further reading, and exploration. This document is simply an information sharing starting point only.
- All of our **High Ideals Pty Ltd** personnel and members can contribute to our Resource Library, and share the responsibility for writing all of these documents. As a collective, we have a huge range of backgrounds and areas of expertise. We also take great care when sharing information to ensure it is accurate, useful and a product of sound research as well as our own personal and professional experience. Therefore many of our comments are born out of our many years of experience in a large number of areas of endeavour or interest and the successes of our clients is the evidence behind these strategies and techniques. If we are providing personal opinion, we make that clear, and take care to validate why and/or how this personal opinion may be useful in the total picture of self exploration of the client/reader. When we do share personal opinion, it is typically in the form of sharing from our relevant experience, ideas of strategies we feel may be helpful, and potentially have been helpful for us personally. Personal opinion never includes giving advice or providing specific direction to the client/reader. If we are referencing the work, thoughts or opinions of others, we also make that clear and give full attribution and acknowledgement to those other sources of information. We also share our validation for why we feel this information may be of benefit to the client/reader.
- We adhere to the Harvard Referencing System in providing reference information and acknowledgement for all books, websites and other information sources. We are continually updating our documents to match this standard. If you ever notice a reference which you feel does not meet this standard, please let us know by writing to [info@high-ideals.com](mailto:info@high-ideals.com) with this feedback so we can attend to it immediately.

- **High Ideals Pty Ltd** never makes any endorsement or recommendation of any websites, books, companies, products or services. Instead, we provide ideas for the client/reader to explore certain websites and books in particular. We review and carefully select which websites and books we feel may have some potential value to our clients/readers. Then, when we raise these ideas with the client/reader, we also provide our justification for why we feel the idea may have some merit. For example, if we raise the idea to the client/reader to explore a particular website, we will indicate what it is about that website which we feel has the potential to be useful to the client/reader. It is then the responsibility of the client/reader to make the final assessment as to whether or not it is actually useful.
- We also take no responsibility for the content of any website other than **High Ideals Pty Ltd**. We cannot control the accuracy, security or technical performance of any website other than our own. Similarly, we have no control over the content of any books we raise ideas for exploration about, or the availability of those books. It is the total responsibility of the client/reader to determine whether this information is for them to pursue further.