

**"Randy Pennington has 'cracked the code' of great leadership."**

—Ross Perot, Founder, EDS and Perot Systems

**ON MY  
HONOR  
I WILL**  
THE JOURNEY TO  
INTEGRITY-DRIVEN® LEADERSHIP



**RANDY G. PENNINGTON**

AUTHOR OF THE AWARD-WINNING *RESULTS RULE!*

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**RANDY G. PENNINGTON**



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# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER ONE

The Beginning . . . . . I

## CHAPTER TWO

Leadership: What Does Integrity Have to Do with It? . . . . . 17

## CHAPTER THREE

Master the Discipline of Personal Integrity . . . . . 33

## CHAPTER FOUR

Master the Art of Interpersonal Integrity . . . . . 53

## CHAPTER FIVE

Master the Complexities of Organizational Integrity . . . . . 77

## CHAPTER SIX

Traditional Principles and Twenty-First Century Challenges . . . . . 113

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Not the End . . . . . 131

Notes . . . . . 161

About the Author . . . . . 171

Acknowledgments . . . . . 173

Index . . . . . 175





## THE BEGINNING

IT BEGAN WITH FIVE words: “He’s a REAL BOY SCOUT.” Those were the words my client, Jim Horton, used to describe his boss. They were *not* meant as a compliment. Moments before, we had been at an impasse. Horton had hired us to provide consultation services for his firm. The project had gone well, and everyone was pleased. In fact, Horton had agreed to extend the scope of the agreement for an extra fee. Now, he was claiming that the extra work had been part of the original package, and he denied agreeing to any additional charges.

We *knew* we were right, and Horton *said* he was right. The old saying, “An unwritten agreement isn’t worth the paper it’s written on,” came to mind. Without written evidence or corroborating testimony, we would be forced to accept Horton’s account of the discussion.

“What about Mike Johnson?” I asked, remembering that Horton’s manager had attended the meeting where the extra work had been discussed, priced, and approved.

The client gave a now-I’ve-got-you smile and picked up the phone. He buzzed his superior and asked him to join us. When Johnson arrived, Horton gave him the details of the dispute, making his own position perfectly clear.

Johnson listened carefully until his associate finished, then shook his head: “Oh, no, the consultant told us about the extra charge up front, and we both agreed it was fair. Don’t you remember? In fact, you said the price was more than fair.”

Horton mumbled something and thanked his supervisor. After Johnson left, Horton began shuffling papers on his desk. The awkward silence was broken by my associate, who said with relief, "I'm sure glad Mr. Johnson remembered."

Horton shook his head in disgust, "Yeah, he's a real Boy Scout."

\* \* \*

The story you have just read is true, although we have disguised the identity of the client and the exact situation. And although it occurred over 15 years ago, Horton's contention that honor and integrity are not consistent with long-term success concerned me then and continues to do so today.

## MY SCOUTING PERSPECTIVE

I was a Boy Scout, although I never earned the rank of Eagle. Sports and other activities received more of my adolescent attention than Scouting, and I dropped out after earning the rank of First Class Scout. I always viewed the basement of the Kavanaugh Methodist Church as a place to hang out with my friends. Little did I know that between the games of four square, knot-tying competitions, and lessons about Native American life, the Scout Oath and Law were being drilled into my psyche.

I had no idea then that I would ever hear Boy Scout used as a disparaging moniker. Scouts in my hometown served as color guards for civic events, marched in parades, and went door-to-door collecting clothes or food for the needy.

Yet, here was a client in my grown-up world implying that the principle of doing what is right was archaic, outmoded, and fit only for children.

## **THE BAD NEWS**

Horton was not alone in his beliefs then, and many others share his sentiments today. A quick scan of recent headlines indicates that there are many who continue to sacrifice honor, integrity, duty, and service at the altar of expedience. Some of them are elected officials, some of them are business leaders—and sadly, they seem to be everywhere.

Executives and evangelists have been punished for playing fast and loose with the money of others. Accounting standards have been manipulated to lock in corporate profits. Elected officials have been sanctioned (or worse) for violating ethical standards. Stockbrokers have been found guilty of insider trading. Leaders in government, business, entertainment, and sports have seen their careers tarnished for inappropriate behavior with subordinates, minors, and other assorted partners.

We're not talking about differences of opinion between people of honorable intention. These actions represent a blatant disregard for leading and living with integrity.

When Watergate conspirator Jeb Stuart Magruder was asked how he had sunk to such a despicable level, he hung his head and said, "I don't know. I guess I just lost my moral compass." Is the real or perceived loss of moral compass the reason for the high level of distrust and cynicism that exists in our society? Or is it merely the fact that bad news sells? Are we deep into a moral malaise, or are we held hostage by an instant and insatiable craving for news? Either way, it is imperative that leaders in all walks of life regain and maintain the mantle of honor and integrity that inspires others to follow.

## **HOW BAD IS IT?**

James Patterson and Peter Kim provided a snapshot of our nation's views on leadership in their 1994 book *The Second American Revolution*.<sup>1</sup> According to their research, "two in three Americans don't believe

we have any leaders with the ability to address the nation's ills; half of Americans don't have anyone in their family they'd like to model themselves after; and 70 percent of Americans believe our nation doesn't have heroes anymore."

A 2004 Reuters/DecisionQuest poll suggested that things haven't changed all that much.<sup>2</sup> Sixty-one percent of those surveyed indicated that their trust in leaders and institutions had declined between 2000 and 2004. In addition, those polled were asked to grade specific occupation groups on a scale of A+ (totally trustworthy) to F (failing). Perhaps these results match your feelings:

- Most democrats: C+
- Most state officials or politicians in your state: C
- Most newspaper reporters: C
- Most republicans: C
- Most television reporters: C
- Most U.S. senators and congressmen: C
- Most entertainment celebrities: C-
- Most lawyers: C-
- Most corporate executives: C-

A 2006 Lichtman/Zogby Interactive poll reported that only 3 percent of Americans think Congress is trustworthy.<sup>3</sup> Corporate leaders did not fare any better with only 7 percent categorized as trustworthy. Only 11 percent saw the media as deserving a high degree of trust.

This is not a purely American problem. A 2005 poll commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Company reported that nearly two-thirds of Canadians have little or no trust in their political leaders.<sup>4</sup> And a com-

parative study conducted by The Knesset Information Division in Israel found a worldwide problem with lack of trust in government institutions in general and parliaments in particular.<sup>5</sup>

Different studies conducted over 10 years apart in multiple parts of the world show similar results. Is this a coincidence? We think not.

Lack of trust is common. It destroys relationships and prevents people from working together to improve their situations. It doesn't matter if we are talking about governments, corporations, schools, religious institutions, or families.

## **THE GOOD NEWS**

Horton's derogatory description of his boss led to the first edition of this book, co-authored with Marc Bockmon in 1992. Marc and I originally set out to send a strong message that traditional principles and values—like those articulated in the Boy Scout Oath and Girl Scout Promise—are critical for success in business and in life. If success is to be judged by column inches in the print media or feature stories on radio and television, we didn't achieve our goal.

Or did we? Since my early work with Marc, I have been privileged to learn from and present seminars to leaders throughout the world. I have seen firsthand that most leaders in all walks of life want to do the right thing. The principles espoused in the Scout Oath/Promise are widely known and accepted. Former Scouts make up a noticeable percentage of the corporate, association, and government audiences to which I speak. Many of the participants can recite the oath and law verbatim decades after their Scouting experiences.

This isn't a surprise. Scouting has been and continues to be known for character building and leadership development. The list of former Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts reads like a *Who's Who* that includes presidents, CEOs, astronauts, elected officials, sports and entertainment stars, and community leaders. Check out the people who volunteer their time,

talents, and resources to Scouting and you will find the leaders in your community.

## THE CYNICS AND DETRACTORS SPEAK

It doesn't happen often, but occasionally someone asks or comments about the stereotyped perceptions of people who support Scouting or reacts to the positions of Scouting organizations. The perception is that Scouts fit a certain mold and that they all agree on everything. My experience (and this is not an official statement from a Scouting organization) is that Scouts—like everyone else—share a diverse and sometimes opposite view of the world.

Do you think U.S. Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter saw eye-to-eye on everything? How about Senator John Glenn and filmmaker Michael Moore? Or astronaut Neil Armstrong or rock star Jim Morrison of the Doors?

Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Representative John “Jack” Murtha from Pennsylvania represented two distinct ends of argument on the U.S. war in Iraq. Both, like the other people listed here, are former Boy Scouts.

## WHAT YOU WILL—AND WON'T—SEE IN THIS BOOK

Character building was a major goal of the Scouting movement from its beginning. In 1907, retired British General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, a war hero who had achieved national prominence, organized a camp for 22 boys. A year later, he published his first Boy Scout manual, and the movement swept England. In his book, *Scouting for Boys*, Baden-Powell proclaimed, “Scouting is a school of citizenship . . .”

Baden-Powell believed that good citizenship and leadership were uniquely connected. My goal is to show how traditional principles and

values—like those articulated in the Boy Scout Oath—provide a blueprint for leadership that builds trust while achieving results.

In fact, the definition of Integrity-Driven® Leadership says it well: The art of influencing others to achieve results by leveraging the power of integrity and trust.

You will see stories, examples, and comments from a group of amazing leaders in all walks of life including H. Ross Perot, Rex Tillerson, Judge William S. Sessions, Mary Kay Ash, Howard Putnam, and Jose Niño. You will meet many others whose names may not be as familiar but who live and lead with integrity every day. My goal is to provide a diverse group of examples to show how you can influence others in a powerful and positive manner.

All leadership begins with *self-leadership*, so we provide suggestions that you can use where you are right now. Leadership, after all, is not about position but rather the ability—the passion and commitment—to influence others.

This book isn't about ideology and it is not about Scouting. This is a book about how to lead and live with integrity. Where political views or other multisided topics are discussed, every attempt is made to provide a balanced examination.

Although grounded in a strong sense of character, *On My Honor, I Will* is about more than ethics. Ethical intention without action toward a goal simply makes you feel better about achieving nothing. This book is about taking action.

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**It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.**

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

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## THE NEW NEWS

One of cartoonist Gary Larson's classic *Far Side* comics shows a dinosaur behind a podium speaking to a group of his peers. The caption reads, "The

picture is pretty bleak, gentlemen. The world's climates are changing, the mammals are taking over, and we all have a brain about the size of a walnut."

Like the cataclysmic changes that hastened the dinosaurs' extinction, we are facing a future that does not resemble the past in the way we live and work. In this world:

- **Everything is connected.** Advances in technology and communication enable us to be simultaneously and continuously in touch with anyone and everyone. But the connection goes much deeper. Thomas Friedman calls it the Dell Theory of Conflict Prevention: "No two countries that are both part of a major global supply chain, like Dell's, will ever fight a war against each other as long as they are both part of the same global supply chain."<sup>6</sup> Friedman acknowledges that his theory is not an absolute guarantee, but the premise is right on target. Our mutual success in every aspect of our lives is tied to the success of others . . . even people we have never met.
- **Communities are more than just the places we live.** Community used to be defined in geographic terms—neighborhoods, cities, states, or even countries. Now it is defined by areas of common interest. The scope of our interests and affiliations is unlimited. You may not know your neighbor although you may be intimately involved in the lives of friends and acquaintances around the world.
- **The lines between life away from work and life at work have blurred and in some cases disappeared.** Depending on your point of view and personal situation, this is either a good thing or a bad thing. Either way, it is a completely different way of interacting with the world and presents each of us with new challenges to find harmony in our lives and relationships.
- **Face-to-face interactions are becoming rarer.** Even though our world is more connected than ever, we can now live our lives without seeing anyone if we choose not to. Coworkers might reside in a different city, state, or country. You may never see your man-

ager. For you, going to work might mean sitting down in front of a computer in a room in your house or apartment. Is this the norm? No, but it represents a trend in all aspects of society. You can purchase virtually any product or service without having to see—or in many cases, speak with—another person.

- **Engagement is a challenge for everyone.** Research done by the Gallup organization projects that the cost of employee disengagement is in the hundreds of billions of dollars.<sup>7</sup> This is just the tip of the iceberg in understanding the destructive nature of disengagement. What do we mean by disengagement? A disengaged citizenry doesn't bother to vote. Disengaged parents don't provide their children with the education and guidance they will need to lead productive lives; they do not participate in their children's sports activities or extra-curricular events. Disengaged leaders make careless decisions that affect others. Engaged citizens, parents, employees, teachers, communities, and leaders take a proactive interest in their success.

We need leaders who earn trust and credibility by their actions and interactions with others. We need leaders who can innovate to meet the challenges of change without selling out to the lure of shortcuts that place short-term return over long-term effectiveness. We need leaders who are concerned with doing what is right and who are not worried about who is right.

## **A UNIVERSAL MODEL FOR LEADERSHIP SUCCESS**

In 1909, American businessman William Boyce became lost in the famous London fog while visiting England. A Boy Scout found him and, practicing the Scout slogan ("Do a good turn daily"), guided him to his appointment. Impressed, Boyce was determined to bring the Boy Scout movement to the United States. The following year, he succeeded. On

May 6, 1911, the Boy Scouts of America finalized their own Oath by adapting the model of their British counterparts.

On March 12, 1912, Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low held the first Girl Scout meeting with 18 young women in Savannah, Georgia. Low had met Sir Robert Baden-Powell in 1911, and saw the importance of developing young women physically, mentally, and spiritually. Low returned to the United States to devote her energy to a new organization that would bring young women out of their home environments into the outdoors and promote community service.

Virtually nothing in America is the way it was in the early 1900s, yet through decades that brought boom and bust; recession and depression; wars and rumors of war; changes in transportation, communication, and lifestyles, the Scout Oath and the Scout Law have remained unchanged. They are intact for the same reason the Bill of Rights and other self-evident truths remain intact—because they work.

There are many models for being successful. Benjamin Franklin had his 13 virtues:

1. **Temperance:** Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
2. **Order:** Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
3. **Resolution:** Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
4. **Frugality:** Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; that is, waste nothing.
5. **Moderation:** Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
6. **Industry:** Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. **Cleanliness:** Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.

8. **Tranquility:** Be not disturbed at trifles or at accidents common or unavoidable.
9. **Silence:** Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
10. **Sincerity:** Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
11. **Justice:** Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
12. **Chastity:** Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
13. **Humility:** Imitate Jesus and Socrates.<sup>8</sup>

Sam Walton had his 10 rules for being a success in business:

1. **Commit** to your business.
2. **Share** your profits with all your associates and treat them as partners.
3. **Motivate** your partners.
4. **Communicate** everything you possibly can to your partners.
5. **Appreciate** everything your associates do for the business.
6. **Celebrate** your successes.
7. **Listen** to everyone in your company.
8. **Exceed** your customers' expectations.
9. **Control** your expenses better than your competition.
10. **Swim** upstream.<sup>9</sup>

J. Paul Getty proposed a three-step approach that many find useful:

*Rise early.  
Work hard.  
Strike oil.*

There is, however, no better model for success as a leader, whatever your walk of life, than the forty words that make up the Scout Oath.<sup>10</sup> They form the roadmap for the journey to Integrity-Driven Leadership:

*On my honor I will do my best  
To do my duty to God and my country  
and to obey the Scout Law;  
To help other people at all times;  
To keep myself physically strong,  
mentally awake, and morally straight.*

Robert Mazucca, Chief Scout for the Boy Scouts of America, put it this way during an interview with Matthew Kirdahy of *Forbes* magazine:

*People who come through scouting know that the principles we work with are really valuable principles. If you want to be a good parent, just live by the scout oath and law. You want to be a good employee, live by the scout oath and law. You want to be a good CEO, live by the scout oath and law.<sup>11</sup>*

You have heard or repeated these forty words before. Let's look at them again from a leadership perspective:

**On my honor I will:** A keen sense of ethical conduct. My word is given as my bond to do what I say I will do. Not "I might," or "I'll think about it." You can count on me. I am committed.

**Do my best:** I will go beyond what's required to meet the minimum standards. You will receive my best performance and effort every day.

**To do my duty:** I will do what's right even when it is not convenient or pleasant.

**To God and my country:** I understand and accept my responsibilities that go beyond my selfish desires. I answer to a power that is higher than a quick profit.

**And to obey the Scout Law:** I will be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent in all areas of my life.

**To help other people at all times:** I influence others through a sense of service regardless of their position or mine.

**To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight:** My responsibility for my health enables me to perform more effectively. I will remain mentally awake and anticipate the changing expectations of my world, and I embrace the fact that the trust of others must be earned through my leadership example.

## **WILL THIS BOOK CHANGE YOUR MIND OR BEHAVIOR?**

Great question. The answer is “Yes,” “No,” and “Maybe.”

The old saying goes, “I’ll believe it when I see it.” The examples provided in this book paint a compelling picture, and if you take an honest look, they offer a time-tested model for success as a leader.

Of course, the converse is true as well: “I’ll see it when I believe it.”

There will be those who allow their preconceived beliefs to prevent them from gaining any perspectives or insights that could improve their lives. If you fall into this category, this book—or any book—is unlikely to provide you with anything beneficial.

Then there are those who will dismiss the very premise of this book as outdated and simplistic. I disagree with them. I agree that we face complex challenges in our families, communities, workplaces, and world.

We need new thinking and the ability to build partnerships with others. Albert Einstein was correct: “The problems that exist in the world today cannot be solved by the level of thinking that created them.” But I believe that while tools and ideas change, evolve, and innovate, principles remain constant.

The principles discussed here are simple to understand and incredibly difficult to implement. In a world where change and complexity are the order of the day, I propose that we need a common—and, yes, simple—set of principles to guide us as leaders.

The “Maybe” answer holds out hope that you will internalize this message and decide to do something different.

This book is merely a catalyst. We can’t bring about internal change with external medicine. In fact, applying an external solution to an internal problem is like taking morphine for cancer. It may disguise the symptoms, but it doesn’t do anything to cure the disease.

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**Start by doing what’s necessary, then what’s possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.**

—*St. Francis of Assisi*

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So in the end, this book is like many others. It can be useful or not depending on you and your actions. To genuinely increase our organizational and individual success, the change must come from within. This takes more time and effort, but it brings lasting change. It’s the kind of change that shifts the focus from *who* is right to *what* is right. Then and only then can we be truly successful.

## IT USED TO WORK . . .

People once helped each other build homes and raise barns. There was a time when an honest person could borrow money at the bank on a handshake. The beauty of the Scout Oath and Law is that they’re like gravity—they work whether you believe in them or not. Oh, you can get away with ignoring these principles for a while—but in the end you

lose the trust and respect of others that is necessary for success in today's interdependent world.

### **. . . AND IT STILL CAN**

I readily admit that the idea of everyone living their lives based on traditional principles such as honor, integrity, duty, and service is at best a pipe dream. As you will see, even the people who are committed to leading and living this way struggle from time to time. I certainly do.

So here is my question to you: Can you be better at modeling these principles tomorrow than you were today? You don't have to be a bad parent to want to be a better parent. You don't have to be unhealthy to want to be healthier. And, you don't have to be dishonorable to want to live and lead with more honor.

I'm not asking for much. Just consistent effort, the realization that living and leading with integrity is a journey with successes and failures rather than a series of easy-to-implement steps, and the hope that you—like me—won't be offended if someone calls you a “real Boy Scout.”