

# CHARACTER

## *The essence of a person*

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### Overview:

In this edition we explore the importance of Character. Character reveals itself over time, and is observed in individuals as they respond to certain situations and behave in different settings. It is not a competency trait nor does it necessarily reveal itself in personality profiling. So how do you observe, learn, predict and understand the character of members in your organisation or team? In this edition of our newsletter we explore the attribute of character and how it manifests itself.

### Character:

Character is a human trait unique to every individual in every circumstance in every different work or life situation on the planet. Inconveniently for employers there are no “one off” assessment instruments to define with any accuracy a person’s character. It is something which evolves over time and is observable through actions, behaviours and attitudes in relationships.

Typically there are two different character traits important for leaders and team members:

### Performance Character:

This is where the pursuit of mastery and excellence in education, work or life lies. It manifests itself in the motivation or appetite on two ends of a spectrum:

- A relentless pursuit of personal improvement, achievement or attainment of goals and ambitions  
And
- The level of comfort / contentment and satisfaction with the status quo.

**Performance Character** reflects an individual’s passion, skills, attributes resilience and ultimately what they deem important.

### Moral Character:

**Moral Character** encapsulates an individual’s ethics, values and social relationships. It is a reflection of how an individual treats oneself and others and how they inter- relate in personal and social environments; and how they respond in times of crisis. An individual’s capacity to respond appropriately within accepted shared values; and the ability to exercise emotional intelligence will reflect moral character.

**Character is often witnessed in the workplace when things get a little difficult or bumpy.** When times are challenging what do team members and colleagues do? Do they justify, lay

blame or make an excuse for non-performance, errors or omissions.... Or do they jump in, accept the circumstances and focus on solutions and improvements?

The path of least resistance is always the easy option, but is it the correct option? When making hard decisions and actions it is always interesting to witness who absents themselves from the process and who actually is committed to and drives the agreed outcomes. In an increasingly competitive market place a culture of superior performance is required; and it is the performance character and commitment of the leadership team which will influence work teams to ultimately pursue and meet business performance targets.

**Moral Character** is more difficult to define and judge, as different people will respond to different circumstances in so many different ways. It often comes down to understanding a person's values, beliefs and upbringing. Often a guide to moral character is what a person chooses to not do or ignore. It is through their inaction you actually pick up a better understanding of their moral character.

Character reveals itself by what people do and do not do and how they personally act and behave.

It is often said that "cream rises to the top," which in effect means that in difficult or challenging circumstances is where you will see the real essence of a person. However, without manufacturing a crisis how can a leader or team member get a handle on a person's character? We would suggest this is best done through observing an individual's attitudes, actions and behaviours.

**What follows are ten simple observable traits which may help signal the true character of a person:**

1. **Awareness:** How aware are they of the world around them. Are they aware of the presence of others, the impact of their behaviours or are they so unaware they focus only on themselves?
2. **Language:** How do they talk about their world at home and work. Is it about the team and others or about their own needs and agenda? How do they start questions...? With an "I" or a "We" .... Is their language and thinking positive or negative? How do they view the world...? Optimistically or pessimistically?
3. **Reliable:** Do they follow through on promises; do they do what they say they will do? Or do they just talk the talk but not walk the talk. Do they lend a hand for some extra tasks or volunteer their services when extra people or effort is required?
4. **Authentic:** Are they really interested in other people? Do they take an interest in what others are doing? Do they follow up and enquire on how colleagues are and what transpired in other key events?

5. **Passion:** What does a person value? What are they interested in? What do they read, or talk about? How do they direct and pursue their free time? When do they show interest in others? What do they volunteer for and what do they avoid?
6. **Assistance:** When the chips are down, when there are issues or problems, or support is required, who lends a hand and helps.... Without being asked?
7. **Team:** Is the person team orientated and are they aware of the attributes they bring to a team and the dynamics that are occurring in a team?
8. **Morals:** A moral compass is everything. There are some things which should be taken for granted with all people. These include honesty, integrity, trust, compassion – empathy and equality. If any of these is breached it is our experience that a person’s character will be questioned.
9. **Resilience:** People who are enthusiastic and energised tend to be more resilient and perhaps more likely to follow through and honour their commitments, goals and objectives.
10. **Adaptability:** Guess what? The World is changing. Has done since the dawn of time. Life evolves. So how do individuals adapt, respond, grow and navigate their world? Do they come up with their own ideas, innovations, advances, and responses to an ever evolving world? Or do they just watch it all happen around them?

### **Conclusion:**

Character is ultimately what you look for in a person, whether they are a client, staff member or supplier. The reality is good business is done with good people. If a person’s character is ever brought into question, then it must be clear the relationship with that person is in question. Life is too short to be spent with people of poor character. They will always let you down or disappoint you. The key is to allow your observations of a person over time dictate your ultimate assessment of their character.

**AS A COACH, YOU CANNOT CHANGE A PERSON’S CHARACTER, IT IS THEIRS AND THEIRS ALONE.**