

Exemplify Integrity

The road to excellence starts with being who you say you are

By **Dale Vermillion**, founder and CEO, Vermillion Consulting Inc.

ALL OF US LONG TO ACHIEVE excellence in our careers. Whether we are loan originators, account executives, managers, executives or owners, we want to capture that elusive animal referred to as excellence.

But achieving a true standard of excellence seems to be a difficult goal to accomplish. Perhaps we do not understand the components that comprise it. Maybe we have not defined the gauge or parameters that ensure we achieve it.

A simple credo to live by is “consistent excellence.” It might seem impossible. But by establishing this high expectation from the start, you never have to settle for low performance or mediocrity. As salespeople, this is the only level of expectation that will get you where you want to be in life. Mediocre thinking gets you mediocre results, while excellent thinking can get you excellent results.

Each letter in the word “excellence” represents an aspect of the virtue. The first “E” in the word excellence stands for exemplifying integrity. And the first step to becoming excellent salespeople and leaders is to place integrity as our first and highest priority.

What is integrity?

Whether integrity is included in companies’ mission statements, plastered in employees’ offices or just discussed at meetings, everyone talks integrity.

But how many people and companies really exemplify it? Not enough. Look at what has happened to our industry in the past year to see that there is a real question mark as it pertains to integrity.

Integrity is a direct reflection of a company’s leaders and employees. If you are a manager,

What is Excellence?

In the months to come, Dale Vermillion’s articles will tackle topics that correspond to each letter in the word “excellence.”

Exemplify Integrity (January)

- E**xpect excellence
- C**ontinuously improve
- E**ffectively market
- L**isten attentively
- L**end appropriately
- E**ducate continually
- N**ever coerce
- C**reate referral partners
- E**stablish differentiation

executive or owner, this is a critical truth for you to embrace. Your team, your company and your employees are a direct reflection of you.

Every customer also determines an organization’s integrity by the salesperson with whom they speak first. Salespeople often are the front line for the company’s customer relations, and it is imperative that we establish an air of integrity from the start.

So what does integrity look like? Author and speaker Ron Jenson defines it as such: “Personality is what we are in public, character is what we are in private, and integrity is when they are the same.”

Integrity happens when what we claim to be matches what we really are. In the mortgage business, this takes on many facets. Far too many people talk a good game but then check their integrity at the door.

What do we do with it?

From a customer standpoint, if we are really going to put customers first, we must exemplify that in all we do. This means putting customers first before everything, including our commissions and profits. Great salespeople and managers understand and know that when customers come first, they have no shortage of customers. These customers buy initially and repeatedly and then refer everyone else they know. Success and profitability simply happen when you take care of your clients. In this case, success and profitability become the effect, not the emphasis.

Exemplifying high-integrity business practices means taking a stand on many integrity-based issues. You must integrate integrity in every aspect of your business so as to differentiate yourself from your competition. This affects your business practices, pricing, marketing, products and underwriting guidelines. Some examples include:

- **Loan pricing:** Providing fair and consistent pricing to all customers — not having a “get whatever you can negotiate” mentality;
- **Disclosures:** Providing complete disclosure, verbal and written, of every cost, fee and important detail associated with the loan;
- **Marketing and advertising:** Promoting products, programs and rates that are really available — not using “teasers” on rates or programs to bait and switch customers;
- **Products and programs:** Making loans that benefit the borrowers in the short and long terms — not making loans just to turn a profit, even if the long-term impact to borrowers is detrimental;
- **Underwriting:** Rejecting applicants who do not qualify and avoiding programs that allow customers to qualify when we know they really do not; and
- **Ethics:** Not turning our head when someone doctors a loan to get it approved and not using inflated appraisals.

Continued ...



Dale Vermillion is a prominent industry speaker and founder and CEO of Vermillion Consulting Inc., a consulting and training firm that helps brokers, loan officers and sales management improve their sales performance and productivity. He is also founder of Mortgage Professionals Providing Hope (MPPH), a nonprofit organization created to aid children and families in impoverished rural India. To learn more about Vermillion Consulting or MPPH, visit www.dalevermillion.com or www.mpph.org, or call (888) VCI-EDGE (824-3343).

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Looking at integrity from an employee standpoint, if we as managers and leaders are going to tell our employees how valuable they are, we must show them through our actions. Claiming to run a “family friendly” company while expecting employees to work 80-hour weeks or attend weekend corporate functions is a contradiction. Practices as simple as showing favoritism, demeaning employees in front of their peers, using offensive language and talking behind employees’ backs all show a lack of integrity and character.

“Integrity happens when what we claim to be matches what we really are.”

As salespeople, treating your peers, subordinates and vendors with respect is a key aspect of business excellence.



Integrity is a cornerstone of excellence in every aspect of life. Best of all, it is a characteristic we have complete control over — and one we should aim to exemplify. **!!**

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