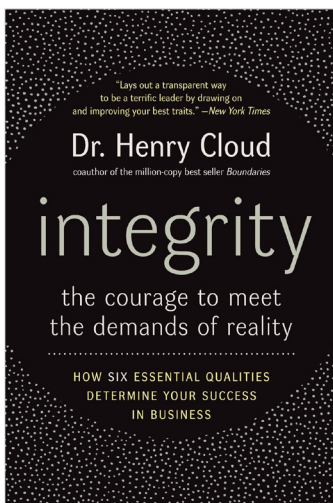


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Henry Cloud

Dr. Henry Cloud is a leadership consultant, best-selling author, and speaker whose books have sold well over 5 million copies. He consults and speaks for companies and organizations in the area of leadership and performance, and is highly regarded for his ability to connect personal and interpersonal development with the needs of business.

Integrity

THE NUTSHELL

Everyone knows that character matters, but we often lack knowledge of how it works in our everyday lives. Character affects results and profits, and making shifts in our own character might make our relationships more fruitful. This book explains how doing so may solve problems or bring previously unobtainable results into reach.

There are three essentials for success. The first two, craft or skill competencies and relationship-building skills, are common knowledge; smart, talented people are a dime a dozen. What makes the difference is having the character not to screw it up. How many times have you seen someone whose personhood got in the way of their success? Has it happened to you?

Character Counts

Who a person is will ultimately determine if their brains, talents, competencies, energy, effort, deal-making abilities, and opportunities will succeed. Our traditional understanding of character is that it involves morals and ethics, and is a safeguard against bad things happening. However, that's not all there is to character. True character integration requires that a leader:

- capture the hearts and minds of people they're leading

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- see all of the realities in front of them, including blind spots regarding themselves, others, markets, customers, or other realities necessary to reach their goals
- produce results congruent to resources and abilities
- deal with losses and negative people and situations
- create growth in their organizations, people, profits or industry • become part of a larger mission

Although little attention is paid to these components of character, they can have greater effect than a person's industry and alliance building skills. Neglecting them can result in a performance ceiling much lower than one's aptitude, derailing when one hits an obstacle, or self-destructing shortly after a success, thus negating it.

Traditional definitions of integrity include ideas about character, ethics and morals. However, the other dictionary definitions carry associations of wholeness and effectiveness. In order for character to work, a person needs to integrate the six character areas mentioned above. Deficiencies in any one area compromise the other areas, as well as that person's gifts in a particular field. It's easy to see how establishing trust without being able to see reality can lead to real trouble. Success in these areas virtually guarantees success in all interpersonal and task-oriented goals. Each person has gaps in each competency area, and must ensure that these gaps are areas for growth rather than sites of dysfunction. He or she can do this by first taking a clear look at the nature of reality, fruitfulness and success, as well his or her personal development needs. The next step is to understand the components of character and what makes them work, so one can plan to work toward integration of character. There are six key components people need to understand:

1. Building Trust

Trust can be built in three ways. The first is through connection. Connection comes from empathy—being able to understand another's experience, to "get them," even when not fully agreeing.

The second way to build trust is by extending favor. At a basic level, all trustworthy people do what they agree to do, but every situation can't be written into a contract. A leader at a higher level "looks out for your interests, as well as his or her own."

The third way to build trust is through vulnerability. People trust other people and institutions that seem strong and stable. However, if a person is impenetrable or on a different level from us, we believe he cannot understand us, and we cannot understand him. Therefore, for trust to occur there must be a balance of power and vulnerability.

2. Oriented Toward Truth

Obviously, telling the truth at a basic level means not lying. At a deeper level, it is about being in touch with reality. People who are in touch with reality share three qualities. First, they seek the truth. Many people avoid the truth, perhaps because they have emotional investment in some other reality, are afraid of dealing with the ramifications, or are caught up in their own arrogance.

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A successful person also seeks the truth about himself, actively soliciting feedback from mentors, accountability groups, and therapists. He is not looking for flattery, but for reality. He asks others “what is it like to be on the other end of me?” and is excited about an honest answer

The second quality of a person who faces reality is emotional valence. That means understanding that life is not always black and white, but there are often shades of grey that need to be understood.

Finally, a person who understands reality can incorporate new information that’s in conflict with existing paradigms. We all have set ideas of certain people or groups, but a leader can change her ideas when they no longer serve.

3. Achieving results.

A lot of people know their field and work hard without the results they can achieve. High producers share some characteristics that we often neglect when we think about work training, and these are more often about character than factual knowledge.

The first characteristic is self-knowledge. People don’t want to just “do a good job;” they want to live up to their full potential. To do this, they need to know their likes and dislikes, their values and beliefs, and what they’re good at.

Second, high achievers have a ready, aim, fire process of action; they follow its three steps in order and find balance between them. “Ready” means prepared and able to take on the task. This preparation must have an aim, or “purposeful, goal-oriented action that knows where the energy and resources are being spent and therefore spent well.” Finally, once the goal is in sight, the person must be able to pull the trigger. Many fail at this stage because of fear of failure, rejection, loss of security, or poor outcomes in general.

4. Eating problems for breakfast

Life is largely about solving problems. That reality is not going to go away, so if people can’t orient themselves to finding solutions, they will stagnate. Of course, if this were an easy task, anyone would do it, and we all know that anything valuable takes work. Putting in the hard work to do the confrontation means relief of pain later.

5. Getting better all the time

As the introduction noted, each area of character has to be integrated with the other areas, so being stuck in one area affects the others. Growing and dying are both always happening, although one predominates; if a person is not focusing on growth, he’s leaning into death. We learn by doing. Those things we practice get better and stronger, like exercising a muscle. We may not become perfect, but we can be growing continuously.

6. When you’re small, you’re bigger

If you ask people if they are God, they will invariably say what a silly question that is. But they often act like they are the center of the universe; some even wear shirts that proclaim how important they are. “It’s all about me,” they say.

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People of character have transcended ordinary human selfishness and self-centeredness that we all express in small ways at some time or another, realizing that life is about the things that are bigger than them. The greatest people are those who greatly serve important missions and causes.

Conclusion

Images of people in power are often distorted, and this has damaging effects on their viewer's character. Some people idealize leaders, hiding their own shortcomings out of shame and limiting opportunity for growth. Others assume poor character, such as dictator-like qualities, are what made people successful. They don't acknowledge that this leader actually succeeded in spite of those qualities and the terrible wake he or she left behind him. If the bad qualities disappeared, the good ones that made him successful would not vanish!

All people are in some way un-integrated, even people with credentials, and we need to get over the fantasy that some are not. In the end, character is not something people have or don't. Everyone, including high achievers, has a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. People shouldn't be ashamed of this. Rather, they should embrace the chance to grow.