

Character Formation Guidance: Character in the Professions

**CHARACTER IS AN INDIVIDUAL'S TRAITS AND MORAL OR ETHICAL QUALITIES
(ARTHUR & KRISTJANSSON, 2022).**

CHARACTER IN ORGANIZATIONS IS CRUCIAL FOR:

- Building trust
- Ensuring ethical behavior
- Fostering positive work environments
- Enhancing leadership and decision making
- Improving employee morale
- Strengthening customer relationships
- Maintaining a good reputation
- Managing crises effectively
- Achieving long-term success
 - A positive organizational culture founded on good character is vital to an organization's success and leads to higher employee retention rates (Avota et al., 2018).
 - Organizations that prioritize character and ethical behavior are more likely to achieve sustainable success.
 - Successful organizations build solid foundations based on trust, respect and ethical practices, contributing to resilience and adaptability in a constantly changing business environment.



“Researchers found that CEOs whose employees gave them high marks for character had an average return on assets of 9.35% over a two-year period. That’s nearly five times as much as those with low character ratings had; their ROA averaged only 1.93%” (Measuring Return on Character, 2015).

WHY FOCUS ON CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS?

- Moral actions, a positive culture, a strong community and character-focused individuals contribute to enhanced results.
 - Organizations with leaders of good character had a return on assets that was five times as high as the leaders who received low character scores (Harvard Business, n.d.).
- When employees feel respected and valued, they experience higher levels of job satisfaction, engagement and loyalty, which reduces turnover and enhances overall performance.
- Character traits such as empathy, respect and fairness improve interpersonal relationships and teamwork. Employees are more likely to support each other, share knowledge and work together effectively when they believe they are in a fair and respectful environment.
- Organizations known for their strong character and ethical practices tend to build better relationships with customers and partners. Customers and affiliated partners are more likely to trust and remain loyal to companies and organizations they perceive as honest and reliable, which can increase satisfaction and retention (Avota et al., 2018).
- An organization's reputation is closely tied to the character of its employees and leaders. A strong and positive reputation attracts talent, investors and customers and it can provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace.



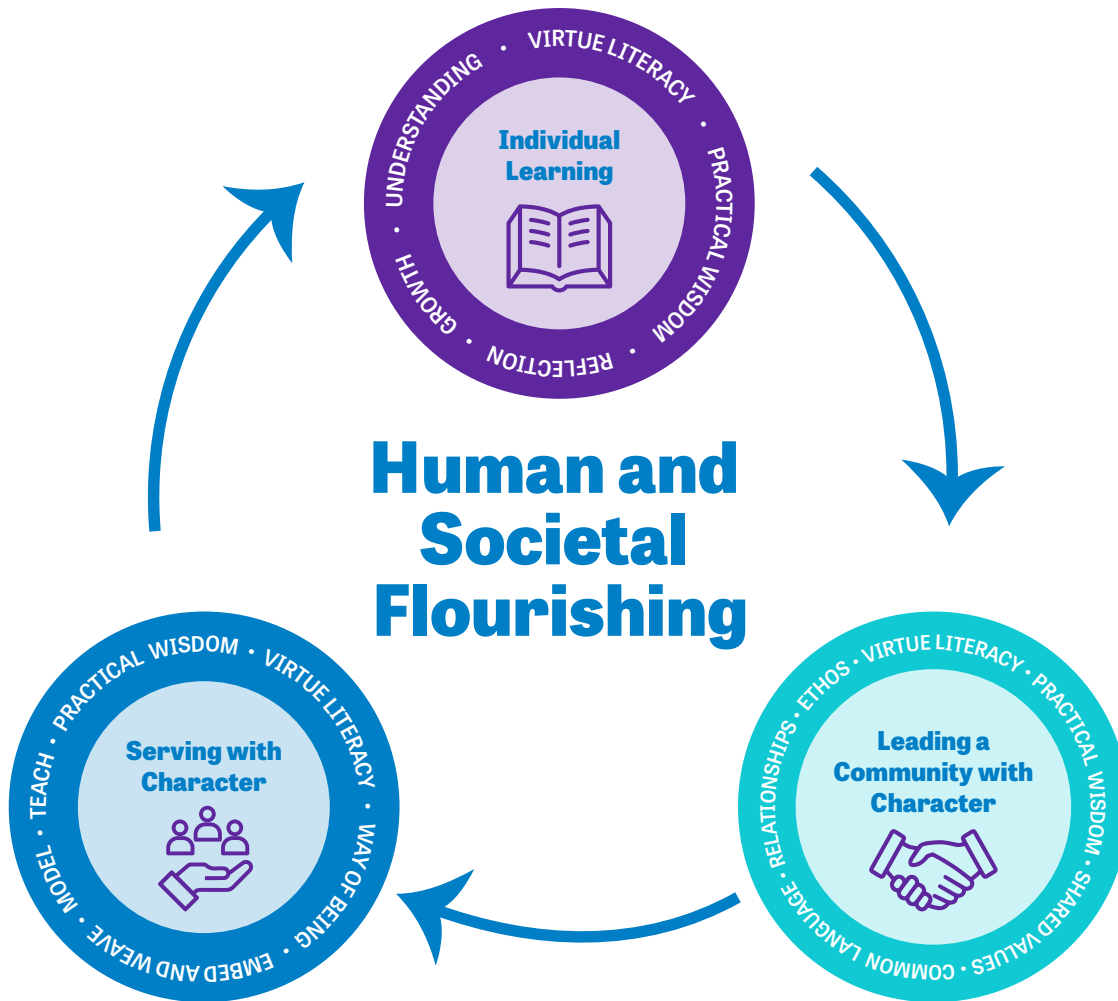
References

- Arthur, J., & Kristjansson, K. (2022). [Framework for character education in schools. Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues](#). The Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues. Retrieved Dec. 30, 2024.
- Avota, S., McFadzean, E., & Peisenice, L. (2015). [Linking personal and organizational values and behaviour to corporate sustainability: A conceptual model](#). Journal of Business Management, 10, 124–138. Retrieved Dec. 30, 2024.
- Harvard Business Publishing. (n.d.). [Leadership character: No longer just nice to have](#). Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning. Retrieved Dec. 30, 2024.
- Harvard Business Review. (2015). [Measuring the return on character](#). Harvard Business Review. Retrieved Dec. 30, 2024.

FOSTERING CHARACTER IN THE PROFESSIONS IS INSTRUMENTAL TO AN ORGANIZATION'S SUCCESS

Organizational leaders can use the Canyon Center for Character Education's [Framework for Purposeful Cultures of Character](#) as a guide for actionable steps to cultivate an environment of positive character, trusting relationships and sustainable success.

The Framework provides an outline for necessary steps and ideas for integration:



The following pages will provide ideas for workplace activities and events aligned to the domains of the Framework that leaders can use to enhance character within the culture. You can access this linked resource via the link or the QR code below:



[Framework for Purposeful
Cultures of Character](#)

**FOR SUPPORT WITH TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION,
PLEASE REACH OUT TO CHARACTEREDUCATION@GCU.EDU**

Character Formation Guidance: Practical Ways to Develop Virtue in Organizations

- Character formation is a lifelong journey that shapes our interactions, decisions and overall quality of life. Character formation occurs via many avenues. Building virtue literacy in professional organizations involves fostering a culture of ethical behavior and integrity through targeted activities and initiatives.
- This document offers many strategies for cultivating virtues through intentional activities and experiential learning. It provides actionable ideas and methods for enhancing virtue literacy, fostering moral growth and promoting ethical behavior in everyday life.
- These additional ideas help reinforce a comprehensive approach to building virtue literacy within professional organizations, ensuring that ethical behavior and virtuous practices are integrated into every aspect of the workplace.



Phase I: Individual Learning, Self-Knowledge and Development

In this phase, work to reflect on your own character and who you wish to be within the organization, as a leader and as an individual. Who we are and how we came to influence how we interact, the choices we make and how we serve others. Encourage others in the organization to engage in the same reflection.



Character Self-Assessments

Provide employees with self-assessment tools that allow them to evaluate their strengths and growth areas in different virtues. Pair these assessments with resources to help them develop their weaker areas. This encourages self-awareness and personal responsibility for virtue development.

Resources: [Virtues in Action \(VIA\) Strengths Assessment](#), the [Big 5](#) or others.



Virtue Leadership Workshops

Conduct workshops specifically for leaders to develop virtues such as humility, integrity and fairness and explore servant leadership, empowering them to set a positive example.

Resources: [Leading with Virtue](#), [The Virtuous Leader](#), [Leadership Virtues in Servant Leadership](#).



Leader-Led Virtue Talks

Schedule regular talks where leaders share personal stories and insights about the importance of virtues in their professional journeys.



Reflection and Goal-Setting Sessions

Provide time and resources for employees to reflect on their personal and professional growth in terms of virtues and set goals for improvement.

Resources: [Goal Setting Graphic](#) or [SMART Goals Template](#) and [SMART Goals Training Video](#).



Virtue Apps and Journals

Develop or adopt mobile apps or encourage journaling to help employees track their virtuous behavior, set goals and reflect on their personal progress.



Weekly Virtue Reflection Emails

Send out a weekly email to staff focusing on a specific virtue, offering quotes, short stories or reflection questions to encourage contemplation throughout the week. This keeps character development top of mind and easily accessible for busy professionals.

Resource: [Example Email — Resilience](#)



Virtue Highlights

Each week, highlight a specific virtue (e.g., honesty, empathy, perseverance) within the organization. Encourage team members to share examples of how they demonstrated or observed others demonstrate this virtue in their professional or personal lives. This promotes active reflection and raises awareness of the importance of virtues in daily actions.



Collaborative Virtue Journaling

Create a shared virtual journal where team members can anonymously contribute reflections on their work on specific virtues. Colleagues can comment or add their own experiences, fostering a sense of shared growth. This promotes collective reflection and growth in virtues while providing a space for employees to support one another's character development journeys.



Character Stories from History

Share stories from history that highlight the role of character and virtues in shaping important events or leaders related to your organization. Use these stories as a springboard for discussing how similar virtues can be applied today. This activity provides historical context for virtues and inspires reflection on their enduring relevance.



Phase II: Leading a Community with Character, Community and Culture

In this phase, work together to develop an organizational mission and vision rooted in character, apply core values and work to enhance relationships and a shared language. This phase is essential to building a culture with all relevant parties and working together to develop ethical, committed and responsible individuals dedicated to the success of the organization.

1. Create Organizational Foundations Together

A vital step in culture development is allowing leaders and employees to collaborate and share in decision making. This includes shaping the organization's foundational pieces, such as its mission, vision and core values, to foster buy-in and commitment.

Mission and Vision Statements

Mission statements ask organizations to define their purpose, articulate it and identify how the mission will be used to make decisions. Conduct workshops to collaboratively determine a mission and vision statement that drives the organization's goals and behavior.

Resource: [Process Steps and Items to Consider](#)

Core Values Identification

Core values are deemed as qualities that are universally understood and promote better individuals and a better society while serving as a guide for organizations on their character journey. Conduct workshops to collaboratively determine organizational core values that all relevant parties can adhere to in professional settings.

Resource: [Determining Shared Core Values](#)



Values and Virtues Alignment Workshops

Facilitate workshops that help employees align their personal values with the virtues promoted by the organization. These workshops can include activities like value mapping and discussion groups. This fosters alignment between individual and organizational virtue goals, leading to greater personal investment in character development.



Measurement of application/implementation

Use surveys to measure the effort made in implementing character development in the organization and its effectiveness among staff.

Resources: [Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey](#), [Phronesis Measurement](#) created by The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, [Defining Issues Test](#)

2. Build Relationships through Team Building Workshops and Recognition

Work to provide time for staff to engage with one another and learn about one another. Ask them to share personal stories about their own character and virtues. Recognize virtues in others and show gratitude for their efforts to build morale and set expectations.

Character Challenges

Develop monthly "Character Challenges" where employees are encouraged to focus on practicing a specific virtue (e.g., patience, generosity) in their work and personal lives. Follow up with team discussions on the impact. This provides a structured approach to integrating virtues into daily life, emphasizing personal reflection.

Virtue Spotlight

Feature stories of employees who exemplify specific virtues in company newsletters, intranet or social media channels.



Virtue Challenges

Create challenges where teams compete to demonstrate virtues such as kindness, teamwork and responsibility with rewards for the best initiatives.



Peer Feedback Sessions

Encourage regular peer feedback sessions where colleagues can recognize and discuss virtuous behavior and share recognition and appreciation for one another, helping to reinforce a positive culture.



Virtue Lunch and Learns

Host informal lunchtime learning sessions where speakers discuss various virtues and how they apply to the professional environment.



Virtue Mentoring

Establish a mentorship program where mentors focus on guiding their mentees in character development. Mentors can provide feedback on how the mentee applies virtues like patience, diligence and respect in their work. Mentorship fosters one-on-one virtue cultivation and personalized growth.



Peer Recognition Program

Create a peer-to-peer recognition system where employees can nominate colleagues who exemplify a particular virtue. This can be done through virtual badges, certificates or a shout-out during team meetings. This encourages positive behavior modeling and highlights the practical application of virtues in the workplace.



Volunteer Days

Organize volunteer days where employees can engage in community service, reinforcing virtues through hands-on actions.



Phase III: Serving, Integration and Opportunity

Offering employees training sets expectations and builds knowledge. Opportunities for collaborative discussions centered on ethics and character and service opportunities increase understanding while developing relationships and cultivating a culture rooted in character.



Simulations

Provide simulation exercises that allow your leaders and employees to engage in ethical decision making related to the context of your organization. Let them try different choices and later discuss their effects. Simulations lead to reflections and discussions of action choices and the virtues in play or in need within the situation.

Resource: [Facilitation Guide and Scenario Examples for Various Professions](#)



Ethics Training Programs

Conduct regular workshops focused on ethical behavior, decision making and the importance of virtues such as honesty, respect and responsibility.

Resource: Contact CharacterEducation@gcu.edu to request their facilitation of a workshop.



Role-Playing Scenarios

Engage employees in role-playing exercises to practice approaching ethical dilemmas and identifying situations in which taking virtuous action will occur.

Resource: [Facilitation Guide and Example Scenarios](#)



Ethical Leadership Circles

Form small groups of leaders who meet regularly to discuss ethical challenges and share strategies for promoting virtue within their teams.



Virtue Awareness Month

Designate a month to focus on a specific virtue, incorporating it into communications, workshops and activities throughout the organization.



Ethical Dilemma of the Month

Present a hypothetical ethical dilemma each month and encourage employees to submit their solutions, fostering a culture of thoughtful, ethical consideration.

Resources: For guidance on approaching ethical dilemmas, refer to the [ICED Approach to Moral Dilemmas](#). For a step-by-step guide on using AI to generate ethical scenarios for training, [click here](#).



Cross Departmental Projects

Initiate projects that require collaboration between different departments, promoting virtues like cooperation, respect and understanding.



Ethics and Virtue Courses

Offer online courses or in-house training programs focused on ethics and virtues, encouraging continuous learning and personal development.



Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives

Develop and participate in CSR programs that promote virtues like generosity, empathy and civic responsibility.

Resource: [Example CSRs for Various Professions](#)



Partnerships with Ethical Organizations

Partner with organizations that promote ethical practices and virtues, providing employees with additional resources and opportunities for engagement.



Ethical AI and Automation

Implement AI tools that promote ethical behavior, such as automated reminders for character building and virtuous practices or virtual ethics training.



Character-Based Conflict Resolution Training

Provide training on how to resolve conflicts by emphasizing virtues such as empathy, respect and humility. This could involve role-playing difficult conversations with an emphasis on character-driven solutions. This helps individuals approach conflict in a way that promotes understanding and maintains relationships, aligning with the organization's virtue focus.



Role Reversal for Perspective-Taking

Organize role-reversal exercises in which team members assume a colleague's or client's perspective and reflect on how to apply virtues such as fairness, empathy and patience in those roles. Role reversals enhance empathy and understanding, promoting the application of virtues through experiential learning.



Service Opportunities

Provide an opportunity for staff to work together to serve others, such as Habitat for Humanity, participating at soup kitchens, etc. Consider service that aligns with the organizational core values and mission and vision.



Intentionality

Consider ways to intentionally integrate organizational values into job descriptions and evaluations. This practice will demonstrate your organization's commitment to character. It also provides an opportunity for ongoing organizational or departmental evaluations and a focus on continual improvement.



Virtual Reality Ethics Training

Utilize virtual reality to simulate ethical dilemmas and scenarios, providing immersive training experiences that emphasize virtuous decision making.



Mentoring, Peer Observations

Consider creating a mentor program for new employees or employees who show interest to help provide character-focused direction aligned to your organization's professional goals, mission and vision and core values.

ACCESS THE ADDED MATERIALS HERE:
[CANYON CENTER FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION WEBSITE](#)



CANYON CENTER FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION