

Ethical Virtues in Business, by Dhammaloka

Throughout human history and in all major culture, a few virtues have been seen to lie at the core of the quest for higher understanding in daily life. These are activities that direct our energy away from emotionality and confusion toward integrity, dignity, and stability. You can use these virtues as a kind of map, a guide for behavior and a strategy for how to work well. For example, if you find that joy or happiness are missing from your life, you can practice generosity or discipline. Likewise, beauty emerges with patience, and aliveness with effort. As your concentration and commitment deepen, a steady peace of mind appears. Exercising knowledge leads to wisdom. In the end, it is wisdom that will set you free to attain the highest success.

Awareness creates Opportunities

Awareness is the great catalyst. Wherever you are you can practise awareness by noticing the sensations and feelings of your body and its movements, the emotional flavor of your physical and mental state, the quality of your thoughts and the ways you act and connect with the world around you. To bring awareness to what is going on in and around you will open the channels between your body and mind. You will learn to more deeply relax and at the same time get to know yourself much more deeply.

Body and mind will start to mutually support each other. Your activities will become more vital and effective, yet smooth and gentle. There is an art to maintain breadth of awareness whilst being focused.

Generosity leads to Enjoyment

This virtue is about giving freely, without holding back, and fully participating in all we do with all our energy and intelligence. It is the antidote to avarice and greed. Being generous includes sharing information and knowledge. Instead of withholding or resisting, you can give to the situation you find yourself in, to whatever needs to be done. You can learn to be more generous by starting with small acts of giving. Train yourself to notice what needs to be done. Ask yourself: what contribution can I make? How can I help?

Through participating fully, without regrets for the past or anxiety about the future, generosity begins to grow. In being generous, you recapture the joy of being and fuel your sense of being alive.

Ethical Integrity conduces to Happiness

A consistent, yet light-hearted and balanced discipline of ethics gives form to our life. As a skill that will grow gradually, it needs discipline. To develop a discipline means that you become a 'disciple' of the meaning of life. This, then will draw out your potential and enable you to attain mastership. You learn to concentrate on what is truly effective, and stop doing what is not.

For discipline and ethical integrity to be complete, and to provide reliable results, it should involve body, speech, and mind. In other words, you must become aware and take hold of your attitudes and your thoughts, of what you say and what you do, and then take action accordingly.

In the context of work, discipline means being dependable and reliable—keeping your promises and having the interests of all in mind. Discipline helps to shape what really matters. Seeing your aspirations come to life brings happiness.

Patience draws out Beauty

Patience requires staying with what you are doing, rather than giving in to re-active, antagonistic or compulsive behavior. It is always being ready, able to appreciate what is valuable. Genuine patience is being open to others and to each situation. Seeing the value of

everything and taking in the context, you let go of opinions and judgments. In relation to work, patience will make you more sensitive to timing, able to proceed at the right pace, neither too slow nor too fast. Patience leads away from the periphery into the center of experience, where you find appreciation and beauty.

Patience allows everything to come into focus. You can apply yourself entirely, not just with your attention, but with all your senses open. As you persist, new opportunities reveal themselves. You sense when the time is right, and your activity becomes a work of art.

Effort produces Splendor

While patience rejoices in what is valuable, effort brings it into being. Effort means never giving up. It counters laziness and kindles aliveness. When you remember that time is precious, effort prevents you from wasting it .

How can you develop effort? Start by developing a discipline of effort. Set targets and goals related to time. Learn about your tendencies to hold back and wait, and be generous with your energy instead. As you become familiar with your energy, you will get a taste of your own strength. Encourage yourself patiently. Effort may merely be a matter of 'more' or 'longer', but usually it is about 'better'—better communication, better cooperation, better results, and a better use of time. Effort is applied passion. As it gains momentum, integrating what was formerly separate, each situation sparkles with splendor, and working becomes increasingly effortless .

Concentration leads to Peace of Mind

To align yourself with what you are doing right now, without giving in to distractions, is the beginning of concentration. At first concentration may require squeezing your attention tightly, but gradually you learn to establish a light focus. Concentration counters grasping and anxiety. Extended concentration can only be supported by an ongoing relaxation in the body and mind. In the process you become calmer and clearer .

To practice concentration at work, begin by paying attention and developing awareness about what is needed and by when. As you also develop sensitivity to the quality of your concentration, you will naturally assemble what is required to finish the task at hand. Your concentration will bundle your energy and mind as you refine how you work .

With concentration you come into time, linking it with awareness. Past and future dissolve in the present moment, your mind is at peace, and you are open to embody understanding — or even wisdom .

Wisdom recaptures Freedom

Wisdom includes but goes beyond conceptual understanding. It involves knowledge of every kind. It counters notknowing, confusion, and most basically, lack of awareness. Since awareness and being are inseparable, the more awareness the lighter, stronger, and wiser your being .

In the business context, you can begin developing wisdom through learning skills and improving the usage of time .

As soon as you understand how something works there is a sense of relief—now you know how to do it. Learning from your actions is empowering. As you learn from your mistakes and face the results of your actions, your resolve is strengthened, providing a solid base for improvement .

Business has its own intelligence and wisdom. It often begins with common sense, 'street smarts', and being savvy .

Learning about people, about time, about how money works, and about producing quality may sometimes be disillusioning, but such knowledges become the pillars of success .

In order to develop this kind of understanding you have to muster up interest and be able to sustain it. You may be interested because you are worried or afraid or because you are determined to make something happen—in any case, what counts is that you want to know something. On that basis you can learn to be sharp in your observations and analysis, and to question issues and potentialities .

There are times when you understand more than you actually show in daily life. You are not backing up your understanding with energy and so are not able to embody your wisdom. When you realize your wisdom is lacking energy, the other virtues can help give the power to enact knowledge. They help you to step into the world and produce or manifest what you know is right over time .

The Virtues in Business

When exploring the effects of these virtues, start working with just one of your choice. You will soon find the others are involved too. They all feed back into each other in ways that apply directly to business concerns. Efficiency improves with discipline. Patience prepares you for opportunities. Productivity depends on effort, and concentration assures quality. The more generous you are, the more helpful you will be and the more you enjoy what you do. With knowledge you regain the freedom to be creative and aim for the highest accomplishments. An awareness sets the stage for everything else.

Obstacle	Virtue	Action
being lazy	awareness	reflect on brevity of life
holding back	generosity	participating fully
postponing	discipline	being dedicated
avoiding	patience	being ready
giving up	effort	giving 5% more
going away	concentration	focusing more
making mistakes	wisdom	aiming for lasting results

Many thoughts of this handout were inspired by Arnaud Maitland's book *Masterwork*.