

# Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

## WORKPLACE: ETHICS

Mother Teresa wrote:

**People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered; forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true friends; succeed anyway.**

**If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; be honest and frank anyway. What you spend hours building, someone could destroy overnight; build anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; be happy anyway. The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; do good anyway. Give the world your best anyway.**

**You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God; it was never between you and them anyway.**

When I first read this piece, I was taken aback by the simple truth of it, and how so many of the themes touched on by Mother Teresa related to our work lives: success, honesty, building something; giving something your best. But if you read it through again, you realize what is encapsulated there is far from simple - she is talking about 'giving' winning over 'greed'. In a work based setting she is talking about ensuring you always work to the highest ethical standards and ensuring that your integrity and professionalism remain above question.

So what does this mean in practical terms? First, you must remain totally independent of any corruption. You should treat all work colleagues, suppliers and clients in a fair and above board way. You shouldn't allow yourself to get dragged into petty office politics – or try to win promotions in an underhand way. Let your work speak for itself, put your pride into your work and be prepared to accept a mistake openly; put it down to a 'learning'.

When you get falsely accused of doing or being something, rise above it, remain calm and do not retaliate in kind. At the end of each day, go to bed with a clear conscience, knowing that you have not lied or cheated. Try not to break promises or let those you work with down, although sometimes you may promise delivery of something that is not fully in your control, in which case I'm sure you'll be forgiven. But try your best anyway.

If you let someone down, or accuse them of something they did not do – say SORRY, even if you are that person's boss.

Accept that life is unpredictable – but do not use that as an excuse not to even try to succeed. Remember that success is just someone else's opinion of you, and we all judge success differently. I think success has more to do with having values rather than driving the latest car.

Ask yourself why you work – do you work to give your best, to fully use your potential, do you work for the benefit of others? Or do you work just for money, to get rich quick? Do you think Wangari Mathai set up and dedicated herself to the Green Belt Movement to win the Nobel Prize money? I don't think so.

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