

Pennington on Leadership

By Randy G. Pennington



Texas Town & City is proud to introduce a continuing series written by a longtime and greatly admired friend of the Texas Municipal League. A frequent speaker at TML education events, Randy combines more than twenty years of front-line leadership and consulting experience with extensive research and writing to deliver practical ideas that can be applied at many levels. His expertise has made him an internationally respected guest commentator, with appearances on CNN, PBS, Fox News, the ABC Radio Network, and the BBC. He is also a prolific writer, and his ideas have appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Entrepreneur*, *Executive Excellence*, *Training & Development*, numerous newspapers, and many professional/trade association journals.

Leader or Liar? Turn Good Intentions into Action

We chose every day. Are we a leader or a liar?

This is not a blanket accusation of malicious or criminal behavior. Most people want to do what's right. Here is the challenge: We know our intentions. Others judge our behavior and performance filtered through their lens of perception. We may see ourselves as a leader, but to others we are simply lying to them or ourselves.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A LEADER?

Inconsistency between word and deed — regardless of intent — fosters mistrust. And mistrust creates friction that makes effective leadership challenging. Here are three ideas to turn good intention into positive action.

Tell yourself the truth.

Imagine wearing a large button with the words "Leader" and "Liar" written in opposite directions, so that one of the words is always readable to others. Individuals and organizations can fall prey to 3-D Vision — *Denial*, *Distortion*, and *Delusion*. We deny the truth, distort reality, and delude ourselves into thinking we are better than we are. The cure is simple — the continuous search for and acknowledgement of truth and reality.

Make better choices.

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick created a six-point test of deciding right from wrong. Dr. Preston Bradley adapted it, and we revised it into "The Ethics Litmus Test".

1. Does your course of action seem logical, responsible, and legal?
2. Would the results be beneficial for all if everyone made the same decision?
3. Where will your plan of action lead? How will it affect others?
4. Will you think well of yourself when you look back at what you've done?
5. How would the person you most admire your hero handle this situation?
6. What would your family and friends think of your decision? Decisions made in the hope that no one will find out are usually wrong.

Act... intentionally.

Thomas Edison said, "Vision without execution is hallucination."

Commit to a course of action. Do just one thing differently today, and then build daily on that success. Even the best leader has a bad day. The occasional honest mistake does not brand us a terminal liar. Being the leaders our communities want and deserve is a continuous journey to be better today than yesterday.

Randy Pennington helps leaders create cultures focused on results, relationships, and accountability. He is author of *Results Rule! Build a Culture that Blows the Competition Away* and *On My Honor, I Will: Leading with Integrity In Changing Times*. For additional information, contact him at 972-980-9857, randy@penningtongroup.com, www.penningtongroup-cities.com, or www.resultsrule.com.