



Dear June,

## The \$64,000 Question

Sometimes being a consultant is hard. I say that because I assess, highlight, probe, suggest, etc., but usually I don't implement. That's the responsibility of the client.

A perfect example is a company meeting I recently attended. This client was outlining the process and timeline for an upcoming organizational assessment. When the floor was opened for staff feedback, low and behold the \$64,000 question came.

*"What are you going to do with the information you learn?"*

Valid question. Valid question, indeed!

While I know what SHOULD happen with the results, and while I know how they will be presented and how recommendations will be made, there is always one big uncertainty for me, as a consultant. I never know how the client actually will receive and use what's learned. And, that's what makes the job a hard one at times.

As I see it, the stumbling block for many people -- whether they lead an organization or just themselves -- is honesty. It's not just *hearing* or *seeing*, but it's really *receiving* with a spirit of openness that allows them to do something with the information that's been given.

So, in this month's edition of **EA Insights**, let's take a look at honesty. Not are you honest with others, but are you honest with yourself? Are you able to receive feedback in order to use it effectively to learn and to grow?

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
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## Honesty: A Necessary First Step to Improved Outcomes

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Very often at the beginning of an engagement with a new **Executive Advantage** client, we'll work through an assessment. It may be a company diagnostic to get a sense of direction, capacity, capabilities, and environment. It may be a management or 360° assessment to understand an individual's strength and challenge areas. It may be a series of behavioral assessments to explore how a person is wired and how that unique makeup both contributes to, and sometimes impedes, success.

Whether it's an outside assessment, like those listed above, an annual performance review at work, a close friend who offers a word about something you've said or done recently, or just a moment of personal introspection, evaluations happen constantly. But, be honest. How many times have you gotten feedback, only to toss it aside?

- "Well, that's just **THEIR** opinion."
- "She doesn't understand my situation. So, how can she evaluate me?"
- "I'm not that way."

Here's the rub. While getting information certainly is important, what comes next is pivotal. After all, *gaining* knowledge is one thing; *applying* the knowledge you've gained is something completely different.

Yet, to open yourself up to application...to do something to move yourself forward, it's critical to be honest about what's been received. What's the big deal about honesty? In many respects, honesty is the essential first step in the practical



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### "Quotes"

*"Honesty is the cornerstone of all success, without which confidence and ability to perform shall cease to exist."*  
~Mary Kay Ash

*"Dishonest people conceal their faults from themselves as well as others; honest people know and confess them."*  
~Christian Bovee

*"Our own reality may be difficult for us to face with honesty, but it is the only reliable and reasonable place to begin."*  
~Donald DeMarco

*"Whatever games are played with us, we must play no games with ourselves, but deal in our privacy with the last honesty and truth."*  
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

*"We all need to know what it means to be honest. Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth telling, truth speaking, truth living, and truth loving."*  
~James E. Faust

*"Where is the man who has the strength to be true, and to show himself as he is."*  
~Wolfgang Goethe

*"Honesty will never break you."*  
~Kate Hudson

*"Honesty is the first chapter in the book of*

application process in order to improve your outcomes.

**Honesty and Effectiveness:** *Effectiveness* is the ability to produce a desired result. So, consider this situation. Have you ever complained about not being able to accomplish X or Y (that is, not being effective in a certain area)? Yet, when an observer shared with you a potential reason for your ineffectiveness or, better still, a possible solution to it, you found every reason under the sun why the observation or advice didn't apply to you. That's a situation in which honesty (or the lack thereof) had a negative impact on effectiveness.

To be increasingly effective, to produce more and more of those desired results, honesty is essential. It means stepping back, and in an unbiased manner, looking at what, how, when, where, and why you're doing what you're doing. It means being open to recommendations for ways to improve, whether they're comfortable, or different, or easy. And, it means not just being open to the ideas, but giving them a fair shot and not simply a half-hearted effort that allows you to say you tried but to explain away the idea's failure in the long run.

**Honesty and Professional Development:** In the work environment, people often gripe that there are no opportunities for development and growth. With economics as they are today, there may be some truth to that. However, it's difficult for employers to identify development opportunities for folks who see themselves as having no flaws. (Ouch, did I just type that?)

Seriously, at the heart of constructive development -- whether personal or professional -- is honesty. Everyone does some things well (not everything, mind you). So, what are those strength areas? How can you further enhance them, or how can you highlight them, so that they can be even greater contributors to your success? And, then there are the challenge areas. If you're honest, you will admit that you have some. (We all do.) So, what are they (not just those you'd acknowledge, but those that the folks around you see ever so clearly)? Consider how they are impacting you today and what that means for the future. The good news is that, if you're being honest and open to opportunities for growth and increased effectiveness, you've got the ability to develop solutions to overcome your challenges or, at least, to prevent them from being game changers for you.

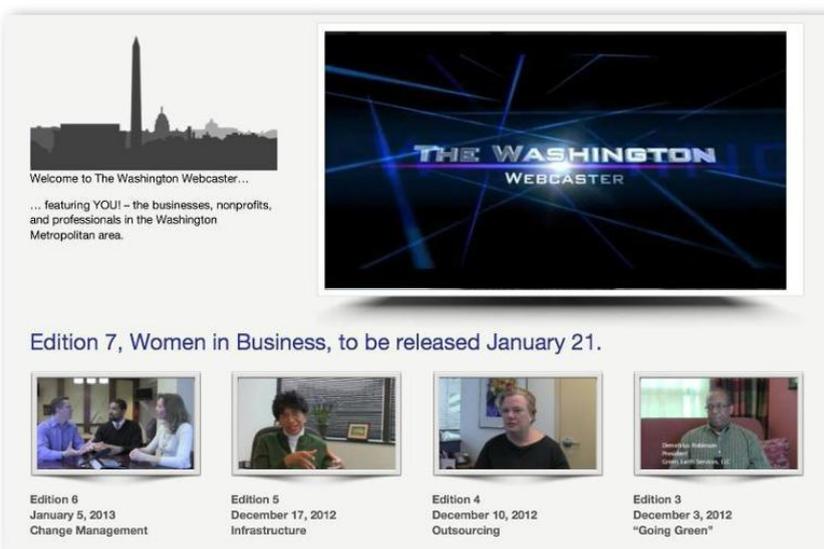
**Honesty and Leadership:** Leaders are special people. If you were to brainstorm about essential leadership characteristics, a good many would come to mind. However, perhaps the greatest among them is the ability to achieve results through others.

Okay, so what's accomplishing outcomes through others got to do with honesty? Just think about that. How committed would you be to a leader who's very willing to assess you and identify your faults but is unwilling to do the same? Now, the recommendation is not that leaders publicly live out every aspect of their assessments and improvement plans before the world. On the other hand, to be a credible leader, people do need to know that you are holding yourself to the same (if not higher) standards as those to which you're holding them -- that is, that you're expecting assessment, introspection, and ongoing action on the findings to bring about progress for, and in, you all.

So, want to be more effective? Desire to grow personally and/or professionally? Need a boost to your leadership quotient? Be more honest -- with, and about, yourself. Honesty really is a necessary first step to improved outcomes

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## [The Washington Webcaster Features Executive Advantage's June Mickens](#)



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**THE WASHINGTON WEBCASTER**

Edition 7, Women in Business, to be released January 21.

 Edition 6 January 5, 2013 Change Management	 Edition 5 December 17, 2012 Infrastructure	 Edition 4 December 10, 2012 Outsourcing	 Edition 3 December 3, 2012 "Going Green"
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Check out Edition 5 (December 17, 2012) of The Washington Webcaster.

**Executive Advantage's** own June Mickens is featured in this edition on infrastructure development.

wisdom."

~Thomas Jefferson

"As I have said, the first thing is to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself..."

~Nelson Mandela

"Honesty is the most single most important factor having a direct bearing on the final success of an individual, corporation, or product."

~Ed McMahon

"Trust, honesty, humility, transparency, and accountability are the building blocks of a positive reputation.

Trust is the foundation of any relationship."

~Mike Paul

"Almost any difficulty will move in the face of honesty. When I am honest, I never feel stupid. And when I am honest, I am automatically humble."

~Hugh Prather

"They're the kind of people who were honest. They'd listen and tell me what they thought -- the kind of honesty you need when you're trying to perfect your craft."

~Gretchen Wilson

"Personal deficiencies might be termed negative qualities[.] \*\*\* Many fail in their work because they are unable to overcome one personal deficiency. Check up on yourself. Don't be afraid to put yourself under a microscope.

Eliminate your negative qualities. Develop your positive ones. You can't win with the check mark in the wrong place."

~M. Winette

## About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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