

## **Are you normal?**

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What exactly is normal anyway? Sure, part of the equation involves conforming to community standards. Society has to have some level of cooperation in order to function smoothly. That's a given. But, is achieving normality a good goal to have?

Probably not. At least that's the stance of Warren Martin, Executive Director of the General Tommy Franks Leadership Institute, who will be speaking to an OK Ethics audience in Oklahoma City soon. According to Martin, being normal could lead to unhealthy compromises in one's own integrity.

He makes a good point. Studies suggest that normal typically means going along to get along. But, sometimes we lose our balance and make the wrong concessions in our efforts to conform. Consider a 2012 Ethics Resources Center report that indicated at least 62 million employees observed workplace misconduct. However, a whopping 21 million failed to report these observations. In other words, there's a lot of bad stuff going on that people recognize, but are simply unwilling to confront it. This is an indication that many workers will sacrifice their personal principles in order to conform to the company's "normal" business practices.

Martin's research indicates American workers value integrity in their boss more than any other single factor. Unfortunately, not everyone is getting the message. According to a Gallup poll cited in a July, 2013 edition of the *New York Daily News*, at least 70% of workers they surveyed "either hate work or are completely disengaged, and perks don't help." The report indicates that dissatisfaction due to bad bosses translates into big money: "an estimated \$450 to \$550 billion per year in lost productivity, stolen goods, and missed days of work."

Being normal these days can clearly be costly, both in financial and personal terms. As Martin puts it, "Striving for normal is not an ideal goal. Workers want more from their leaders."

Borrowing from lessons that he has learned from General Tommy Franks, Martin proposes that we aspire to achieve higher standards. As he put it, "Greatness has to be chosen. It requires an intentional commitment to extraordinary standards, including courageously speaking the truth to power."

Think of how the workplace might be transformed if we decided to not be so "normal."

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