

## 4 WAYS EMPLOYEES CAN HELP CREATE AN ETHICAL CULTURE



## ETHICS IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

EMPLOYEES HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN CREATING AN ETHICAL CULTURE

Ethical leadership is vital to organizational well-being. From CEOs to first line supervisors, ethical behavior is important. But what about those who do not hold a formal leadership role? How can regular employees contribute to the ethical culture of an organization? Here, we outline four ways in which employees can help to create an ethical culture: trust leaders, develop a shared understanding of good leadership, share stories, and reinforce norm for ethics.

### INTERACTING WITH LEADERS

#### TRUST, BUT VERIFY

Employees can reward leader initiatives by placing trust in the leaders. An atmosphere of trust allows for frank discussion of ethical challenges and room for bold action to meet those challenges. However, leaders must first earn trust by displaying competence, high character, and transparency.

#### DEVELOP A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF GOOD LEADERSHIP

Every employee has an ideal image of what good leadership should look like. An essential element of that image should include ethical behavior. As employees interact and reinforce the importance of leader ethics, it helps to create a shared understanding. This shared understanding helps to create a common expectation for ethical leadership – and a lower tolerance for unethical leadership.

### CREATING THE CULTURE

#### SHARE STORIES

Ethics is best taught through powerful stories. As employees shares stories of ethical courage within the organization, the culture will continue to strengthen. Of course, there needs to be such stories in the first place. Employees can help to create them through courageous action.

#### REINFORCE NORMS

Committed employees and cohesive teams help to drive organizational performance, but only when those employees and teams are committed to productive norms of behavior. As employees help to encourage one another and hold their leaders to account with respect to ethics, norms will develop and help to create an ethical, high performing culture.