

# *The Eagle's Nest*

*By Philip J. Lawson, J.D.*

*Philip J. Lawson, J.D. was the founder of the Knoxville law firm of Wimberly & Lawson and retired from active practice on December 31, 2004. Phil has lectured and taught widely on a variety of aspects of labor, employment law, leadership, and personal growth.*



## **The Value of Values and The Importance of "Walking the Talk"**

After practicing law for over 30 years and having the privilege of serving as a hearing officer for the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Tennessee Supreme Court for a number of terms, I began to see more clearly the importance that personal values play in the lives of attorneys.

Knowing personally the dedication and hard work needed to earn a law degree and a law license, I was saddened to see members of the profession lose their license for various periods of time and in some cases losing their license completely – total disbarment.

There is a professional responsibility attorneys must demonstrate to fellow members of the bar and the public in general. Looking back over the cases in which I participated as a hearing officer, I thought about the role personal values played in most, if not all of the cases when disciplinary actions were brought against attorneys. The genesis of the lack of professional and personal responsibilities occurred over a long period of time. Once the attorney “stepped over the line” in small ways, the practice of continuing to step over the line was borne and the tendency to do so became more commonplace and more serious as time went on.

Due to the nature of the practice of law, attorneys are in a position to take advantage of clients and even non-clients. There is concern by the general public about lawyers and their ethics.

In our own firm, discussions of ethical responsibilities and requirements were commonplace. Questions with respect to ethical responses to pleadings, procedural and substantive, and in other matters of discovery occurred frequently.

In this article, I want to discuss and highly recommend a small book written by Eric Harvey and Steve Ventura titled “Walk the Talk.”

I found this book to be a wonderful aid in helping us to maintain the core values that will bless us and those we serve.

Christopher Reeve once stated:

*“I think we all have a little voice inside us that will guide us.... If we shut out all the noise and clutter from our lives and listen to that voice, it will tell us the right thing to do.”*

What an awesome statement by an awesome individual.

In several recent articles, I have referred to a company called **Simple Truths**® ([www.simpletruths.com](http://www.simpletruths.com)) (800)900-3427. The president of this company, Mack Anderson, is the founder of Simple Truths and Successories and has the unique talent of finding both subjects and articles on personal growth principles and ethics; perhaps Mack is the “best in the business” in this regard. The author points out that “with few

exceptions,” all of us have beliefs, values, and a relatively similar sense of what’s right and what’s wrong. They are what make us different from other living things on the planet...they are what makes us human. “But while having principles may be natural for us, actually practicing them isn’t. Acting according to these beliefs, values and good intentions...doing what’s right... **‘walking the talk’** is one of the biggest challenges each of us faces every day.”

The authors quote several different phrases that are familiar to most people.

**Practice what you preach.**

**Actions speak louder than words.**

**Talk is cheap.**

**Show me.**

And the song title “**A little less talk and a lot more action.**”

The authors point out there are two facts “you can take to the bank”:

“We all have moments when our behaviors are out of sync with the beliefs we hold deep inside, and the vast majority of those out-of-sync behaviors are unintentional.”

The authors provide five key principles to live by in “Walking the Talk” and acting accordingly:

### **FIVE KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. Words to live by are just words... unless you actually live by them.
2. You are what you do.
3. Everything you do counts. The authors quote Peter Scotese. “Integrity is not a 90 percent thing... not a 95 percent thing. Either you have it, or you don’t.”
4. The “Golden Rule” is still **PURE GOLD**.
5. **Character is the Key.**

The acrostic, which makes up the word “character” provides exemplary information on each of the character points. The authors provide excellent dialogue on following the words making up the acrostic “character” – a great outline for

teaching in your firm or organization.

**C** ommitment

**H** onesty

**A** ccountability

**R** espect

**A** ttitude

**C** ourage

**T** rust

**E** thics and integrity

**R** esponsibility

The book ends with **A Poem of Possibilities**

If every person walked the talk,  
can you imagine  
how it would be?

A world filled with good intentions...  
that all became reality.

We could count on one another,  
and coexist respectfully.

There would be no  
broken promises,  
and no hypocrisy.

We’d have no problem spotting heroes,  
they’d be everywhere to see.

Just by looking in the mirror,  
we all would find  
**INTEGRITY.**

If everybody did what’s right,  
most rules we wouldn’t need.  
Conscience, trust,  
and common sense  
would be the things that we’d all heed.

There would be no hurtful  
actions in the news  
That we would read.  
only story, after story,  
of yet another  
**NOBLE DEED.**



And when it came to raising  
children with young characters  
to mold and feed,  
the best lessons  
they could ever learn  
would come by merely following  
**OUR LEAD.**

If each of us behaved beliefs,  
there'd be little cause for fear.  
All actions would be honorable,  
our values would be clear.

Just by watching  
what it is we DO,  
one could tell  
what we hold dear.  
For our principles would be  
acts you see...  
not merely words you hear.

It's a challenging task to  
**WALK THE TALK...**  
Every hour, day, and year.

And we ALL can do a better job,  
Let's start **RIGHT NOW...**  
**RIGHT HERE!**

I sincerely recommend the book "**Walk the Talk**" by Harvey and Ventura. The book is one, which the leader of any organization can use to teach others the importance of **walking the talk.**

Eric Harvey is president and founder of the Walk the Talk® Company and is a leading expert on ethics and values-based principles. Steve Ventura is a recognized and respected author, book producer, and award-winning training program designer. This work reflects over 30 years of human resource development and experience – both as a practitioner and a business consultant.

Over the years, both as a consultant and as an attorney, I have learned that "the secret to wealth" is repeat business from your clients or customers. Without credibility and "walking the talk," you will never realize the blessing of having clients and/or customers coming back to you for repeat services. Clients and customers return to you because of your integrity and your desire to help them succeed. You cannot do this without **CHARACTER.**

**Think on these things.**

Most sincerely,  
Philip J. Lawson