



# Lead with Ethics

## Differentiate Your Company in a Changing Market

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"Your personal core values define who you are, and a company's core values ultimately define the company's character and brand. For individuals, character is destiny. For organizations, culture is destiny."

– Tony Hsieh

# AI Transparency Notice

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- I use licensed graphics
  - Some of these might be AI-generated
- I do not use any AI tools for generating content, writing, or text in any way
- I do use AI assisted research tools (primarily Gemini from Google)



# Today's Message

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Business Ethics have never been more important than they are today.

Which means . . .

Your marketing should use Ethics to differentiate your business and attract the right kind of clients.

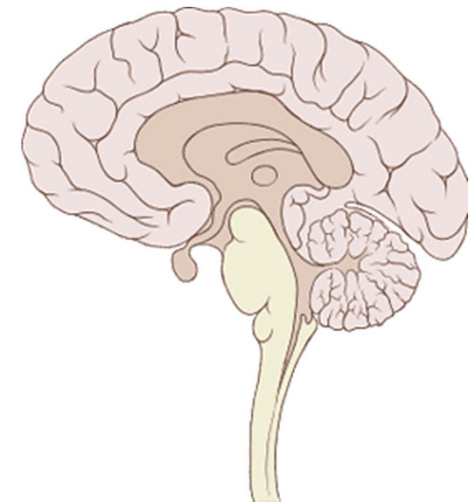


# Exercise: What Do People See?

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1. Google your business
2. Go to LinkedIn and search for yourself, your business, or both
3. Go to your web site
  - a) Read the About page
  - b) Then read the front page without scrolling
  - c) Then poke around and read more



For a primer on the Reticular Activating System, see <https://relaxfocussucceed.com/2018/07/priming-your-brain-part-1/>

Handout at <https://relaxfocussucceed.com/reading-list>



# Of-Repeated Advice

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→ Build good relationships with clients.

→ We do business with people we know, like, and trust.

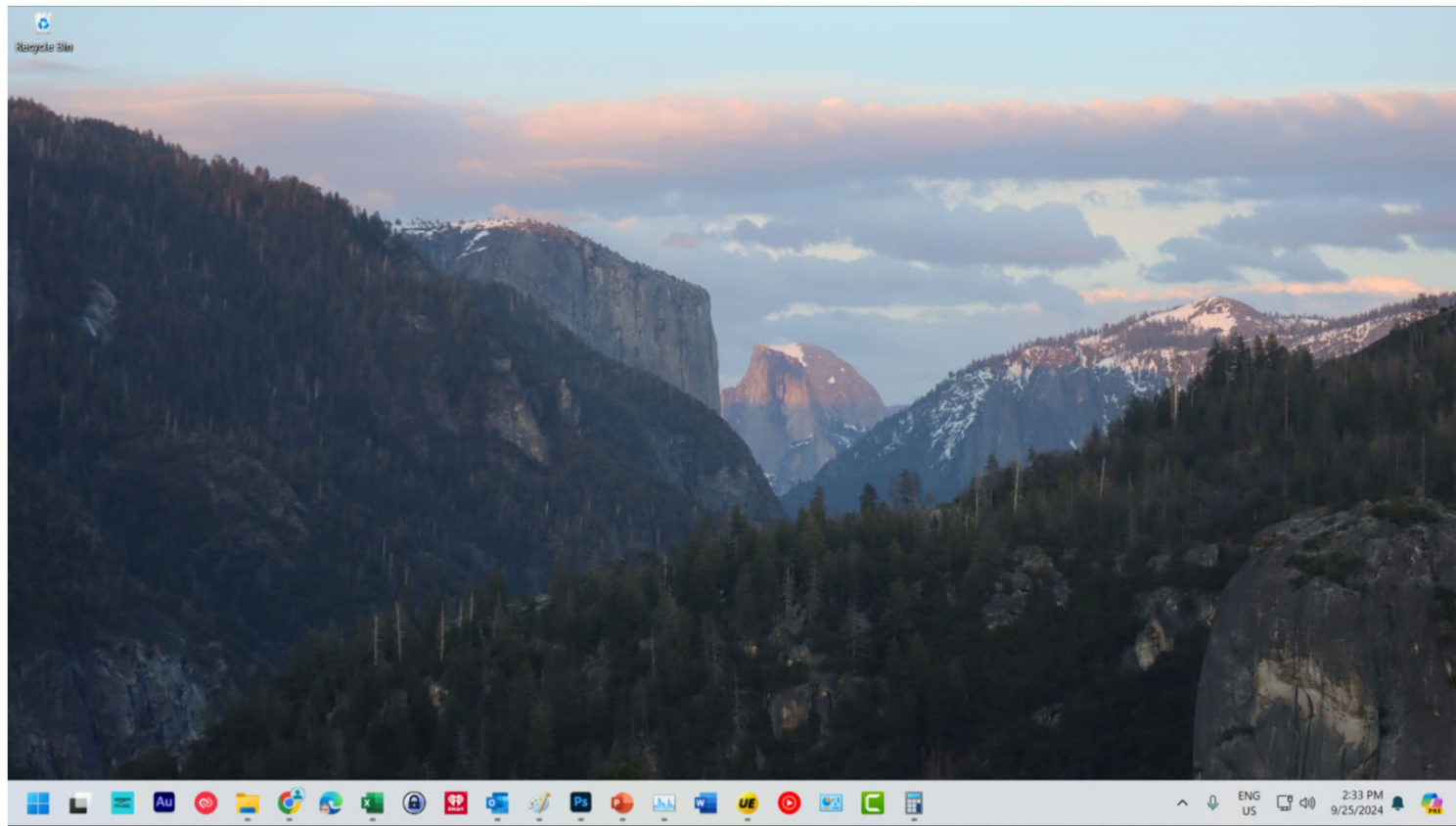


**What does that look like in the real world?**



# A Little Background

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# Step into my time machine

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## 1990's-2000's

- Keeping secrets
  - Little or no documentation
  - Don't give clients their passwords
  - Hoarding of knowledge
- Common practice
  - Only sell the tech you know
  - (No ongoing education)
- Rampant license violation
  - Pirated software
  - Used equipment
- Ongoing maintenance was RARE



# Step into my time machine

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## Common Jobs

- Clean up messes from incompetent technicians
- Document existing installations
- Get clients legal re: software
- “Break into” a new client’s system to give them access denied by previous consultant
- Come in after “the big job” and set up backups and ongoing maintenance



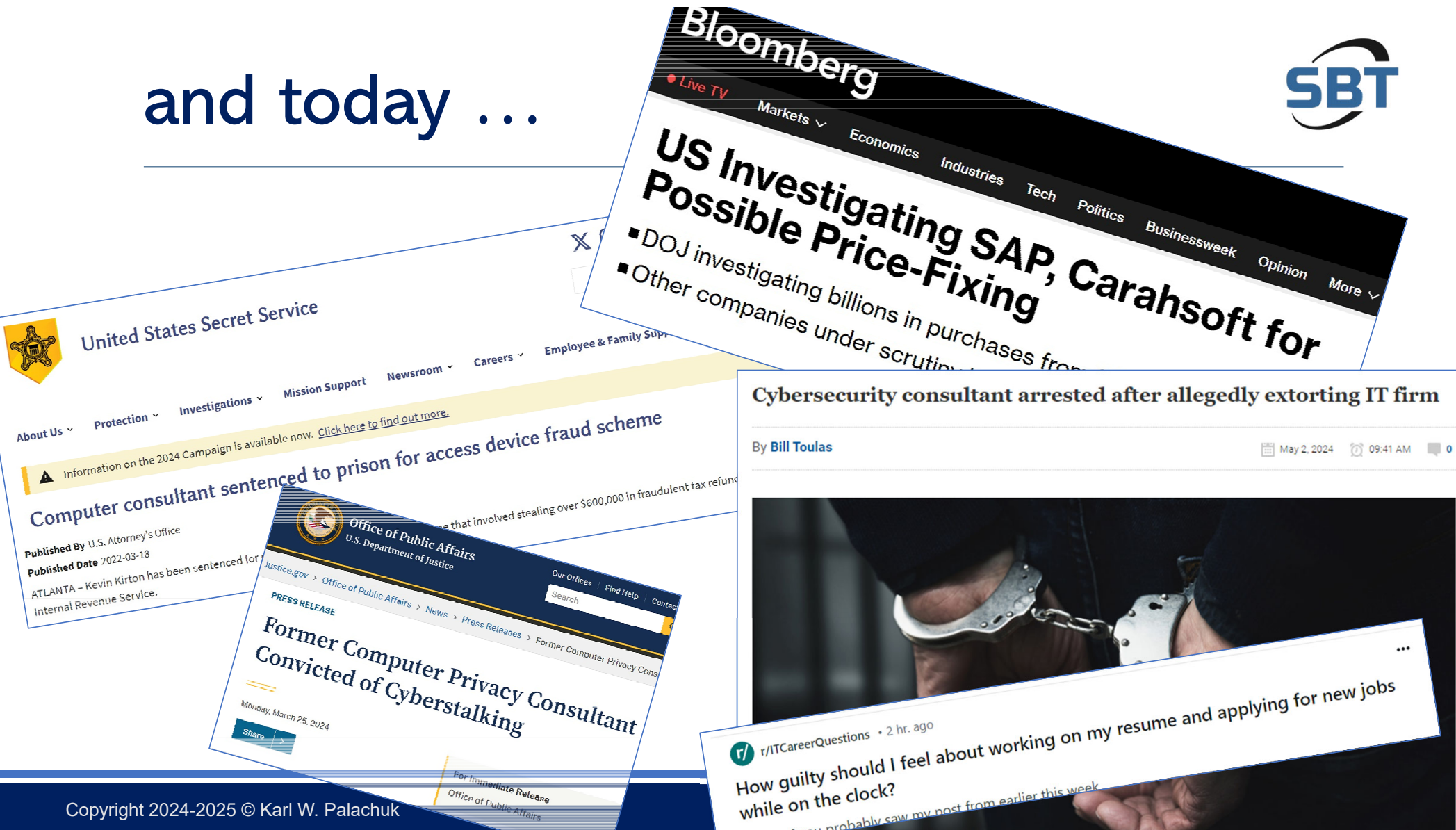
# Is it Any Better today?

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and today ...





# and today ...



(Aside from just plain evil people)

- Some consultants have abusive (often unenforceable) contracts
- Some consultants still hold client data hostage
- Some consultants sell “managed services” but provide no maintenance – so it’s break/fix on a flat fee
- Some consultants treat employees like disposable tools
- Some consultants lie to clients, mislead clients, and sell things that are not needed

etc.



# Ethics is Easy. And Difficult.



- We are not one world
- We each maximize specific values
- Download Brene Brown's "Dare to Lead" list of values
  - <https://brenebrown.com/resources/dare-to-lead-list-of-values/>
  - Or see appendix in *Relax Focus Succeed*



# Disclaimer

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Having values . . .

And talking about them in public . . .

Does not mean you're arrogant . . .

Or that you think you're better than anyone else.

**It does mean you're willing to post a measure . . .**

**And be publicly evaluated on that measure.**




# Examples\*




**VALUES**

Our values articulate how we work together as a team and with our members and partners. As our environment changes, our strategy may change, but our values stay consistent to help us meet any challenges we face as an organization.


The professionalism and integrity of our industry are our passion.




Communication is the cornerstone of our integrity.




We choose to communicate openly and honestly. Our clients and colleagues always deserve the truth.



We embrace change and education as the foundation of our industry.



We are devoted to operating a highly successful member-driven organization.



<https://nsitsp.org/about/mission-vision-values/>

\* You need to go through YOUR process

# Examples



## Code of Ethics

**Small Biz Thoughts** (Great Little Book, IT Service Provider University, SBT, SMB Community Podcast, etc.) is fundamentally a company designed around the concept of helping others to be successful. We literally exist to help as many people as possible to be successful. To that end, we have adopted the following Code of Ethics to drive our behavior and interactions inside and outside our company.



### We are honest

In our work with clients, prospects, and strangers, we are committed to honesty at all levels. This drives several elements of our behavior.

### We are competent

That means we know what we're doing, or we don't do it. It also means that we are constantly dedicated to learning new things. We are committed to never-ending education in a world that is always changing.

<https://www.smallbizthoughts.org/about/>

# Examples



Not sure where to start?

<https://nsitsp.org/code-of-ethics/>

## NSITSP Code of Ethics

COMPETENCE	We will always represent our skills and abilities accurately.
	We will maintain our capacity to provide wise counsel for those areas we represent having expertise through education, and experience.
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	We advise our clients of conflicts of interest that exist and will always present the options we genuinely believe are in the best interest of the client.
	We shall not knowingly make recommendations or provide advice that serves the member and not the recipient.
CONFIDENTIALITY	We treat all client information as confidential unless we know it's not.
	We will not take advantage of proprietary or privileged information, either for use by ourselves, our client's firm, or another client, without the client's permission.
	We have documented measures for maintaining the confidentiality of our clients' data as well as our own.
COMMITMENT TO CLIENTS	We compete by consistently acting in our client's best interest and employing the highest levels of honesty, competence, transparency, and professionalism.
	We expect our vendors and other IT Service Providers to operate within the same Code of Ethics we hold ourselves to, and will not tolerate unethical behavior.



# Okay. Now What?

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Once you HAVE a public position  
on values and ethics,

How do you LEAD with values and ethics?

→ NOTE: Please enter questions as we go along!

COE



# 1. Implementation

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- ☐ Add or update Code of Ethics on your web site
- ☐ Add a Satisfaction Guarantee Statement
- ☐ Add or update an owner bio with photo
- ☐ Update the home page with a statement about your values (e.g., integrity, professionalism)
- ☐ Add a link to COE and Guarantee in our newsletter
- ☐ Create a blog post or LinkedIn article highlighting your values/COE

Handout at  
<https://relaxfocussucceed.com/reading-list>

## 2. Go-To-Market Messaging

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- ☐ You can hold us to a higher standard
- ☐ “Honesty and Integrity First”
- ☐ Your data is your business!
  - ☐ We sign non-disclosure agreements with all clients
  - ☐ All of our employees sign non-disclosure agreements. If you need a copy for your records, just ask



Most importantly: **LIVE** your code of ethics

# Is This Realistic?

[Home](#)[New Companies](#)[Honorees](#) ▼[FAQ](#) ▼[Contact Us](#)

## The 2024 World's Most Ethical Companies® Honoree List

In 2024, 136 organizations are recognized for their unwavering commitment to business integrity. The honorees span 20 countries and 44 industries, and include 15 first-time honorees and 6 organizations that have been named to the honoree list 18 times, marking every year since its inception.

Companies that value  
ethics and integrity  
love to work with each other!

Hewlett Packard  
Enterprise



JUNIPER  
NETWORKS

Western Digital



DELL Technologies

<https://worldsmoethicalcompanies.com/honorees/>

# Prep those Questions . . .

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# Homework

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Download the Worksheet.

Here are the highlights:

1. Review and evaluate your public presence (web site, LinkedIn, other social media, etc.)
2. Explore and document your personal guiding principles/values
3. Define and write down your company guiding principles/values
4. Define and write down your company Code of Ethics (Consistent with personal and company values)
5. Implement education internally
6. Update your public presence and ongoing communication





# Links mentioned

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**Handout at** – Handout at <https://relaxfocussucceed.com/reading-list> → Bottom of the page

- <https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/legal/cybersecurity-consultant-arrested-after-allegedly-extorting-it-firm/>
- <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/former-computer-privacy-consultant-convicted-cyberstalking>
- <https://www.secretservice.gov/newsroom/releases/2022/03/computer-consultant-sentenced-prison-access-device-fraud-scheme>
- <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-09-25/us-probing-tech-firms-sap-carahsoft-for-potential-price-fixing>
- <https://therecord.media/ftc-says-it-will-go-after-companies-that-change-privacy-policy-ai>
- <https://brenebrown.com/resources/dare-to-lead-list-of-values/>
- <https://smallbizthoughts.org/about>
- <https://relaxfocussucceed.com/2018/07/priming-your-brain-part-1/>
- <https://nsitsp.org/code-of-ethics/>
- <https://worldsmoethicalcompanies.com/honorees/>

# Questions . . . Comments?

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