



HI-P INTERNATIONAL LIMITED

WALK-IN INTERVIEW TODAY

Look out for our advertisement in today's The Straits Times Recruit for more information.

THE STRAITS TIMES RECRUIT

Classified Jobs 1800-289-9988 • www.sphclass.com.sg/recruit • Executive Appointments 1800-289-8822



moe.gov.sg/teach

The ABC's of Work & Life

I is for Integrity



Katie Mehnert gets introspective about I.



Success without integrity is failure - I is for Integrity.

When I attended Louisiana State University, I remember sitting in my business ethics course at the journalism school. Dr. Matthew Reavy told us we'd never forget him, and he was right. He explained to my senior section of budding journalists that *he couldn't nor wouldn't teach us ethics*. "One day you'll be forced to make a really tough decision. You'll be at a fork in the road. And on that day you'll remember me

telling you this story," he said. "Because ethics comes down to who you are, what you value and how you decide to respond to moral dilemmas you'll face. Integrity is everything."

At 21, I didn't get it. But he was right.

I remember Dr. Reavy often. Sadly, I've come across some pretty interesting dilemmas in my career. Each time, I remember the day he told that story. It had a profound effect on me. It's been a defining moment I return to a lot when I need to be reminded of my innocence and the carefree days of college. Back when most dilemmas were deciding what I was going to consume: *beer, pizza, or both?*

What is integrity?

I used to think integrity was about your approach. The more time I've spent in business, the more I've learned it's more encompassing. Integrity is a value, not a priority. It has everything to do with having principles. My top four include: respect, honesty, accountability and transparency.



What are your principles? What are the three to five things you stand for no matter what?

Being principled sometimes gets you the badge of "unpopular".

So here's the problem with the truth: *No one really wants to hear it*. I believe the one thing worse than being lied to is knowing you weren't worth the truth.

The good news is you can't dispute the facts. And if you lay out all of the data, 1+1 is always going to equal 2. Today, it takes a lot of courage to speak the truth. It means putting yourself out

there. Oh, it's too risky, right? My friend, we live in a world that wants to hear nothing but good news. **People like hearing everything is "fine"**. But that's when we need to be asking, "What don't we know?" or "What isn't fine?"

Have you ever had to give a message to someone who didn't want to hear it? How did it go? What did you learn?

Why don't more people speak up? F-E-A-R.

Fear stands in the way of a lot of things. And, sadly, so does money and job security. "I have to pay for my kid's education. That's why I don't say anything." I've heard this more often than I've seen people speak up. What a way to live - in fear. I have to pay for my kid's education, too. But I also have to look at myself in the mirror and know I am doing the right thing. That's why I always choose integrity over money.

I was once asked to lie on a report. (Actually it's happened more than once.) Guess what I did. I said, "No." What happened? Well, after I stunned leadership with an answer they didn't

expect, I invariably got labeled. I became unpopular to those who didn't want to hear the truth and *popular to those looking for a voice*. It felt good to say no because I got to stand for a whole group of people who needed to see it was OK to say so.

When have you encountered fear in speaking up and doing the right thing?

Consistency is key.

I've consistently chosen the unpopular path of No Fear. It hasn't been easy, but taking a consistent approach certainly helps others to be clear about who you are and what you stand for.

Are you consistent in your thoughts and actions?

- Define your principles. It's not hard to make decisions once you know what your values are.
- Don't accept "green" as the automatic "all things are a go".
- Let go of your fear (even if it means exiting gracefully instead of speaking up).
- Be consistent.

Just remember: the world needs more people (like you) to do the right thing when no one is looking. Integrity is everything.

Katie Mehnert (pictured) is a global talent development and change executive with 17 years of helping people and companies get curious, connect, share, grow and perform better. She has recently been appointed CEO of Pink Petro; www.pinkpetro.com, a platform to connect women and men in the energy industry and advance females in her industry. Prior to her latest venture, Katie was a Director with BP, joining after the Deepwater Horizon incident and worked in various leadership roles worldwide with Shell. She's a dynamic speaker and author having been featured in LinkedIn, CEO.com, Business Insider, and Yahoo. As a work-in-progress marathon runner, wife and working mom, you can follow her musings on balancing it all on her blog at www.katiemehnert.com, or email her at katie@katiemehnert.com