

WillBe™

13 REASONS
WillBe's

ARE LUCKIER THAN
WannaBe's

Ian Ziskin

Foreword by Dave Ulrich

A BOOK FOR HIGH POTENTIALS WHO HAVE WHAT IT TAKES

Words of praise for this book . . .

“Ian Ziskin brings an uncanny and practical perspective to the human dimension of driving great company performance. He’s seen it all, and offers sage advice to up-and-coming *WillBe*’s.”

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Northrop Grumman Corporation
Member, Board of Directors of Apple, Amgen, and Chevron

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Author of *Talent: Making People Your Competitive Advantage* (2008)

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School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University

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—Lynda Gratton, Professor of Management Practice
London Business School
Founder of the Hot Spots Movement

Look for more comments from readers at the beginning of this book.

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Chapter 1

DEFINE THE MOMENTS

Watchword: Ethics

SOMEONE ONCE TOLD ME, “You never know what your values are until they cost you something.” This philosophy is a great way of underscoring the importance of an unwavering commitment to ethics and integrity, even if it’s inconvenient or messy. No compromises. No shortcuts. No excuses. No kidding.

True *WillBe’s* seem to understand that the highest standards of ethics and integrity are foundational to everything else. High potentials will not be viewed as such without also being seen as high integrity people. They cannot maintain the highest ethical standards unless they are prepared to raise issues, ask tough questions, take a stand, and potentially put themselves at risk by irritating people who may not like being questioned or second-guessed. This capability is particularly important for *WillBe’s* who often do not yet hold positions of power in their organizations. Confronting ethical dilemmas can be uncomfortable, but it must be done when circumstances call for it.

WillBe’s know how to push back and challenge things that seem unethical, without offending people unnecessarily or seeming like alarmists or holier than thou. It’s a delicate balance, but these kinds of dilemmas are what I mean by **Define the Moments**. How these situations are handled

can shape one's reputation for years to come. Ethical choices are not about doing what's convenient or safe; they are about doing what's right. At one of my previous employers, we called this behavior "know when to challenge and when to support."

A Situation!

Steve and Dana are Division General Manager and Deputy General Manager, respectively, of a large manufacturing division. They receive an urgent call from the company's "Ethics Open Line" indicating that a sexual harassment complaint has been filed against one of the division's plant managers.

This plant manager has been in his role for about six months. By all accounts, he has done an excellent job turning around the plant, which previously had a series of quality, delivery, and financial problems. He has been with the company for 25 years, and was transferred into this job from another plant because of his skill fixing troubled businesses and his positive relationship with the plant's most important customer.

Following a thorough investigation by the Human Resources and Law Departments, Steve and Dana learn that the plant manager has been accused by a temporary contract employee of making repeated inappropriate and unwanted sexual advances. In addition, he is accused of following the contract employee around town on several occasions (what she describes as "stalking her") in an attempt to watch her, touch her inappropriately, and ask her out on dates. The temporary employee asked the plant manager repeatedly to discontinue his behavior, but to no avail. She then filed the complaint.

The investigation has revealed that the plant manager did in fact repeatedly approach the employee to discuss his sexual interest in her. In addition, he followed her in his car as she drove to her home and around the small town where they and their families live. The plant manager has admitted he did the things of which he has been accused, but maintains

Handling this Situation!

If the first thing that pops into your mind about Steve and Dana's dilemma is how inconvenient it would be to fire the plant manager, you are focused on the wrong thing. Don't gloss over a question of ethics. Get the facts and make sure the right people are involved in any investigation. Advocate discipline that is reasonable for the ethical offense committed. Even give people a second chance if the situation and the offender's reputation warrant it.

But once a determination has been made regarding the appropriate actions to be taken, take them. Make it clear that you are not willing to sacrifice your reputation for someone else's convenience. In this case, the plant manager needs to go.

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Some additional advice for *WillBe's* about Ethics . . .

- Challenge up the organization to superiors whenever ethical questions arise, and support down in the organization to protect and encourage those who may be reluctant to raise such issues.
- Foster confidential means for people to express their ethical concerns.
- Never ask anyone to do something you wouldn't do yourself.
- Insist on the highest standards of personal ethics and integrity for yourself, and make it clear that you expect no less from others.
- Safeguard your reputation; it takes a lifetime to build and only a moment to destroy.

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About the Author

IAN ZISKIN IS PRESIDENT of **EXec EXcel Group LLC**, a human capital consulting firm he founded following a highly successful 28 year career as a business executive.

Ian is also Executive in Residence to Cornell University's Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS) at the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, as well as to USC's Center for Effective Organizations (CEO) at the Marshall School of Business.

Previously, Ian served in Chief Human Resources Officer and other senior roles with three Fortune 100 corporations: Northrop Grumman, Qwest Communications, and TRW.

Ian has a Master of Industrial and Labor Relations degree from Cornell University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Management from Binghamton University, where he graduated magna cum laude.

In 2007, Ian was elected a Fellow of the National Academy of Human Resources, considered the highest honor in the HR profession.

For additional information on the author and **EXec EXcel Group**, visit www.exexgroup.com.

