

BUSINESS & FINANCE

ARISTOTLE ON BUSINESS

By Joseph F. McKenna

Tell the Donald to step aside. Aristotle is back in business.

In a refreshing departure from today's mainstream business books, two professors from Baldwin-Wallace College have merged their respective expertise in business and religion to fashion a text on effective leadership based on the seven classical virtues.

Identified by Aristotle, the virtues – courage, faith, justice, prudence, temperance, love and hope – “serve well as business virtues” in these days of corporate capers and government-induced integrity exams, according to **Alan Kolp** and **Peter Rea** in *Integrity Is a Growth Market: Character-Based Leadership*, released this month by Cincinnati-based Atomic Dog Publishing.

“The goal of this book is to integrate concepts that focus on enduring wisdom (virtue and character) with concepts that focus on contemporary business issues (value and competence),” the authors explain. “Character is about identity – who we want to be and how we can make a life that is bigger than ourselves. Competence is about action – what we need to know and how we execute our ideas to serve stakeholders.”

Who better to tackle such a lofty task than Kolp, holder of the Moll Chair in Faith and Life and professor of religion at B-W, and friend and colleague Rea, chairman of the college's Business Administration Division?

In the days after the Enron scandal had broken, the two academics mused about the introduction of Aristotelian principles into the world of balance sheets and stock options. Their musing evolved into the idea of collaborating on a single article.

“We were intrigued by what each of us would bring to the conversation,” says Kolp, whose first brush with business was as the dean of a seminary. Rea, who has counseled many businesses and organizations, notes that business texts are loaded with caveats, warnings and rules about the don'ts, “but not many rules on the dos.”

As a team, Kolp and Rea aimed to embed the seven classical virtues into the contemporary business landscape. Before long, the writing partners found themselves with not a single article, but an entire book – a scholarly but readable work whose chapters were field-tested along the way by working executives, including **Pierre-Jean Everaert**, a renowned European business leader and chairman of the Belgian brewing giant InBev. Kolp and Rea also enlisted Everaert to write the preface for the book.

Readers of *Integrity Is a Growth Market* will find that Aristotle is all business in today's world: “Aristotle did not propose that virtue be used to pursue happiness; rather, happiness occurs as a by-product of doing something worthy – when we do what we are meant to do and when we become who we were meant to be. Aristotle defines success within this context.”

When success gets distorted, say hello to Enron scandals and Sarbanes-Oxley regu- ▶



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Alan Kolp (left) and Peter Rea say they enjoyed the two-year project that became *Integrity Is a Growth Market*.

▶ lations, the authors point out. That's why those in the business world “seek leaders who can add value (competence) and develop virtue (character) while they create new products, enter new markets and reduce costs,” write Kolp and Rea.

Robert J. Joyce, chairman and CEO of the Westfield Group, is among the business executives already endorsing *Integrity Is a Growth Market*, saying that “rather than rely on the latest management fad, this text relies on ideas that have stood the test of time.”

Kolp and Rea can say that they have withstood the test of writing in tandem. In fact, they plan to collaborate with Everaert to produce a book that focuses on the European business community.

“Even if we hadn't completed the book,” Rea says, “we had a lot of fun.”