FROM THE NRRTS OFFICE

Character, Choice and Ripple Effect of Leadership

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"True change does not come from intention alone; it emerges from character, is carried by integrity, and is revealed in the way people choose to lead."

My thoughts as my time as iNRRTS president ends and the torch passes. Thank you for your help, for inspiration and for being in awe of the people who were inspired to lead before me.

Change Begins with Character

Change is often described as the result of intention: a deliberate decision to challenge the status quo and pursue a different outcome. Yet meaningful change rarely begins so neatly. More often, it emerges from something deeper and more enduring: character.

At its core, lasting change is not driven by slogans, strategies or ambition alone. Integrity shapes it — the consistent alignment between what a person believes and how that person acts. It is built over time through decisions made when accountability is internal rather than visible. It is expressed through leadership not merely as a title, but as a disciplined way of engaging others with honesty, courage and purpose.

Leaders who leave a durable impact are seldom those preoccupied with appearing transformational. Instead, they focus on doing what is right, even when doing so is difficult or inconvenient. Through consistent conduct, they build trust, influence expectations and gradually alter the environment around them.

In this sense, change is not merely something leaders pursue. It is something that follows credible leadership.

This distinction is important. When intention is elevated above integrity, leadership can become focused more on visibility than substance. When character comes first, however, change becomes more organic, credible and enduring.

The Butterfly Effect in Leadership

If character is the foundation of change, the butterfly effect helps explain how that change spreads.

The butterfly effect — the idea that small actions can produce significant and sometimes unpredictable outcomes — offers a useful lens for understanding transformation. Change seldom begins with a sweeping gesture. More often, it starts with a decision, a word, a moment of courage or a simple act of integrity. These moments may appear insignificant at first, yet they can ripple outward in ways that cannot be fully anticipated.

In leadership, this means change does not always begin in boardrooms or through formal strategic plans. It often begins in everyday interactions. A leader who chooses honesty over convenience sets a tone. A manager who listens instead of dictates builds trust. A person who stands firm in principle, even when it is uncomfortable, quietly shifts the expectations of those nearby.

These acts may be small in form, but they are not small in consequence.

Over time, such ripples expand. One person's integrity can influence a team. A team's culture can reshape an organization. An organization's conduct can affect an industry or a community. The original act may be nearly invisible in hindsight, but its consequences can become undeniable.

This is where character and the butterfly effect intersect. When actions are grounded in strong values, their ripple effects are not random; they become constructive. They create momentum in the right direction, and because that momentum grows organically, it is more likely to endure.

Organizations often look for dramatic turning points to explain meaningful change. Transformation frequently begins quietly, with a single decision rooted in character. The rest is a cascade.

For that reason, the most influential leaders are not necessarily those who try to control change at scale. They are those who understand the weight of small moments and choose well within them.

Inheritance, Context and Human Agency

The same principle also reframes how we should understand inherited context. A genetic ancestry test, such as 23andMe, can provide a valuable map of where a person has been. It can describe ancestry, origins and biological inheritance. It cannot determine where a person is going.

Such tools tell a story of ancestry, biology and inherited traits passed down across generations. They may explain aspects of identity, predisposition and tendency. Yet they stop short of the most significant part of any life: the future shaped by choice.

The past informs human development, but it does not define human potential.

In an era shaped by data and prediction, there is a temptation to believe that if enough can be measured, everything can be foreseen. It becomes easy to imagine outcomes as embedded in DNA, simply waiting to unfold. But human beings are not algorithms. They are not fixed patterns. They are decision-makers.

This is precisely why character — and the butterfly effect — remain essential to any serious understanding of change.

If genetics is the story people inherit, character is the story they write.

A DNA test may suggest where certain traits come from, but it cannot determine when a person will choose courage. It may reveal predisposition, but it cannot predict discipline. It may trace lineage, but it cannot define leadership. Those qualities emerge not from biology alone, but from moment-to-moment choices.

In that sense, the future remains invisible by design.

It is not something waiting to be discovered in data; it is something waiting to be created through action. Often, as with the butterfly effect, those actions appear small at first: choosing integrity, speaking up, remaining consistent and acting when it matters. Over time, those choices compound, shaping not only an individual path but also the paths of others.

Viewed this way, inherited information is not a limitation. It is context.

It may show the roots, but it says nothing definitive about the direction of growth.

I write this article as my last as the current president of iNRRTS. It has been a wonderful experience, and I have been inspired by what we have accomplished.

We have exceeded 1,000 Registrants worldwide and successfully entered Australia. Just this year, we recognized the 10th anniversary of titan, Simon Margolis, who the industry owes a debt. Although geography can separate many on the board of iNRRTS, there is an inherent comradery due to all of us wanting the same thing, to be the best at what we do and put clients first.

I want to personally thank Weesie Walker, Gerry Dickerson, Andrea Madsen, Amy Odom, Tom Simon, Mike Osborn, Bill Noelting and Kathy Fisher. These are people who inspire and help me. Lastly, my wife and children, without whose support I could not do this.

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to lead.

Please continue to educate yourself, lead and look to the future for growth.

Conclusion

Meaningful change, then, is neither accidental nor fully predetermined. It begins with character, is carried by choice and spreads through the small moments that gradually reshape people, organizations and communities. The future is not simply inherited. It is written through action — and revealed in the ripples those actions leave behind.

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