

Turknett Leadership Character Awards Nomination

Nominee: Luella Brown

Organization: Southern Company

Category: Executive/Manager

Seventh Annual Awards: February 23, 2010

***Integrity** is defined by honesty, authenticity, and truth telling. Some examples of behaviors that typically illustrate integrity would be: always telling the truth even when it is difficult, keeping all promises, never twisting facts for personal advantage and being willing to stand up for what is right. Give up to three examples of how this person demonstrates Integrity:*

Luella Brown, application portfolio manager at Southern Company, manages a \$4 million budget and leads a group of technical staff in the development of application solutions, enhancements, maintenance, and software purchases.

For more than 30 years, she has been a trusted and respected employee, leader and mentor. Starting as a keypunch operator and then information systems analyst, she steadily rose to her current position as an application portfolio manager in IT at Southern Company. Such a position demands a comprehensive understanding of application development technologies and methodologies, as well as strong account management and customer service skills. Her strategic, out-of-the box thinking, solid communication and interpersonal skills, and integrity have not only created excellence in work, but in her community.

Often, tragedy reveals character. Luella's spirit and disposition were put to the test in October 2009, when the company experienced a tragic loss. Like any typical Wednesday, Luella was winding down and about to leave the office after a productive day of work, when she received the kind of horrible news no one ever expects. There had been an accident involving a long-tenured employee on Luella's team.

In the following days and weeks, Luella led her team through a tragedy most of us will never face. In the end, her actions left the kind of lasting impression that define her as a strong, compassionate leader and a person of paramount integrity.

On Luella's integrity, as told by those close to her:

Keith Lang, systems analyst, reports to Luella

Before working at Southern Company, I served in the army, so I've seen tragedies happen and I know what good leadership looks like. In the wake of losing a member of our team, Luella's steadfastness outperformed some of the most committed military leaders by 100-fold. She gave us time to grieve and helped us along, while holding back her own grief. She was able to channel her energy to the needs of the team and the needs of the employee's family, making sure everyone had what they needed. It was amazing to watch how naturally she managed the delicate balance between allowing

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the team to grieve, and knowing that the work still had to get done. Having experienced the loss of a fellow soldier, I'd give Luella four stars for the integrity she demonstrated.

Vicki Gamble, IT financial services manager, co-worker and friend

I've known Luella for 20 years and have been impressed time and again by her integrity and teamwork. The example that comes to mind that illustrates Luella's incredible character does so because it was recent and very emotionally-charged. Luella's team was hit hard by the loss of one of their team mates this year. She took responsibility without being asked to avail herself to her employees and the deceased's family members. She made sure she was in the office before any of her employees arrived, so they would receive the news from her -- with all of the empathy a situation like this deserves. She talked, she listened, she comforted. I can think of no other person who could have handled this better. I'm sure her employees would agree with me.

Robert Holmes, systems analyst, reports to Luella

To me, integrity is when a person does the right thing *out* of the presence of people, as well as *in* the presence of people. I have had pleasure of getting to know Mrs. Luella Brown, and she is the epitome of integrity and leadership in action. I've come to discover in my personal life that integrity is not gained instantly; however, it's gained by commitment, dedication, and selflessness. Mrs. Brown didn't become a great leader and a woman of integrity because of her education or of her relationships she developed with many people throughout the company. She became a great leader because of her servant-leadership style, and her commitment to others.

Respect helps create a state of partnership and teamwork. *Respect is defined by the qualities of humility, empathy, lack of blame and emotional mastery. Some examples of behaviors that typically illustrate respect would be: listening and being respectful of others, not blaming others, welcoming suggestions, being willing to compromise, admitting limitations, and maintaining composure by expressing disagreement calmly. Give up to three examples of how this person demonstrates respect:*

A testament to how one person can make a difference, year-after-year Luella Brown has had profound impact as a both a leader and role model. Throughout her 30-year career, Brown has shown her flair as a "people person" in the smile she wears on her face each day. Behind that smile is her demonstrated belief that mutual respect and teamwork are essential to a productive and inclusive workplace.

In 2008, Luella received Southern Company IT's annual Inclusive Workplace Award. An inclusive workplace fosters open communication, where everyone's input is valued, all opinions have merit and every voice is heard. Her connections and earned respect throughout Southern Company have helped her team clear hurdles that they were not sure how to tackle.

Across the board, Luella is respected for her pleasant and driven personality. Luella is noted for the considerate way she treats people and the respect she has for her co-

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workers – even when hard decisions must be made, making the work both tough and tiring.

On respect, as told by those close to Luella:

Joe Licata, IT portfolio manager, co-worker and friend

Having worked side-by-side with Luella as a peer early in our careers, then being her manager and finally peers as managers, you always know where you stand. Luella's feedback is based on observation and not hearsay. She can be counted on to pull her share of the workload and then some. She has a common sense, no-nonsense approach to performing her job and is not one to seek out recognition for herself.

Luella has worked hard to build and nurture relationships throughout her career and leverages them to get the job done. There have been countless times that I have seen Luella identify a situation that needs attention; she takes the initiative to address the appropriate parties to get resolution, she does not sit back and let someone else take the ball and run with it. There are very few people in my career that I can trust as much as Luella. Because of our mutual respect, I know that I can count on her in any situation to do whatever it takes to get the job done.

Angela Gillis, information security analyst, co-worker and friend

Luella has always been a person of integrity, fairness and truly believes in doing what is right. I have seen her in meetings, making sure the dialogue is all-inclusive, and that everyone has the opportunity to participate. If there is ever an issue on the table that has had stalled, she offers suggestions or suggests a creative angle of looking at the issue. She always challenges others to look at things differently. I admire how she is not afraid to call attention to situations that she believes are wrong and offer suggestions on how they be corrected.

Tonya Bryant, systems support project manager, co-worker and friend

I view Luella as a role model, a mentor, and a friend. She is not afraid to stand up for what is right; she has no problem making unpopular decisions if they are the right decisions. She often challenges the people around her to think outside of the box and to challenge the status quo. She has a way of motivating people to do their best (this is one of her many attributes that I would like to model). She also has the ability to see the potential in people and she believes in them even before they see and believe it about themselves. She provides guidance and feedback that is authentic and practical. When giving constructive feedback she can give it in a way that is very direct, yet respectful -- you can feel that she wants you to be successful and that it is for your benefit.

Luella truly has a heart for leading and developing people both professionally and personally. An affirmation of this can be seen through the numerous people that seek her for mentoring and guidance. When faced with tough situations and decisions, I know that I can always count on Luella to ask the tough questions, look at the entire picture, and she'll support me through it all.

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Responsibility is the acceptance of full responsibility for the success of the project, the team and the organization. Responsibility is defined by the qualities of accountability, self-confidence, courage and a focus on the whole. Some examples of the behaviors that typically illustrate responsibility are: taking initiative and being willing to act to get things done (whether it's your "job" or not), delivering on promises and holding others accountable, being willing to express an opinion, and sharing information across the company. Give up to three examples of how this person demonstrates responsibility:

After working an eight-hour day with technology, Luella enjoys having a positive impact on other people's lives. She currently serves as an assistant pastor, and is a mentor both at Southern Company and for God's Elect Ladies (GEL), a non-profit group that helps women develop strategic plans for their lives, business plans, interpersonal skills and technology training. She also mentors grandparents raising grandchildren with networking opportunities and assists them in acquiring assistance for legal matters.

On responsibility, as told by those close to Luella:

Pastor Smith, Luella's brother and pastor

My sister, Luella, is assistant pastor and praise leader at our church, as well as a role model and teacher to our young people. She gives so much of herself and I depend on her a lot. Because of her, I am a better pastor.

People are drawn to Luella. She has a knack for bringing people together and motivating them. Maybe it's because she is very approachable; never intimidating or "bigger," but always on your level. For that, she's especially good with our young people. She challenges them to do good in school, and because of her, they have achieved excellence. To her, that is the greatest reward possible.

One thing I really like about Luella -- she gets things done. And not by telling others what to do, but by investing in them and working with them to achieve the goal. When you can demonstrate taking that kind of responsibility for others -- that's a noble character trait!

Kassandra Dominick, GEL Inc., mentored by Luella

I know Luella as my mentor. I'm the founder of a Christian-based group called God's Elect Ladies. Luella is on our board in a mentoring role -- however she helps put *everything* in motion. She advises on our strategic planning, and as a result we are well on our way to becoming a non-profit. She's more than dedicated -- to me, she is the perfect example of moral strength and integrity. She sets the standard of what a good mother, grandmother, wife, mentor, and leader should be. She is a woman of her word, who also is humble and approachable and always willing to listen with an open heart. My mother always said, "Sometimes you don't know you're crooked until you stand beside someone who is straight." Luella provides that shining, straight example that others aspire to become.

Joe Mundy, database administrator and co-worker

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“Luella’s leadership style is to listen intently, then make suggestions on how to raise the bar. She also realizes when things are unreasonable or would cause a hardship on the team or for the project. She wants us all to be successful and when she says, ‘I’ll handle that,’ you know she will.” And if she knows you, she’ll make a point of greeting you by name. It’s her way of showing that she cares about how you are doing. People have come to expect that, just as they’ve come to expect are great things from Luella and her team.

*Please relate an incident or tell a story that shows how this person demonstrates **Leadership Character**. Examples may include professional or community involvement:*

The 30 years Luella has been with Southern Company not only reflect a successful past, but generate a bright future for us all because while she's helping to develop corporate applications, she's also developing new IT employees into respectful, mindful guardians of Southern Company's success and their own.

Luella undoubtedly demonstrates leadership character at work and in her community and deserves national recognition for her integrity, responsibility and the respect she has earned from those who are fortunate to work with her.

On Leadership Character, in the words of Judy Maloney:

It is my honor to submit Luella Brown’s name for consideration for the Turknett Leadership Character Award. As a previous recipient of this award and a frequent participant in Turknett’s Women in Leadership Series I am very familiar with the tenets of Turknett’s Leadership Model. When I thought about possible nominations Luella Brown immediately came to mind. Luella lives her life with integrity, respect and responsibility and is a role model for those she encounters.

I first met Luella when working on a cross-company project almost 28 years ago. I was immediately struck by her candor, diplomacy and concern for others. Luella is someone who speaks her mind with respect and sensitivity. Her concern for others is one of her hallmarks. In our corporation we provide services and support to a number of affiliates. Balancing the needs of individuals with the need for good business decisions can be challenging. Luella has always been masterful at maneuvering through these challenging situations.

I have known Luella Brown in a variety of capacities including project team member, direct report, colleague and friend. She is truly remarkable in the way she lives her life and the influence she has on others. Her influence on her family, co-workers, church members; young people and friends is profound because it is based on genuine care and concern for others. While Luella did not invent the Golden Rule she most certainly has practiced it every day of her life. And for all of us who know her – we have benefited from her thoughtfulness, courage, humility and ownership of her own destiny.

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Southern Company has a set of behaviors called Southern Style and these focus areas (Unquestionable Trust, Superior Performance, and Total Commitment) drive our culture. Luella is someone who promotes Southern Style through her words and actions. She holds herself accountable and is a role model to others. Evidence of this can be seen in the numerous mentoring relationships she has had over the years. In talking with some of those mentees they refer to her empathy, her ability to see the big picture, her focus on moving forward – never blaming and her self-confidence.

Luella manages a large group of diverse employees. She invests considerable time to know them and their families. She is someone who senses when a person needs a helping hand and typically she is the one who stretches out a hand to help. She keeps an open mind and is always humble about her contribution.

She also has a full family life raising two young grandchildren who adore her! She is grooming them to be ethical, strong, intelligent young men. Her sense of responsibility is powerful. She is completely accountable at home and at work.

Luella Brown is someone who emulates the Turknett Leadership Character model every day. She has been honored with distinctions such as the Southern Company IT Inclusive Work Place Award and the Women of Color STAR Award. Both are testimonials to Luella's behaviors. I am proud to know Luella, to call her a friend and to nominate her for this award.