

MORALITY IS CONTAGIOUS

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At the age of 21, an outfielder burst into the big leagues, drilling over 30 home runs in his rookie season. He wasn't a sure-fire prospect, having been drafted in the 15th round. But by the age of 24, he'd have an MVP award and a world series title under his belt.

Yet, his contribution on the field was dwarfed compared to his contribution in the locker room. This player made his teammates better. The proof was in the data. When a group of [researchers went back and analyzed](#) what happened when players joined this particularly star's team, they got significantly better. Home runs, RBI's, batting average, and more all went up. This performance-enhancing affect even carried over to players once they were no longer on this star's team. In fact, when compared to 30 other all-star caliber players, no one had a similar boosting effect on his teammate's performance.

The player was [Jose Canseco](#). The notorious confessed steroid user. The aforementioned data came from a fascinating paper that utilized Canseco as an example for unethical behavior can spread among our coworkers when performance is heavily incentivized. It wasn't Canseco's mindset that was spreading amongst his teammates. It was his medicine cabinet.

This effect doesn't just reside in baseball. It holds up inside traditional workplaces too. Our coworkers and teammates [influence whether](#) we're more likely to cheat or commit some sort of corrupt act. When we see others cheat to get ahead, we're more likely to bend our ethics. But it's not all doom and gloom. [As we at the Growth Equation have outlined before](#), good vibes are also contagious. Ethical behavior, happiness, and even our physical health can all be influenced by those surrounding us.

The people you surround yourself with shape who you are. We like to think of our morals, ethics, and behaviors as entirely within our control, but the truth is we are subtly nudged by those we spend time with. It's why forming the right culture, getting the right people on the bus, is vital to any team or organization. We may think of human resources as a cost-center, but at its essence it is probably the most important department most organizations have.

— Steve

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