Character Matters

Address to Policy and Business Leaders
Chicago, Illinois
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Professor James Heckman
Nobel Laureate in Economics
The University of Chicago:
If we think broadly and we think historically about where America has really done and been bold, we have to think about building a group of excellent people, citizens for the next generation, not remediating problems. Character matters in a way that we traditionally did not recognize. Public policies need to recognize the importance of what are sometimes called ‘character’ or ‘soft skills’.
Many employers look very closely at these soft skills. And along with cognitive skills, they determined success in school, in the labor force and in life itself.

David Pope
President
Village of Oak Park:
For people to be able to understand how to plan and to coordinate and collaborate and work collectively in an environment; whether that's a corporate environment, whether that's a municipal environment, whether that's a not for profit environment. We can't succeed if we can't work together. Those are the sorts of emphases that need to be part of the environment as we are educating children, but not just in the formal education process from age five on. They're skills that really are learned at an earlier age than that and we need to make sure that there are sufficient supports in place to allow families and communities to help encourage the adoption of skill sets that will enable children and later adults to be able to work together effectively.

Diana Sands
Vice President of Financial Planning and Investor Relations
The Boeing Company:
Having the right character doing the right thing, if you do it, that helps with success in a company. If you don't do it, it can cost a company literally billions of dollars. And so investing in that character is very, very important.

Bridget Gainer
Director of Government Affairs
Aon Corporation:
At Aon, we're in the business of sales. You can't sell something, especially you cannot sell a service, unless you can really understand what the client needs. What are the
things they are concerned about? Where do they think their business is growing? Unless you can develop a relationship with that person, you cannot be successful.