



For more information on business openings and closings, see Patt Johnson's New in the Neighborhood column at [DesMoinesRegister.com/business](http://DesMoinesRegister.com/business).



has opened a 12,000-square-foot former Staples store at 901 E. First St. in Ankeny.

# Why do we CHEAT?

**B**aseball has been in the headlines lately, and for the ugliest of reasons: cheating. Not the old hide-the-ball-in-the-glove trick or greasing or scuffing the baseball. No, those would be too obvious. In their pursuit of perfection, or at least superior performance, dozens of high-paid athletes, superstars and utility players alike turned to performance-enhancing drugs that they hoped would evade discovery. It didn't work, and America's pastime is plagued with scandal.

The sad thing is that cheating is not that uncommon. We see it on Wall Street, in politics, in famous marriages and just about everywhere you look. It seems it's become part of our culture. Is the spirit of competition that drives American progress creating a nation of cheaters?

People cheat on diets, at cards or on exercise programs. Bolder folks might cheat on taxes, resumes or dating profiles. But where do we draw the line in the sand? Is some cheating OK?

We need to examine that attitude. I still believe that trust is one of the most important — if not the most important — attribute of any truly successful person.

In a Conference Board poll of 15,000 juniors and seniors at 31 universities, more than 87 percent of business majors admitted to cheating at least once in college, the largest such percentage. Engineering students came in second, with 74 percent admitting to cheating. Next came science students, with 63 percent. Humanities majors were least likely to cheat.

According to USA Today, college students on 27 campuses in 19 states were asked what they would do

if they caught a classmate cheating. Would they report it? Eighty-one percent said, "No." Are you as surprised as I am that there are more than 150 websites that offer essays, term papers and dissertations for sale?

Does that set the stage for life? Well, I surely hope not. But reading the headlines might make you think otherwise.

Political sex scandals are hard to ignore these days. Certainly not all

politicians are cheaters, but when the news is dominated day after day by some outrageous behavior that most of us would never condone, it casts a long shadow. After all, if they'll cheat on the ones they love, what will they do to get votes? Or push legislation through?

When trust is eroded, an entire group suffers, even those who are squeaky clean.

Business is hardly exempt. A survey by CFO Magazine found that 20 percent of financial executives feel more pressure since 2001 to "make results appear more favorable." In a recent survey of students at the nation's top business schools, two-thirds of women and more than half the men said they do not believe that most companies are "run honestly or ethically."

In a speech, former Bank of America global risk executive Amy Woods Brinkley spoke about what the research firm Inferential Focus called the "gaming" of everything in our lives. "What they mean, in short, is that our passion in America for games — for entertainment and competition — seems to be exceeding its normal bounds. As a result, the lines between recreation and reality have grown blurry. More and more aspects of our society appear to be treated like a game to be won ... rather than a real life to be lived."

A baker bought his butter from a local farmer. After some time, the baker began to suspect that he wasn't receiving full pound bricks of butter from the farmer.

For several days, he weighed the butter after it was delivered. His suspicions proved correct. So he turned to the law to settle the matter.

The farmer was brought to court to answer for his act of fraud. "What kind of scale do you use?" the judge asked.

"I don't have a scale, your honor," replied the farmer.

"Then how can you weigh the butter that you sell?"

"It's pretty simple," the farmer said. "I have balances, and I use the one-pound loaf of bread I buy from the baker as a weight."

Case dismissed.

I learned a long time ago that by not cheating — and doing the right thing — you will live a much happier life than trying to cheat your way through it. Just tell the truth. It's so simple, so basic — and the cover-up is always worse. You'll also sleep much better at night.

**Mackay's Moral:** Sophocles said it best, "I would prefer even to fail with honor than to win by cheating."



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