

White Paper

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Solution Focus Areas:

Engagement / Morale
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Productivity
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Whatever Happened to Customer Service?

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What happened to good old fashioned work ethic? What happened to the days of trusting in a handshake or a person's word? It seems more and more today that it is difficult to find a business that truly cares about their customers. How many hours have you sat at your desk on hold waiting to talk with a real person? Of course this waiting was only after hours of pushing numbers on your phone to even have the opportunity to talk with someone. Inevitably, you end up getting disconnected somewhere in the process and you need to start all over again. If you ever get to actually speak with a real human being, far too often that becomes as frustrating as the process was to get to them. I have a feeling that far too many of us can relate to this scenario.

It seems that it has become common place to not pay attention to customers. A weekly occurrence is calling a business, leaving a message and then never hearing back from that business. How often has it happened to you that you contact an actual person from a business, share what it is you are looking for in a product or service, the individual says, "Let me look into that and I will call you back." And you are still waiting today for them to call back? I have often wondered whether businesses are doing so well and making so much money that they don't have a need for our business.

What is happening in our culture today? Where did the days go that you could walk into a business and talk to someone that cared about you and who could actually make decisions? Where did the days go when you could make a telephone call to a business and speak to someone who would call you by first name and actually have a desire to meet your needs?

Times have changed. Technology was supposed to have created a society where we worked less and accomplished more. We were supposed to be able to slow down and pay more attention to people. Unfortunately, technology has deceived us. Of course most of us would acknowledge that technology has done some wonderful things for us. I can be anywhere in the world and do business or talk with my family as long as I have a cellular telephone. I can even search the internet, email, or text message someone. Technology has provided us with a lot freedom and the ability to do things in ways we could never have imagined before. It has also allowed us to stop connecting with people face to face. We no longer have to talk with people or even see people. It is even possible for me to never leave my home again as long as I have a computer and an internet connection.

I believe that it is time to look at our business culture and reflect on the way things used to be, how things are today, and create a new future that takes the best of both worlds. Here are three key areas that I believe create a formula for a business to succeed:

Values + Relationships + Priorities = Success

It is critical that organizations have clearly defined value statements. But, it is even more important that the values statements be taken to the next level. It is important for businesses to also create a “culture statement” based on their shared values. This requires that the organization involve as many stakeholders as possible. A culture statement provides clarity and a sense of reality to the values statement. A culture statement is a set of behavioral indicators that act as examples of day-to-day actions that people live out. A culture statement is how the organization behaves while accomplishing the goals set forth by the mission statement. Well crafted values and culture statements can provide direction for an organization on how to treat their employees, as well as the vendors, customers and community at large that they interact with. This is one critical solution to creating a high standard of excellence of work ethic and customer service.

Relationships need to be the essence of any set of values and culture statements. As much as technology has supported us working more efficiently and allowing consumers to meet their needs on their own, people are still at the heart of any business. If we lose track of or forget that people have been, are and will always be the heart beat of our businesses we will be destined to fail. Businesses need to consider how they can restructure and reshape their cultures in order to place the highest value on people. When we value people, we in turn value quality. When we consider what others need and want, we can provide excellent service. People, whether customers or employees, more than ever before desire to be respected, involved and treated with dignity. A majority of products today can be purchased in dozens different ways and from dozens of different places. What sets any business apart from their competitors is their ability to engage their employees and customers in a positive and on-going relationship. People still like to be called by their first name.

Priorities are the final missing piece to this formula. As much as money is a driving force in our culture today, money doesn't satisfy all our needs. Our society today believes that you can never have enough money. Think about the last time to received a raise or a bonus. It probably was a motivating factor at the time, but it was also short lived. In other words, the motivation that the extra money provided lasted about as long as it took for you to spend that extra money. When the extra money was consumed into your life style, a new craving started and that was a desire for more money. People desire something that is long lasting. I understand that money will always be important. But, should it be the driving force behind what we do and how we do it?

I believe that if we develop a strong set of values with a focus on relationships and center our priorities on these values and relationships as opposed to money or power, we will begin to see truly successful businesses. We will see businesses that last and that have a legacy they hoped for. It is time for us to learn from what worked in the past and combine it with our current knowledge and strengths to create a new future for the business community.