

## Business Goodwill

Just recently I was looking at a TV news item, where a business had negotiated a large sum of money for the sale of its assets - and an even larger sum for its goodwill. What is interesting about 'goodwill' is that it is calculated on the company's power to attract customers. Hundreds of thousands [if not millions] of dollars are paid for the goodwill of a business - the larger the customer-base, the larger the perceived goodwill. In a very competitive market, it is critical to provide both the product at a cost the market will bear and the service with which to attract customers. Assuming the product is doing its job, the quality of a company's customer service will set it apart from its competitors... the question is, what is at the heart of customer service?

It's difficult to put your finger on one thing that defines goodwill in companies, though the feel of such a company is usually in evidence when you see good customer-service, high job satisfaction and staff morale. Every corporation, school, shire or local council, community agency, church, association, club [right down to your local bowling club] either has or lacks this intangible thing called 'goodwill'. One thing is certain: you know when it is present or absent! You could say that organisations thrive or perish on goodwill.

**The question is, what is at the heart of customer service...?**

Clearly, when customers first come through the door, the feel of the business will greet them. From first contact, whether that's at the reception desk or over the phone, we pick up the tone of goodwill [or lack of it] within seconds. In a nutshell, it is the reflection of the attitudes held by employees and management toward each other; and toward customers. But what creates it?

At first glance, it looks as if the spirit of goodwill is created by thoughtfulness throughout the company - making us as customers feel as if we are being listened to and really valued. And of course, the reverse is true! There is not one of us who wouldn't be impressed with a company who handled complaints with grace and a 'no bother' approach.

No matter how trivial the complaint, nor how unreasonable the customer, a company that leaves customers feeling respected and satisfied, lives its goodwill. Not because 'the customer is always right' - but because people are more important than products, and customer-service is more than selling.

So thoughtfulness is a state of mind, an attitude, or a collective spirit – a 'spirit' that is not only directed towards customers, it is nurtured and maintained, infused, throughout the entire organisation. Loyalty, enterprise, initiative, fearlessness... these all demonstrate the powerful synergy between employer and employee. Furthermore, creditors, business colleagues and competitors know that the business has authenticity written all over it.

### The unrecognised power behind goodwill

**We may see the outward appearance of goodwill, a temporary, dull imitation of the real thing when the organisation wants to put on a show...**

Interestingly, goodwill is both seen and unseen in organisations. We see it in a smile, a welcoming posture; the thoughtful gesture on arrival. Those are physical expressions of the intangible attitude of the individual - reflecting a strong, vital, sustainable organisation. Of course, we may see the outward appearance of goodwill, a temporary, dull

imitation of the real thing when the organisation wants to put on a show. But it is only temporary. Because where goodwill has not been nurtured, where the power of attitude has been disregarded, the natural goodwill of individuals is untapped - creating the intangible mark of the unconscious organisation. But what creates attitude - good or bad? And what enables a company to grow and sustain positive attitudes in the workplace? Unlike their counterparts overseas, many Australian organisations have done little to harness this critical dimension in business. For Principles in Business, that which is behind the creation of attitudes - state of mind - **IS** the business.

### State of mind: the heart of the business

We all recognise goodwill when we see it - the intangible as 'personal attitude' - goodwill being one of many forms our attitudes take: fixed, flexible, open, closed, suspicious... and so on. However, there is an intangible force that enables us to manifest all those attitudes - and this force, this power; is inbuilt. This unstructured and unformed power to create an attitude [any attitude, view, stance, opinion, or belief that we hold to be true] is our ability to create our personal reality via the LAW OF THOUGHT. All our attitudes, views, beliefs, judgements and opinions are just the form that THOUGHT takes to manifest our personal reality. And the creation of our personal reality is largely unconscious. Interestingly, companies that have a high level of goodwill typically have employees that naturally understand the power of their own thinking to determine attitudes [and hence their experience of life].

We could observe then, that the staff as a whole, understand or are CONSCIOUS of, the power of their ability to create attitudes. Their collective appreciation or understanding of CONSCIOUSNESS is another aspect of the power of our personal minds - the LAW OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

CONSCIOUSNESS means that people are [or become] aware of their moment-to-moment experience: manifested from within. CONSCIOUSNESS keeps us awake to the power to create our attitudes, views etc. and at the same time, keeps us awake to the already formed attitudes we hold. As we become more conscious, we also become more aware of our feelings - the tangible evidence of our attitudes.

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We become more aware of and how our pleasant [or unpleasant] experience of life is constantly created via our thinking. Thus, we are provided an opportunity to change our minds about what attitude we are holding, or what attitude we are manifesting at the workplace or in the home.

For instance, take those colleagues who appear to suffer little or no workplace stress, even when the pressure is on... have you noticed that when these same colleagues are distressed or 'under the pump' they usually shrug it off as a momentary thing? They know that how they think in this moment will translate to how they eventually experience demanding times - 'stress out' or 'stress less'! Isn't it true that we all face difficult customers, demanding workloads and difficult work relationships? But there is an inner authenticity in acknowledging demanding workloads, strained work relationships and 'difficult customers' that has nothing to do with whatever situation or crisis presents itself. Our seemingly stress-free colleagues are able to see that their *personal experience is created via their thinking - their attitudes, beliefs, and stances*. Moreover, they are CONSCIOUS of the power of THOUGHT - their state of mind - and more able to take full responsibility for their personal experience of life. They are able, and willing, to not take their thinking so seriously.

Of course, it goes without saying that organisations who appreciate this have significant leverage. Companies that keep their corporate eyes on 'goodwill' know it to be their unseen asset. They understand the need for more CONSCIOUS employees. And they understand and foster an inner respect for the power of their own minds. In short, they are exceptional companies who are leveraging the Triple Bottom Line. ■ ■

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GRANTED. FOR OTHER PUBLICATION RIGHTS EMAIL DAVID  
AT: [director@principlesinbusiness.com](mailto:director@principlesinbusiness.com)