

Ethics and Integrity

2008 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

I have spent 38 years in the transportation industry and have been involved in Mergers and Acquisitions for the last 21 years. I have always felt that I am a pretty good judge of character, but I have witnessed some of the most unethical, immoral acts by specific individuals that are so bizarre that it's hard to put into words. I have tried to align myself with customers that;

- Have integrity;
- Honesty, and;
- They use that as their personal foundation for their business and life values.

Unfortunately, once in a while a situation changes based upon economic conditions. In my practice you never need to cheat to win. If you want a life of success and balance, your value will be the vehicle that gets you there and what is right is more important than who is right. In many of my articles I talk about the generation gap, and maybe that's a misused phrase. What I'm referring to is the value systems of my generation, versus the new generation. Today, we are very fast paced;

- Communication is by email;
- By text messaging;
- The old fashioned relationship building is a thing of the past;
- Shippers bid their lanes "online";
- Loyalty is a thing of the past, and;
- A business deal is only as good as the economic benefits that "the customer" receives at that moment.

For some companies, integrity has lost its meaning. Over the last several years some of the customers that I used to do business with, I have eliminated. Some of my mentors have indicated that;

- You don't have to like someone to do business with them;
- Receiving something is better than nothing, but when a customer asks you to compromise your values, your integrity, or;
- Compromise your fees, when you have a written agreement;
- That is NO longer a customer!

It's no different than any other industry.

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Shippers wonder why, when the pendulum swings, they are going to get a good “butt kicking” and the reality of their situation is:

- They have lost their integrity;
- They have lost their value system, and;
- It's always about the almighty dollar.

In business, there are only 5 things to remember to be a successful entrepreneur:

1. **First, your sales have to exceed your expenses.**
2. **Collect your receivables! There all kinds of people who go out of business with other people owing them money. Be reasonable, but don't be your customer's banker.**
3. **Take care of your customers.** They pay your bills and write your checks. **Remember, you work for them;**
4. **Take care** of your people, and;
5. **Be confident,** but also have humility.

How many times have you met someone that's successful but they believe that they “walk on water”? The sad thing about their attitude is;

- Their situation could change tomorrow, and;
- Because of their attitude, nobody will be willing to give them a helping hand to get them back on their feet.

Humility helps you to be open to learning and growing in your field of expertise. When you lose your humility, you lose your ability to learn. Humility is different than having confidence in your ability.

Recently, I had a disagreement with a client. My client was rationalizing why he was:

- Compromising my trust;
- Betraying my trust, and;
- He was justifying what he did from a legal standpoint.

My comment was;

- You have justified your value system, which I believe is the foundation, of our personal and business relationship;
- When I brought it to his attention, he continued to justify his decision by stating legal interpretation.

My response; there is never a gray area. It's either black or white;

- If you are guided by values, such as integrity;
- Honesty, and;
- You want a life of success and balance, your value will be the vehicle to get you there.

At that point, that individual ceased to be a customer.

This is a customer that I had done business with in the past. Although I have not done any business with this customer recently, it is a customer that I considered a friend. It is a customer that I trusted. It is a customer that I recommended very highly, and when the act occurred, it was a customer that I felt had betrayed, for what I believed to be, the ethical and moral values necessary for our relationship to continue.

My point, all relationships need work and all relationships will go through their highs and lows but it's important to recognize that if your business and your life is guided by values of integrity, honesty and purposeful work, that will not only be the foundation for a successful business, but a successful life. It's important to recognize that what is right is more important than who is right.

(Excerpts taken from *The One Minute Entrepreneur*- Ken Blanchard/Don Hudson)