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Every role has its own nobility

Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman discuss characteristics that differentiate the best hotel housekeepers from all the rest in *First Break all the Rules*¹. They found that after they are done cleaning a room, the best housekeepers lie on the bed and turn on the ceiling fan. These housekeepers know that the first activity a tired traveler does upon entering a room is to lie on the bed and turn on the ceiling fan. If dust blows off the fan, then no matter how clean the room is, the traveler's first impression will eliminate all credibility of its cleanliness. These best housekeepers have a sense of nobility about their roles; they feel like they are always on stage and are part of a great show.

Over the years I've worked with many individuals who felt they were doing a noble job, even if the job was considered to be less than respectable by most of my colleagues. Take Arnie (named changed) the dishwasher, for example. He worked in an R&D company and with me and washed glassware for chemists. He had a system where he would take the dirty glassware, rinse it, transfer it to a sink with detergent, let it sit for a specified time, wash it with brushes, transfer it to a rinse sink and transfer it to a second and final rinse sink. The feature that made him the best is that he would treat each piece of glassware as though it was a precious gem. He would hold it up to the light, examine it from one angle, turn it around, examine it from another angle, look into it, look through it and then move it on to the next step in his process. He treated each piece of glassware with nobility and made sure that the chemists would never have a problem arising from a minute particle in his gems. It was spectacular to watch him perform his craft. He brought nobility to his role.

I've known many individuals who also brought nobility to their roles. Anna, whose job it was to place cards into the cartons that held our product; Tom who monitored the reaction tanks for their status; Bob who inspected the materials entering the plant from outside vendors; Alice who prepared the products for shipping to clients. The list goes on and on. Each of these individuals, from plants throughout the world, brought nobility to their role because they knew the importance of the job they were doing for the clients who would be using the products they were making. They knew that their purpose was to perform their role as flawlessly as possible because mediocrity would not satisfy their clients. They had a sense of purpose, a nobility, about their jobs that was partially innate and partially expected. Although they were originally hired for their skills, they were subsequently retained for their efforts and accomplishments by their supervisors. In many cases their supervisors realized the importance of their jobs and made sure they treated them with respect and dignity, allowing them to feel noble about what they did.

In essence, supervisors and managers are the key to developing nobility for every role by continuously recognizing the best employees through meaningful recognition programs. These programs force the supervisor/manager to know their employees and to recognize them in a manner that reflects the employee's needs. It's a difficult job to know your employees well enough to do this and it takes time and effort. However, the payoff is worth the time and effort because a noble workforce is essential to creating and maintaining loyal clients. When the best employees believe their role is noble, they help to create lasting endurance and success for the

organization. They create both the first impression for a client and probably the last impression. Depending on whether they have a sense of nobility about their role can determine if the client will continue to patronize your business. So, the next time you're in a hotel room, check out the ceiling fan. You'll know whether or not the housekeeper who cleaned your room is noble.

¹ *First Break All the Rules* Buckingham, M. and Coffman, C. p 98