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“I’m in a large diversity application business”

Recently during a web conference the moderator identified his company as a “large diversity application business”. Excuse me, but what the heck is a large diversity application business? Large means big, huge considerable; diversity means variety, assortment, mixture; application means function, purpose, relevance. Taken together I suppose he meant that his business is a huge mixture of relevance. What he really meant is that he was so self aggrandized by his position that he wanted to impress us with his significance. Or, he was so amazed with his company he thought this would astound us. Or, maybe he simply wanted to brag about himself. Whatever the case, the statement indicated to me that he cared only about himself, not his audience.

Many managers and executives share this type of attitude with their subordinates without realizing how detrimental it can be to their business. Quite the opposite from what I teach, this attitude doesn’t engender engaged employees and it certainly doesn’t generate loyal customers. In fact, it may make customers feel uncomfortable and they will eventually take their business elsewhere. I witnessed this first hand when I was sixteen and worked in a local delicatessen. I couldn’t understand how it stayed in business because the owner was always yelling and intimidating the busboys, cooks, waitresses and cashier, even while customers were eating in the store. How could they stand it, I wondered? How could they continue to patronize this ogre’s business? After he sold the business to two decent guys I found out that the customers couldn’t stand it. After the new owners bought the store, many customers who returned stated they would not have been back if the old owner was there; they didn’t feel comfortable with the way he treated his staff and refused to patronize his business, even though the food was excellent.

The moral here is that loyal customers are the key to a successful business and treating your employees with respect and dignity will help to build this loyalty. A “large diversity application business” is the height of arrogance because it doesn’t help customers feel comfortable; if they’re uncomfortable they won’t be back. And repeat business is the bottom line for any business.