

OTHERS

27. Kindness Is Free!

"Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind."—Henry James

An extensive 225-hospital, 140-thousand patient survey by Press Ganey identified 15 factors which shaped patient satisfaction. The startling results: "Not a single one of the top 15 sources of patient satisfaction had to do with the patient's health outcome. All 15, in effect, were related to the quality of the patient's interactions with hospital staff—and employee satisfaction among staff members." The key, at an even deeper level, according to a patient-centrism experts at top-ranked Griffith Hospital:

"There is a misconception that supportive interactions require more staff or more time and are therefore more costly. Although labor costs are a substantial part of any hospital budget, the interactions themselves add nothing to the budget.

"Kindness is free.

"Listening to patients or answering their questions costs nothing. It could be argued that negative interactions—alienating patients, being unresponsive to their needs, or limiting their sense of control—can be very costly. Angry, frustrated, or frightened patients may be combative, withdrawn, and less cooperative—requiring far more time than it would have taken to interact with them initially in a positive way."

This has become a centerpiece of my work. In the commercial sphere I encompass it with an equation:

$K = R = P.$

Kindness = Repeat business = Profit.

That is, among other things, kindness is the ultimate "hard" variable affecting the bottom line.

28. Civil! Civil! Civil!

*"For many years literature was my life ... One day, while lecturing on the Divine Comedy, I looked at my students and realized that I wanted them to be kind human beings more than I wanted them to know about Dante. I told them that if they knew everything about Dante and then went out and treated an elderly lady on the bus unkindly, I'd feel that I had failed as a teacher."—P.M. Forni, *Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct**

It's a variation on the theme above: civil behavior. I was influenced by a description of a book called *Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation* that George Washington had produced from a list of 110 items encompassing civil behavior originally created by French Jesuits in 1595.(E.g.: #1 - Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those that are present.) Washington's proper & gracious behavior was a key success factor throughout his life. Again, to me, "civil" strikes me as a stunning profit-enhancement tool. (Among other things.)

29. Listen to Ann—and "Act Accordingly." The late Texas governor Ann Richards tells us that despite ire, or even fury, at a service mixup, you must remember that the frontline person you are dealing with is the ... only person on earth ... who can help you. Act accordingly—i.e. with reverence! It's great advice! It works!

30. "Being There" (Or: How I Learned First Principles from My Grandfather's Last Rites.)

"You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."—Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

My grandfather ran a little country store in a little town in Virginia. Thousands—*literally*—attended his funeral. He had been helpmate to virtually everyone in the community over the years. That turnout sent an unforgettable message to me.

31. Appreciating the Great Battle: A Case for Consideration

"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."—Plato

This is not a plea to be soft. (Though it's certainly the decent way to behave.) It's a plea concerning the value of trying to understand the pressures and cross-pressures on every (*very different*) person you deal with—in fact about 98% of what's going on with them is hidden from view.

"I'm not paid to be a shrink" is a commonplace from the mouth of managers. It's, well, unspeakably stupid. Of course you're paid to be a shrink—if, that is, you're interested in implementation. Every day at work you field a different team—depending on the state of individuals' stresses and strains at the moment. Sports coaches, the good ones at least, get this. So should you.

Mike Krzyzewski ("Coach K"), coach of the Duke basketball team: *"Things don't stay the same. You have to understand that not only your business situation changes, but the people you're working with aren't the same day to day. Someone is sick. Someone is having a wedding. [You must] gauge the mood, the thinking level of the team that day."*

32. Thoughtfulness Is Free (or Close Thereto)

Thoughtfulness is *key* to customer retention.

Thoughtfulness is *key* to employee recruitment and satisfaction.

Thoughtfulness is *key* to brand perception.

Thoughtfulness is *key* to your ability to look in the mirror—and tell your kids about your job.

"Thoughtfulness is free."

Thoughtfulness is *key* to speeding things up—it reduces friction.

Thoughtfulness is *key* to Business Issue #1, cross-functional communication—XF communication is 98% a matter of social factors.

Thoughtfulness is *key* to transparency and even cost containment—it abets rather than stifles truth-telling.

So think about thoughtfulness, think about adding "*Thoughtfulness in all we do*" to your unit's (or company's) (or agency's) values statement. As to the day-to-day "work of thoughtfulness," I call it: "The Practice of Dogmatic Thoughtfulness."

This document is #9 in a series of 48 highlights from Tom Peters' *The Little BIG Things: 163 Ways to Pursue Excellence* (HarperStudio, 2010). For more information, visit tompeters.com.

