

Business Psychology

By Alan Ethan Dezen

## Why building employee self-esteem will help your revenue

In last month's column, I asked you to try an experiment aimed at bolstering a cashier's self-esteem. When the cashier at a store asks you, "Is that all?" you were to say, "Isn't that enough?" Surprised by the positive and friendlier reaction that the clerk gave you?

Why did the clerk respond in a more human way? Because you confronted him with this rudeness. The clerk knew that he was being rude but felt obligated by company policy to act that way. By your confrontation, you were investing emotionally with the cashier, which allowed him to abandon his insecure defensive stance. You raised his self-worth by telling him in a nice way that your purchase should be appreciated.

Surprised by the cashier's reaction? You shouldn't be. All of us want to be treated in a human, personal way. The cashier had been taught to be scared of customers by distrusting them. The cashier was sent the message that his job was not important to the company. Consequently, he felt like he wasn't valued and transferred that low work self-image into defensive behavior.

If the cashier doesn't feel valued, he's not going to treat the customer as valued. Consequently, all day long the cashier breeds ill will by his distancing statement. The distrusting behavior then is transferred to the customer by subtle, defensive behavior designed to protect the cashier from becoming emotionally vulnerable.

As I mentioned last month, the degree of worker self-esteem is a company's destiny—the single most important determinant of a company's future. But high self-esteem must begin at the top of a company and trickle down to all levels.

The following are what I call "self-image enhancers," which you, the business owner, can incorporate for yourself and your employees:

### On tricking yourself

- The problem is, there is no problem—and that's a big problem. We create problems to avoid looking at ourselves. We don't like ourselves, so we focus on anything but.
- There is no need to be self-critical. We can get that free from millions of insecure people looking to make themselves feel better at our expense.
- Sixty percent of our waking life is taken up by our jobs—so

a job's impact is as great on us as our families. Yet unknowingly, we seek from our jobs an unmet need for a level of approval that we don't get elsewhere.

### On liking yourself

■ The need for approval stops our conflicting need to change. Most of us go through our business lives without direction—doing what we don't want to. If we don't like what we do, we won't like ourselves.

■ The more we like ourselves, the less we need the approval of others—and the more we will change. The more we change, the more we understand ourselves.

■ Self-knowledge is the compass that gives direction in business.

■ Understanding yourself makes a strong person able to weather any storm.

■ Understanding yourself creates a good self-image.

■ A good self-image leads to success.

Now let's revisit the cashier after he's undergone incorporation of self-image enhancers. You walk up to the cashier with your purchases. He now says to you, "What else can I get you?" What a difference in the purchasing environment that the cashier has created. You may actually find yourself thinking, "What else do I need to buy?"

This is a radical change from the previous defensive, non-purchasing stance you take after the "Is that all?" response from the clerk. How much might your company's revenue increase if only 10 percent of your customers purchase one additional item in response to the clerk with the improved self-image? Think about it. ■■



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