



FEATURE



Driving Success in Your Business—Creating a Culture of Leaders

[By Bob Furniss, President of Touchpoint Associates, Inc.]

FedEx is a company that has redefined quality in America. When a customer drops off a package in a FedEx box, he or she leaves with the expectation that the package will be delivered 100% of the time. And FedEx seems to deliver on this promise most of the time—it measures success in the hundredths of a percentage point.

So how did FedEx create a company with a culture for quality every time? It started with the baseline of caring for the *employee* first. Fred Smith, the founder of FedEx, said it this way: “Take care of your people; they, in turn, will deliver the impeccable service demanded by customers, who will reward us with the profitability necessary to secure our future.”

While the same concepts apply to businesses of all sizes, small businesses often struggle to keep a focus on the employee. The day-to-day issues seem to consume the day, and often the employees feel less than engaged.

What does “take care of your people” mean? Here are four ways to build relationships with your employees:

1. Cast a vision and communicate it at every level. What is your vision? What is your mission as a company? Is it more than something that is in a frame on a wall in the center? Have you tied your mission to your objectives? Do your objectives focus on the customer or on internal expectations or metrics? Try this: spend some time with your employees tomorrow and ask them to tell you the two most important things they do every day. Let’s hope that one of the answers has something to do with taking care of the customer. You may be surprised at the results.

2. Begin to communicate at a new level.

Effective communication is the key to a successful workplace. Several years ago, working with Michael Tamer and Scott Thomas of Tamer Partners Corporation, we developed a communications program called the communication WEAVE®, which has been implemented in companies across America. The WEAVE is a simple yet effective way to interact with other managers and employees. Here’s how it works:

W: Welcome on a personal note. You probably know this as a basic human need, but we sometimes forget to make it a priority when we move into the business environment.

E: Explain your intentions. Move to the business that you need to address. Communicate both the “what” and the “why.” If they understand *why* there is a change or *why* a new policy was implemented, they will have the ability to make good decisions when talking with customers.

A: Acknowledge their response. Model active listening by acknowledging what they say and tie the business’s needs back to their responses.

V: Verify that all needs have been met. Ensure that the employee understands how to implement what you have discussed. This is often the part of the equation that goes

unfinished. Do you understand? Do you need anything else? Are we on the same page?

E: Exit on the personal. If you started the conversation on a personal note, end it the same way. By actively listening to their side of the conversation, you should have a way to tie back to something that they have said.

3. Coach for a change in behavior. Coach for the purpose of improving behavior, not to finish one more monitoring session. In some companies across America, coaching of employees has moved from true coaching to just completing monitoring forms and meeting quality numbers. The next time you have a coaching opportunity, ask your employees for their feedback first; this may actually change your feedback. Also, calibrate as a last step and ensure that they understand the expectation and plan to move toward action or a change in behavior.

4. Lead with your heart. Recent research shows that 65% of people who leave jobs don’t leave their *companies* but leave their *managers*. Employees want to feel valued and build relationships with their leaders. People will often stay with tough jobs if their relationships with their managers are strong. Yet many managers have not mastered the skill of building relationships with their teams. Try this test:



FEATURE

- List each member of your team—first and last name.
- List the names of their spouses, significant others, and children if they have them.
- List the most significant event in each of their professional lives in the past six months.
- List the most significant event in each of their personal lives in the past six months.

- List their passions in life—hobbies, interests, sports teams, etc.

You may be surprised at what you *don't* know. This basic information can be the first step in developing a relationship.

Implementations of these ideas are good first steps toward creating a culture where people feel valued and as if they are part of something important. We all have seen the success of FedEx over the past 20 years. I believe it all began with Mr. Smith's basic concept of "taking care of people first." What are you doing to take care of your people?

About the Author:

Bob Furniss, president of Touchpoint Associates (www.touchpointassociates.com), works with organizations to increase productivity and profits by bringing out the best in their people. Furniss, a featured conference speaker and member of the National Speaker Association, provides keynotes, workshops, and consulting services to help companies redefine success.