

Business by the (Good) Book

Creating a Christian Corporate Culture

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About Business by the (Good) Book

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“There is no reason you can't be one of the most successful organizations in the world and one of the most unselfish. There is no inconsistency between those goals.” —Anonymous

Take the following scenario:

A businessperson is about to sell his business for a nice, fat profit. However, he delays the process until he secures a promise from the new owner not to let go any of the existing employees. The result—all employee jobs are secured.

A business owner is worried about an employee who is having difficulty overcoming alcohol abuse and is regularly tardy or absent from work. The employer consistently seeks out the employee to sober him up, get him something to eat, pray with him, and keeps him employed.

A small business owner recognizes employees' anniversaries with company-paid luncheons and tokens of appreciation.

What book do you think this employer learned this from? The answer is the Bible. The employer and business owner was my father, Homer Menzies.

My father was a wonderful example of someone who genuinely lived the Christian life in front of his employees, customers, and suppliers, and applied that life to business.

God doesn't ask us to be a successful businessperson at the expense of our Christian values. He desires for us to pattern our lives after the life and teachings of His Son Jesus Christ. And I believe He would have us create a culture in our business that reflects those teachings, whether it's long-range strategic planning, developing employees' skills, holding people accountable, offering employee benefits, or balancing work and family life. The question is, what would Jesus do if He was the C.E.O.?

These topics become evident when you look at the environment in which you run your enterprise.

People who write about business call this environment “Corporate Culture.” Corporate culture is the atmosphere that is created where ever people work together. Essentially, it’s “how things are done around here.”

Corporate Culture can show up in both visible and not-so-visible ways.

The visible ways it might show up could include the dress code, work environment, benefits, employment perks, the work/life balance, or the organizational structure.

The not-so-visible expressions might be the company values, attitudes, beliefs, world view, social responsibility, and company philanthropy.

In establishing a Christian corporate culture there are some minimums we might establish: Reflect Christ in our business practices, be accountable (personally/professionally), provide quality products at fair price, honor your creditors/suppliers/vendors, and treating your employees and customers fairly.

Practical Ways to Create a Christian Corporate Culture

1.) Begin with You—Live the Christian Life!

Before anything else, live a Christian lifestyle in front of your employees, customers, and suppliers. Be consistent in your lifestyle. Don’t be involved in things or lifestyle choices that bring reproach on the Gospel. Just live a Christian lifestyle in front of everyone.

A good place to start is to establish the Golden Rule as your “rule of thumb.”

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Do you know what ancient piece of literary work that originates from? It comes from the Bible.

(Mat 7:12 KJV) *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

Applying this rule to your life will affect all those within your sphere of influence. It will cause you to go an extra mile for your employees or help a complete stranger in need.

Those actions will undoubtedly be good for the people you help and are kind to, but you'll also notice a strange thing. People will treat you better too. Beyond that, though, you will find a growing satisfaction in yourself, a belief in yourself, a belief that you are a good person.

The American poet Edward Markham wrote, "We have committed the Golden Rule to memory; let us not commit it to life."

2.) Write a Christian Mission Statement

Establishing a Christian corporate culture can be very thought-provoking. You might consider writing a Mission Statement. A Mission Statement is a concise, written document, stating the non-financial goals you're trying to achieve. For instance, your Mission Statement might answer these questions: What goals are we trying to achieve that results in value or meets human needs? Who are the people we serve? Why is our product or service unique? How do we get the word out about what we offer? How will our Christian values aid us in reaching our goals? A well-honed Statement will be three to five sentences in length.

Here are some examples:

"ICOMEX.COM, Sherman Texas, is a business made up of people that believe that our Lord, Jesus Christ desires to be involved in every aspect of our lives. He loves us and therefore wishes us to be reliant on His strength for all that we encounter in our daily lives. This includes challenges in our families, our personal lives, our education and our businesses."

"Guided by our Christian values, Patrick LaJuett provides professional Web design services with a focus on visibility, usability and affordability."

"The Christian Tradesmen Business Directory seeks to unite

consumers with Christian product and service providers who strive to operate their businesses & organizations according to Biblical principles.”

“It is the mission of Team Extreme Faith to use Christian principals and leadership to promote good health, inspire personal growth and development of our members, and strengthen families by providing them with a vehicle that can create financial security”

“The purpose of Divine Connections: To connect the body of believers to a referral source in the marketplace of professionals and businesses, who are HONEST, with INTEGRITY, offer a standard of excellence, and work as unto the Lord.”

Sight and Sound Theater, Branson, Mo.

“Our purpose is to present the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and sow the Word of God into the lives of our customers, guests, and fellow workers by visualizing and dramatizing the Scriptures, through inspirational productions, encouraging others and seeking always to be dedicated and wise stewards of our God-given talents and resources.”

Can you see writing a mission statement for your business?

Imagine a shareholder walking through Service Master’s lobby at their Downers Grove, Illinois, headquarters and seeing a marble statue of Christ washing the feet of a disciple. Beyond the stature is a wall that stands eighteen feet tall and stretches ninety feet across. Engraved in the all are these four statements that constitute the company’s objectives: To honor God in all we do; To help people develop; To pursue excellence; To grow profitably.

Daily, we’re forced to make decisions that lead us either closer or further from our goals. Use your Mission Statement to become a sort of “North Star” to keep you on track in times of doubt.

3.) Treat Your Employees Well

My father preached to all who would listen that employees are your most valuable asset.

Have you ever heard this statement? “Good help is hard to find.”
“Good help is important to keep”

Like my father taught me, we should be treating our employees as our most important asset. Much of our business’ success or failure will depend on what we’ve invested in them.

Train your employees to deliver exceptional service. Don't leave superior customer service to chance. Make customer service training an on-going process at your company.

Reward your employees for exceptional service. If you want your employees to continually provide stellar customer service, praise alone is not sufficient. You must also offer monetary rewards. According to a survey conducted by the National Science Foundation, when pay is linked to performance, employee motivation and productivity increase by as much as sixty-three percent.

If employees really are your company's most important asset, mass layoffs and salary freezes are a poor way to show it.

The circle of rewards comes back to you as well, because high customer satisfaction usually leads to low customer turnover, which results in higher profits and greater employee satisfaction. Both of these results serve to reduce employee turnover. And it all starts with a foundation of proficient employees properly trained and positively motivated.

Medtronic is a medical technology company with thirty-eight thousand employees in ten countries. Part 5 of their corporate statement says of their employees:

“To recognize the personal worth of employees, providing personal satisfaction, security, advancement, opportunity, and a share in the Company’s success.”

I can tell you my experience at the trucking company I worked for in the 1980s was nothing like that. For women working on the loading dock alongside men it was brutal. It was verbally abusive. It was sexually abusive. It was known and tolerated by the supervisors. That culture won't get you very far in these days. You'd probably have a law suit on your hands.

If you've been in the work force very long you've probably worked where the culture was, "Do as I say, not as I do." "If you got a problem, you're outta' here!" "It's my way or the highway." I understand if you're an employee you may HAVE to work there. However, if you're the boss, if you're the owner, if you're a Christian, that ought not to be.

"You can build a throne with bayonets, but you cannot sit on it for long" —Boris Yeltsin

Building a Christian corporate culture will include the principles of servant leadership. Servant leadership is an approach to leadership development, coined and defined by Robert Greenleaf and advanced by several authors.

Servant leadership means putting people first and recognizing that you as owner or manager of your business are responsible in part for the welfare of your employees. Under God, you are a steward of your enterprise. It encourages leaders to serve others while staying focused on achieving results in line with the organization's values and integrity.

Unlike leadership approaches with a top-down hierarchical style, Servant Leadership instead emphasizes collaboration, trust, empathy, and the ethical use of power. At heart, the individual is a servant first, making the conscious decision to lead in order to better serve others, not to increase their own power. The objective is to enhance the growth of individuals in the organization and increase teamwork and personal involvement.

Unless you work somewhere where the inmates are running the asylum, the corporate culture is set by management. If you want your business' culture to represent the values of the teaching of Christ—it's up to you! It involves more than putting the little fish logo on your business card. (There's nothing wrong with that!) It's more than advertising in the Shepherd's Guide. (There's nothing wrong that that!) You might not be able to match the worthy goals of Medtronics. However, it can be a goal.

Wages and Benefits

(Luke 10:7 KJV) “...*for the labourer is worthy of his hire.*”

It was Catholic Pope Leo XIII who said this:

“Wealthy owners of the means of production and employers must never forget that both divine and human law forbid them to squeeze the poor and wretched for the sake of gain or to profit from the helplessness of others.”

Can you pay your employees a “living wage?” That may be different from minimum wage—that’s set by law. A living wage would be something afforded out of the goodness of your heart. It might reduce the bottom line profits but will enrich the lives of your employees.

Whatever you decide to pay your employees just be sure to be honest with them about wages and benefits up front. Let them know what they can realistically expect.

I paid my employees the best I could, however, I also told them that all their financial goals might not be met working for me. You might need to moonlight and if so, go for it. I understand. However, the only restrictions were please don’t work for a competitor, don’t let it interfere with day job, and don’t come in sleepy and non-productive.

When money is tight you might consider a non-monetary compensation. Think about employee discounts, tuition refund for company-related schooling, extra vacation, additional personal days off, parking privileges, passes to local attractions, or even job titles. Be creative.

Make your business a safe place to work

Physical Safety

A recent report in the newspaper told of our brave American soldiers, after putting their lives on the line for us on the battle field, risked being electrically shocked in the showers. That’s outrageous!

As bosses we can do much for our employees back here at home. We can take advantage of ergonomically-designed office furniture to help with carpal tunnel syndrome, etc. We can supply fatigue mats for standing long periods and back braces and girdles for heavy lifting. We should always provide proper lighting and ventilation when working with dangerous odors. Don't forget to make MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheets) available. Does your shop have a first-aid kit ready in case of emergency?

In these ways you're assigning value to your employees. You're establishing a Corporate Culture that reflects Christ.

Emotional Safety

In the businesses that my father owned or managed, he established a culture of emotional safety. He provided a safe place to work. There was room for human error. Knowing their jobs were secure, they were better, more productive employees. Knowing their families were covered with insurance, they were better, more productive employees. Knowing their paychecks would not bounce, they were better employees. Knowing they were respected, they were better employees.

It was a nurturing place where employees were respected, honored and valued. Their employment anniversary was celebrated. Their birthday was celebrated. Their contribution to the company was celebrated in tangible ways. Many were given keys to the shop building and employees could earn financial bonuses.

Finally, if you have someone's wife in your employment, be sure to treat her like you'd want YOUR wife treated. If you have a young man or girl in your employment, remember how you'd like your son or daughter treated. Especially, since you're a Christian.

Open door policy

I've practiced an "open door" policy after my father's example. That simply meant my door was open to everyone. Not just employees and customers but also door-to-door salesmen and job applicants.

That may sound trivial, but today, it's harder than you think. Try and get an interview with Hiring Manager. Nowadays, job applicants are expected to apply for work on the Internet or send their resumes to an email address or fax it to an anonymous fax number. There's little possibility of talking to a Hiring Manager. Many companies have lost the "human" from their Human Resources department.

It's not that I ever hired someone off the street, but I wanted to give them the opportunity to talk about themselves and to ask questions about themselves that they would enjoy answering. I thought it was the Christian thing to do. It was a part of the culture of my business. Many of these people are hurting and could use a sympathetic ear.

The same is true with Purchasing Agents. It's difficult to get an appointment with one. It's not that I bought much of anything from salesmen but I wanted to give them an opportunity to talk about their product or service. I thought it was the Christian thing to do. I've never been a door-to-door salesman but I have done sales work. I understand completely.

Someday I may be a business owner again. If I am I'll have an open door to people who want to talk to me.

Extending Mercy

In my two different business locations I daily encountered those down on their luck, beggars and hobos, or customers who couldn't pay their bill. I don't want to talk about how I helped them—I might lose my reward—but when I found myself in a position to do good for someone and I usually did it (like most Christians would do).

(Prov 19:17 KJV) *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*

A Company Chaplain

If you're really serious about your employee's welfare, try provid-

ing a chaplain to your employees. A chaplain is there to pray and counsel with employees. He can pray for you and the prosperity of your business.

Tyson Foods employs fifty-two part-time chaplains serving in thirty-nine plants, with John Tyson (grandson of founder of the company and presently CEO and Chairman of the Board) as the driving force behind the program.

These chaplains are not clad in collars and robes, but in polo shirts and khaki or cargo pants. My chaplain wore cowboy boots and a western hat.

Chaplains also visit sick and bereaved employees and their families, when no other minister is available. Remember to take care of your chaplain! (\$\$\$)

Miscellaneous

Some miscellaneous things I did for employees were giving a daily paycheck to someone who needed it to get on their feet. That employee got five paychecks per week for several weeks!

I adjusted the start and stop times of our business for families and employees. Young moms needed more time in the morning to help with family needs. Also, by opening my business an hour later than usual, I could take my own kids to school on the way to work.

A few times I corrected an invoice I had received in favor of the supplier. It's been my personal conviction that neither I nor my business is going to take advantage of someone else's mistake in arithmetic—especially if I received value from their product or service.

(Mat 7:12 KJV) *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

4.) Be a Person of Your Word

(James 5:12 KJV) *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

If you tell your customer you'll be there at 10 A.M. you should be there or call. If you say that project will be done next week, do it, or make arrangement with the customer.

Be a businessman of your word. Honor your contracts. Respect the terms of the contract—for the Lord's sake.

5.) Take Care of Your Suppliers

The supplier is someone who furnishes goods or services to your company. If you're a manufacturer, unless you manufacture or fabricate every single component that you assemble and sell you will need suppliers.

It may be said that cash is the life-blood of a business but you won't get far without your suppliers.

Who are your suppliers? The supplier is the manufacturer that provides the raw material or parts you assemble and sell or simply re-sell. Others, although not technically suppliers, are ever bit part of the supply chain. The office supplies dealer, those who handle your freight (in-bound and out-bound), postal service/in-town courier, UPS, FedEx, and Roadway Express. He's the distributor or middleman who takes your products to the retailer. He's supplying an invaluable service. Don't forget the mechanic that services your fork lift or the banker that carries your business loan. He's also the mailman that delivers your checks and bills.

These are the people and companies that keep your business alive. My philosophy is to make each of them feel that they're a part of MY team. Team Menzies!

It's only being smart to keep the wheels greased!

Each Christmas I ordered edible mail order gifts for my customers. I included my UPS driver. It made him feel appreciated and part of Team Menzies! As part of my "team" sometime he'd make a special trip back to my shop to drop off packages scheduled for delivery later in the day.

There's other ways to take care of your suppliers. First and foremost is to pay your bills on time or in a timely fashion. That's

really the Christian thing to do! Better yet, pay early and take the cash discount if offered.

That has two positive results:

Positive Result #1—it builds a strong relationship with your supplier. That gives you asking favor in a pinch (which happens to us all occasionally). It will give you preferential treatment (favor) to their other customers. You will get preferred delivery times (favor) and preferred everything else. If YOU are a supplier to a company, what happens when YOUR important customers ask the impossible—you do your best to deliver! The Bible says we reap what we sow. When we pay our bills early or on time, we're planting a seed. It might help your customers to pay you more timely!

Positive Result #2—you get free money! Whether one percent or two percent it's FREE Money! You know you have to pay eventually, why not pay early and reap the benefits?

If the three most feared words in a man's vocabulary is "some assembly required" then the two sweetest words are, "check enclosed." As a Full Gospel Business Man, you should be a blessing! Make doing business with you or your business a pleasant experience! Make paying bills early (or at least on time) part of your Christian Corporate Culture!

I remember reading the biography of a famous New York City real estate developer. He bragged about how he "took care" of his suppliers. "Here, take ninety percent of what I owe you or take me to court!" He probably thought, "eighty-nine percent he'll take me to court. Ninety percent and he won't spend the money and time." I'm not a big fan of this man with weird hair. I've only two things to say to him—"You're fired!"

"Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it" (Proverbs 3:27).

Your supplier is due his money in a timely fashion or you should make an arrangement that you can both agree with.

One of my pet peeves was when a customer would say, “You’ll get paid when I get paid.” Suddenly I’m a partner in the collection effort. What happens to me if my customer doesn’t get paid?

I’ve had many good customers who paid me according to my terms on the invoice and I knew they had not been paid. Several customers paid on the 10th of the month regardless of the fact they hadn’t been paid. Whatever invoices I could submit by the end of the month, they would be paid for on the tenth of the next month. What was I willing to do for those customers? I would do nearly anything. This is the kind of customer I want to be.

As a supplier myself, I give my customers free money by offering them a two percent discount if paid in ten days. That’s usually a great motivator. It’s worth two percent to me to have the money in MY bank instead of THEIR bank. It’s part of my corporate culture to give discounts to customers who pay early. I reward them!

What is your word worth? In my father’s generation, when a man gave his word to do something he did it. If he didn’t, no one would do business with him again. It doesn’t take long to get “marked” in your business community or among your suppliers as non-pay or someone that takes a long time to pay.

As business owners we’re sandwiched in the middle between our suppliers on one hand and our customers on the other. We must be men of integrity to both. We must be men of our word to both. As Christians we are bound by the words of our mouth. As Christians we ought to operate under a higher code of ethics than others.

(James 5:12 KJV) But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

You should be nurturing your relationship with your suppliers. Maybe you can develop a personal friendship with your suppliers. Take THEM out to eat. It’s in YOUR best interest that they are

successful in business. It's NOT in your best interest when they close their business or go bankrupt. When their business closes, you've just lost a member of your team. That may even put you in a position to deal with a supplier that you'd rather not. It reduces your options and choices. Remember they are part of your team. Pray for your suppliers—for their business and more importantly for their souls. Get to know them on a first name basis. Shake hands with them when meeting in person. Give them a firm handshake—not one of those limp-wristed shakes.

When I mailed my suppliers gospel tracts, I always inserted it with my payment. Remember those two sweet words, check enclosed! Make it a part of your Christian corporate culture to pray for your suppliers!

Do you like doing business with members of the Body of Christ? I do. I like doing business with other Christians. I feel like I'm supporting the Body of Christ. However, I didn't always feel that way.

I once hired a concrete man to make a patio at my home. Halfway through the process he mentioned he was a Pentecostal preacher. Great! That's what he did—great! I figured he knew a lot about the Bible but next to nothing about concrete. Boy was I wrong! He did an excellent job!

I like doing business with other Christians as long as they are people of integrity. Even though they are Christians they still have to offer a quality product or service, a reasonable price, and a timely delivery of products or services.

We need to be sensitive to the fact that Christian suppliers are our brothers and sisters in Christ. There are two things to keep in mind.

We're helping their economy, and we may be an answer to their prayer for business.

If we terminate the services of a supplier I believe they deserve an explanation. By experience I can say it's disappointing when you

lose a Christian customer with no hint or explanation. To talk with them may be one of the necessary yet unpleasant things we have to do as businessmen. If you can talk out your problems maybe the business and personal relationship can be salvaged.

Bill Gates, in his book *Business @ the Speed of Light*, he says of suppliers that in the traditional model, suppliers have often been merely tolerated for what they provided but were not treated as an integral part of the overall business process needed to serve customers. However, today's approach is that of a value network. Everyone who touches the product must add value. Therefore, let's find the true value of our suppliers and treat them better. Let's make them feel they're part of the team.

Everything is about people—when you outsource, you're not hiring a manufacturing facility—you're partnering with a person. You're dependent upon that person's character, sense of quality control, reliability, and sense of fairness.

As Christian businessmen, let's take care of our suppliers!

6.) Take Care of Your Customers

Let's define your customers. They're the people and companies that buy your goods and services. Beyond that, they're the people that pay your bills. They furnish the money to pay your insurance premiums, your mortgage payments, your company car payment, your business rent, your overhead, and your payroll.

Let's think about what a customer is NOT. A customer is not just another name on the Rolodex. They're too important for that. Without my customers I have no reason to be at work. Without my customers I have no work! Without my customers the above expenses don't get paid!

A customer is not an interruption. They are the reason I'm at work. One of my philosophies is when a customer says, "Frog" then I say, "How high?" They are looking for someone to service them well and make them a priority.

By operating our business like Christians we should make our companies different from our competitors'. Could it be your attitude towards service? Could it be your price?

Could it be the extra quality of your product or service?

Another philosophy is, "Never promise as much as you can deliver but always deliver more than your promise." Under commit—over perform.

You may not have much control over price. You may be at the rock bottom. Your suppliers may be sucking every dime out of your system. Some stores actually tell YOU how much you'll charge.

Today, more than ever, people are looking for more than a discounted price.

They're looking for convenience

Make it easy for them to do business with you. On your web site make contact information easy to find. Especially contact information.

You might be able to add pick up and delivery service (even for a charge). I wish my mechanic would—I'd even pay him.

I offer my customers a chance to make FREE money. Paying their bill 10 days or less earns them 2% of their bill FREE. Provide a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) with invoices. (It's in your best interest!) Make sure your customer gets as many copies of the invoice as needed. Make convenience part of your Christian Corporate Culture!

They're looking for quality

Jesus was a carpenter. He created the world. Can you image Him making a table that wobbled? Maybe you can find some little "value" you can add to your product. Can clean or shine it? Can you partially assemble it? You can add a note of instruction with it or handy tip for operating. Find a way to add value to your product or service.

Recently in Branson, Mo., I stopped at a gas station. They

added value by giving “buy 1 get 1 free” tickets to a lesser seen Branson show. You’re simply finding a way to make your company stand out from the competition.

I add a dozen Crispy Cream donuts with my orders! I learned that from the Homer Menzies School of Business! I put my name and cell phone number on my products. That makes it easy for them to reach me when there’s a problem and they’re under STRESS! Make adding value part of your Christian Corporate Culture!

They’re looking for attitude

Have you checked your attitude lately? Do you show a Pepsodent smile when dealing with your customer in person? A personal visit to your customer’s site should begin with a firm handshake. Dale Carnegie believed there was nothing as sweet to a person ... as his own name.

Do you and your staff have great phone manners? The customer should think they’re talking to Joel Osteen or Dale Carnegie. Be positive! Don’t be negative! Make a good attitude part of your Christian Corporate Culture!

They’re looking for promptness

Do you show up on time? Sometimes it is rude to be early (to a residence) but it’s all too common for trade people to show up late without a call. As Christian businessmen, that shouldn’t be us. You’ve got a cell phone—use it! If you don’t, find a quarter and call! Make punctuality part of your Christian Corporate Culture!

Let me tell you about the Homer Menzies School of Business. The customer was king. He made them feel it.

He made the customer “feel” he was right—even when they were wrong. Perception is everything!

He rolled out the red carpet for the customers. Bass boats were fueled and loaded with gear. He made sure the fish were biting. He may had to have hired a guide. It was certain the customers were going to catch fish!

Next stop was the steak house for the biggest and best steaks. Finally, great seats to the best show in Branson, Missouri.

These are things that grease the wheels in business.

Here's another example: My brother has eight box season seats to the Springfield Cardinals. Four seats are used by him and employees. Four seats are used by suppliers and customers.

I can't afford either of the above, but I can buy donuts! Anyone can afford thank-you cards expressing appreciation. Anyone can afford an e-mail or phone call expressing appreciation. We should always make our customer's experience with us a pleasant one.

If we lose a customer, hopefully it won't be due to a factor that we had control over. If it boils down to price we do have the following options: We can simply reduce our profit and charge less. Maybe we can lead our customer into taking advantage of volume discount. Or, maybe we can offer a cheaper product as long as the quality is clearly known by the customer. Perhaps the cash discount will be enough to win the customer.

We should attempt to nurture a friendship with our customers—especially our long-term customers. Try taking them out to eat. It's always in YOUR best interest that they succeed and stay in business. It's NOT in your best interest when a customer closed their business and goes bankrupt. When that happens, not only have you lost a customer but you might lose uncollected debt. Pray for your customers—for their business and for their souls.

There are unique ministry opportunities when selling to other Christians.

My wife offers a “ministerial” discount to her ministry customers. That discount acknowledges their contribution and value as a minister. It adds value to the business relationship on the part of the customer. It fosters repeat business.

If your profit margins are just too close for that, you can still show interest in their ministry. Maybe you can find ways to show appreciation for their commitment to Christ. Perhaps you can invite

them to your Christian function or attend one of theirs. Give them free tickets to Christian concert.

I pray for my customers and over the products I manufacture for them.

Remember, even with your Christian customers, you must still offer a quality product or service, a reasonable price, and timely delivery of products and services. As Christian business owners, we still need to hold ourselves to a higher standard than our competitors—especially when dealing with other Christians.

Make Christ Your Senior Partner

How do you make Christ your business partner? Make Him your Partner by involving Him in your business. First, recognize Christ as the Head of your business just like He's head of the church and as such honor Him.

We can honor Christ with our dealings with people, our business ethics, and our business transactions. We should make sure we never bring reproach on His name, His work, His church, His Word, or His people.

Make charitable giving part of your business culture. Beyond tithing to your local church it's pretty much between you and your Partner (God).

(Prov 3:9 KJV) Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase:

Ask your new “Partner” to bring the right people into your life and form meaningful business relationships. Business building is about connections and relationships. This is especially true for long-term and loyal customers. There will be plenty of one-time customers—those who are just passing through or are too price-conscious.

Ask God to help you recognize opportunities as they present themselves or ask Him to help you create new business products and services.

Looking for Product Development

Just as a country has natural resources (water, timber, oil), ideas are OUR natural resources. These ideas and opportunities come to you for a reason. Be open-minded to changes in this new economy. Some businesses will not survive. You might have to change the way you do business. Pray for wisdom. Ask your Senior Partner what to do.

Product development is no easy task but it's a fun task. It's the whole program of taking an idea in your head, then going through the discovery work, which includes doing due diligence, making sure it works on paper, and then bringing to fruition the new product to market. Let me give you an example of some of my brain storms. Some have been hits and others have been misses. I've had some golden eggs and then I've just laid some eggs! Such as:

UPC Film Masters

UPC Bar Codes (Uniform Product Codes) became popular in the 1970s and are printed on product labels. A manufacturer is required to obtain a five-digit Manufacturer's Code from the Uniform Product Code Council (now known as GS1) of Dayton, Ohio. (Uniform Product Code Council/GS1 is the clearinghouse of all UPC codes and assigns manufacturer's code numbers.) Using the assigned Manufacturer's Code he adds a five-digit product code which is unique for each product. He then gives that complete set of codes to a printer who will print the UPC bar code on the product label.

The printer needs a "film master" that allows him to faithfully reproduce the barcode perfectly. If the bars are too fat or too thin, they might not provide a reliable scan at the check out counter.

After researching the whole process the Lord gave me the idea to be a provider of film masters.

I contacted the Code Council, registered as a producer of film masters, snagged a toll-free phone number, advertised, and added that product to my services.

I discovered to my pleasant surprise I was one of only two suppliers in the state of Missouri to be endorsed by the Uniform Product Code Council to make film masters. It was a very profitable business. I owe that idea to my Senior Partner. It was a golden egg!

Typesetting Sheet Music

Back in the 1980s no one we could find was typesetting sheet music. I did my due diligence and it appeared it would be a niche product with no area competition.

The idea seemed even better since my chief typesetter, Pam Behling, knew music very well. I figured it would be a cinch for her to compose the music on a computer.

Please remember this was in a time before Microsoft Windows dominated personal computers. PCs operated on a DOS system and it was NOT user friendly. That was probably the weakest link to this idea. We could run the computer but the software was just too difficult to master. The idea crashed before it got off the ground. It was an egg.

Chromatecs™

Known best in the early days as rub-off lettering, Chromatecs™ were often used by ad agencies to make a prototype of some product. Take an aerosol can for instance, you could apply a Chromatec of lettering and a couple of graphics in a wide variety of colors and presto—you had a prototype of a product ready for the camera. From the finished picture you could produce sales literature for a manufacturer's marketing department.

Again, this was decades ago before the popularity (and availability) of color laser printers. Graphic programs such as Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator were to come years later.

I got this idea at Type-Expo, a trade show for the typesetting industry. As soon as I saw this product demonstrated I just knew I could sell it to my existing customers.

Anything you could put in a film negative I could make a rub-off graphic, and in any color including metallic colors. Plus, I

was the only one in Southwest Missouri that offered it. The ad agencies couldn't buy them fast enough. It was a very lucrative service and I owe it all to my Senior Partner for helping me make it happen. It was a golden egg!

Type Font Style Sheet

Typesetters need a way to display the different fonts they have to offer customers. An easy way is to print layout sheets showing the font in a variety of sizes and weights (light, medium, bold, demi-bold, heavy, outline, shadow, etc.)

I had made several attempts to find a workable layout without any success. Something about the layout just didn't seem to work. I decided to commit the problem to the Lord. One night after praying about my problem, I went to sleep still thinking about it. That night I dreamed about a wonderful page layout. The next morning I sketched the picture from my dream and implemented it immediately at my shop. I used that style sheet for 13 years and I had many compliments on it. It was functional as well as practical.

Presentation Graphics

While traveling in Brussels, Belgium, in 1984, I attended a business machines trade show close to the Atomium. In one of the booths a company demonstrated printing a pie chart from a personal computer. That was unheard of! I had never seen anything like that. (Once again, may I remind the reader, in 1984, DOS based computers ruled the known world. MS Power-Point was many years from being invented.)

Immediately a spark went off in my mind. I just knew I could sell this if I could only figure out how to do it. I didn't even own a computer so there was no sense in buying the software in Belgium.

Back home I purchased my first computer. It was a Kaypro Turbo XT with 12 megahertz, 30 MB hard disk and 300 baud modem. It was only \$1,800! I soon upgraded to a color monitor so I could experiment with a graphics program, if only I could find one.

I began reading the few computer magazines available back

then. I was planning to travel to Chicago at that time and once I arrived in the Windy City, I searched for a computer software retail store downtown. (No computer stores in Springfield, Mo., could help me.) I walked up and down the city streets hunting for any kind of computer store. I finally walked into Mr. Egghead Software store.

The only graphics program Egghead sold, compatible with DOS, was Harvard Graphics. It was DOS compatible, worked on my computer and I could produce bar graphs and pie charts. Harvard Graphics cost several hundreds of dollars, I can't remember the exact amount. Color printers were expensive too. I found a color wax thermal printer for about \$800 mail order. The printer was expensive, the ink was expensive, and so was the waxy paper. But I was in the business of selling "presentation graphics."

After showing the finished product around I found out printed sheets were unnecessary. What customers wanted were finished 35mm slides of color graphics. They wanted slides with bar graphs and pie charts and fancy colorful titles. That led to my next search of a service bureau that would take my computer files and turn them into 35mm slides. Brilliant Images of New York City was the answer. They could put my files through their 4000 line resolution film recorder and make stunning slides. My modem was only 300 baud so I would send the files to Brilliant Images, go to lunch, and hopefully the files would be transferred when I returned.

I was the only company in Southwest Missouri with the ability to make computerized 35mm slides. For a year or two they sold like hotcakes. It was a golden egg!

It was so much fun to start with just an idea, go through the whole discovery mode and emerge with a finished niche product that's available only from me!

InstaFaxx

What do you do today when your need a product manual or specification sheet? You Google the manufacturer, sort through their documents and download a .PDF file to your computer. The whole process takes less than five minutes.

That wasn't the way it was done in the 1980s! You either wrote or called a manufacturer and they looked the information up and made a copy of it and put it in the mail and maybe a week later it was in your mailbox. Hopefully, it was the right information you needed.

In the early 1980s I came across a technology that would allow you to store in a personal computer hundreds of numbered. A caller from a remote fax machine would be asked to enter number of the desired file from his telephone key pad. The computer would find the file and fax it to the caller's fax machine.

I figured I could rent space on my computer to companies who would store their documents on my machine and callers would call my fax machine requesting numbered documents. I would offer a product like a service bureau. I called my invention InstaFaxx—Automated Fax Response.

Armed with sales brochures I set out to visit my good friend at a local manufacturing plant. "Bruce" he said, "That's a great idea! I have to send out Material Safety Data Sheets all day to customers and it takes a great deal of time. Let me think about it." He couldn't sell the idea to his superiors.

None of the other people I talked to like the idea. The scheme crashed in flames. I used the machine to broadcast my own sales literature before it became obsolete.

In retrospect, instead of renting space on my computer, I should have sold or leased the technology to companies so their brochures would be more secure and in their total control. InstaFaxx was a big egg.

Desktop publishing conversion

When desktop publishing came on the scene in the 1980s many thought we stood on the verge of another industrial revolution.

What once could only be accomplished by a skilled typesetter sitting behind a multi-thousand dollar machine could now be done on a desk top or even kitchen table and a personal computer and a mouse.

The weakest link to that scenario, however, was the final output. Personal computers typically teamed up with a table top laser printer capable of outputting a maximum of 300 dots per inch (d.p.i.). Looking closely even without a magnifying glass one could see the rough edges of type fonts. The larger headlines were more obvious.

That posed a problem to ad agencies and publishers who were used to a higher quality. They really enjoyed the convenience of the desktop publishing but bristled at the less-than-best output from their laser printers.

Recognizing an opportunity with the help of my Senior Partner, I researched the idea of interfacing publishing files from my customers to my high-resolution phototypesetting which provided about 3,000 d.p.i. output.

It took much trial and error and I had lots of technical glitches but in the end it worked. For several years I provided this service to my customers. It was a golden egg!

My Dog Rosie

Now here's something a little more recent. It was the publishing of an E-book called, *My Dog Rosie*.

In 2008 my wife purchased a book on the Internet. She paid for the book with her credit card and was taken to a page where she "downloaded" a .PDF file immediately.

When I heard about that experience I just knew I was on the verge of something wonderful. I would become a publisher of E-books and sell the on the Internet.

Just think of the possibilities. There would be no overhead as I'd digitize the books myself. All I needed was a web site to advertise and sell the books. Since it's an electronic book there's no printing, no inventory, and best of all no postage to deliver the products. Books can be sold 24/7 from any customer in the world with Internet connections. A company would process the credit card transactions and all I had to do was count the money!

Did I mention earlier that every good idea may not work just like you think? This is one of them.

I began my discover mode by researching e-books on the Internet. What I found was encouraging and promising. I read the testimonials from people who made fortunes selling e-books and they'd just love to sell me the instructions so I could follow their example.

Having more time than money I decided to keep my money and invest my time and kept looking for the path to become a dot.com millionaire. I went to the book store and bought *E-Marketing for Dummies* and *Building Web Pages for Dummies*. At least the titles were appropriate!

Next, I found the perfect first book to publish called, *My Dog Rosie*. Originally published in the 1980s by my father-in-law, Rev. C. J. Greer, it's a true story about a little Border collie that became Reserve Grand Champion of the World four different times.

I decided to first see if there was an interest on the Internet for information about Border collies or working sheep dogs. I found a tool that revealed there were several thousand inquiries per day on Google for that very subject.

Armed with that encouraging information I set out to retype the book in Word format and create a .PDF (portable document format) file to upload to my future web site on the Internet.

I then signed up with Yahoo™ for a simple web site and arranged for a domain name—mydogrosie.com.

Next, I linked up with Click Bank to arrange my credit card processing. That was fairly straight forward.

My next task was to actually build a web site. This was something I'd only played with using free web sites. I used all the examples in the books I bought and did my best.

With all the pages displaying and links to Click Bank working I clicked on the “publish” key on October 31, 2008.

It seemed to take forever uploading all the files and pictures and of course the file, *My Dog Rosie*.

How much would I make that first day? I had no idea.

I forgot. No one but me knows about this web site.

Just because you build it they may not come. You have to bring them. My next stop was Google to buy Ad words. I made my list of keywords, made sure my web site was loaded with key words and set my monthly budget.

I'm proud to report as of this writing, I've sold four books. You heard right—I've sold four books! I've made about enough to buy a pop corn and a small soda!

What went wrong! I've ran the list of what might have happened. Was it inadequate SEO (search engine optimization)? Was it not the right key words? I've experimented with different sale prices. Was it the wrong subject?

To this date I don't know what went wrong. I believe in the business model, I believe it will work but not sure how to do it right. So far my E-book has been a big egg!

As I previously mentioned, it's fun to have an idea, go through the discovery mode, work it out on paper, and bring to market a brand new product.

You can ask your Senior Partner for wisdom at every level of your business goals and ambitions.

Finally, when asking God to be your Senior Partner, ask Him to use you to help meet the needs of others. When we purchase things through our business or provide a living wage we are helping to meet the needs of our suppliers and employees.

For our employees we are helping them to create wealth in the form of paychecks. Those paychecks trickle down to other stores and meet the needs of their employees and suppliers. Eventually our wealth will generate taxes that in turn help support government that pays for our roads and bridges and military to fight the good fight against the enemy that would destroy the American way of life. If you're the owner of a business, big or small, you are part of a big picture. Ask God to be part of this whole thing.

(James 1:5 KJV) *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

In establishing a Christian Corporate Culture there's a few things you shouldn't do. I call this section:

Don't Even Think About It!

Not Paying Your Bills

Taxes

As business owners we have lots of taxes to pay: Employee taxes, sales taxes, use taxes, payroll taxes, and income taxes. The penalties are just too great not to pay—the amount compounds. 47.5% interest (22.5% for late filing and 25% of the total for not filing). Plus it may involve legal or criminal action against you. Your name or your business name may get a FREE listing in the newspaper. You may get a lien placed on your house or real estate. You may scare off customers, vendors, and suppliers. Please pay your taxes.

Payroll and Suppliers

Your employees depend on their paycheck. Your credibility as an employer is at stake. Your suppliers depend on your payment. Your credibility as a customer is at stake. Your credibility as a Christian is at stake. Your suppliers sold to you on good faith. They may not make that mistake again.

(Lev 19:13 KJV) *Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.*

There are proper procedures to deal with the inability to not pay your bills. It involves communicating with your creditor and

working out an arrangement that's acceptable to him. Don't even think about not paying your bills!

Cheating Customers

(Lev 19:13 KJV) *Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour,*

(Prov 20:10 KJV) *Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.*

This is a no-win situation—it's a lose-lose situation.

For thirteen years I worked on Park Central public square in Springfield, Missouri. I either shopped or ate lunch or browsed the big department store on the corner every day.

Sometimes a sale would be announced for a certain day. I'd have a sport coat or pair of slacks picked out. However, on sale day the store was full of different merchandise. I'd ask, "Where did this stuff come from?"

The last manager of that store spent time in jail for attempting to defraud building insurers.

Surely many of you have seen this ad in print, television, and on the Internet. There's a picture of soft-spoken Mr. Yoder, complete with whiskers and suspenders standing in a barn, working on a wood cabinet.

In the background are a group of soft-spoken Amish ladies, complete with bonnets or some with their little hair bun along side them are their soft-spoken children. They're polishing the final coat of wax on the wood cabinet.

Finally, Mr. Yoder is seen driving off with his team of horses in the snow, with YOUR heater behind him in the buggy.

What's the implication here?

Since it's Amish workers, they're probably using woodworking skills and tools brought over from the old country. You're fixing to

get some old-world craftsmanship since each piece is lovingly made by hand.

The implication is they're working in a barn that was "raised" at an old-fashioned community barn raisin'. There's probably no nails in the used in the barn but rather wooden pegs holding the barn together.

Mrs. Yoder, alongside with their children, are involved in the family business. Because everyone is working together in the family shop they all share a warm-fuzzy.

Since Amish don't use electricity, they don't even have a computer, they probably use an old-fashion ledger with double-entry bookkeeping. They make their journal entries with one of those flat carpenter pencils that they sharpen with a pocket knife. It's the same knife Mr. Yoder uses to peel his apple on rest breaks—and his plugs of tobacco.

Since there's no electricity, the television camera making the commercial probably had to use batteries or power from the remote truck.

Finally, it's implied that Mr. Yoder will show up at your door anytime now, with your heater. The horse and buggy will be in your driveway.

Soon you'll be enjoying the crackling sound of a realistic fire, warming your whole house on about the same amount of electricity it takes to run a pot of coffee.

Remember, there's no ash or soot, this heater is a miracle—it's an Amish miracle!

And, because you support the work of the Amish community and their devotion to an uncluttered and unfettered God-fearing lifestyle, you too can enjoy a warm fuzzy.

What's the reality in all of this?

First of all, we all are aware of the "fetish" Amish have of modern technology—especially technology powered by electricity.

Next, we're all aware how the Amish loved to be photo-graphed and their image plastered on television and the Internet. Truth is, the

Amish don't like being photographed. A biblical passage about "no graven images" is something they take literally. Amish really dislike the media. Additionally, according to Amish.net (a non-Amish web site), the Amish do not use the Internet personally or for business purposes.

Finally, don't hold your breath waiting for Mr. Yoder to show up at your door in his horse and buggy to deliver your artificial fire place. It'll probably come in a big brown truck.

There's one other interesting fact.

Since 2007, the Better Business Bureau in Ohio, has received 237 complaints against that company, many of them related to misleading advertising and customer service issues; the company currently has an F rating from the Better Business Bureau. Don't even think about cheating your customers!

An Improper Relationship with a Female Co-Worker

This is true especially if you're already married! This really is a no-win situation. It's a recipe for disaster. It's not going to work out like you think.

I think it's good to be polite, professional, and friendly. But you know when you've crossed the line. You can avoid flirtatious talk by talking about your wife or if necessary, talk about Jesus. It's hard to flirt when you're doing that. Have your wife involved at work or visit often. You need to do that anyway.

One of the things my wife did for me was to help me hire my female employees. If they were okay for her they were okay for me.

You're going to have great times in business for yourself. When you experience the "thrill of victory" make sure it's your wife's hand you give a high-five to.

You're going to have agonizing defeats in business for yourself. When you experience the "agony of defeat" make sure it's your wife's shoulder you cry on. Make her part of your business.

That's one advantage of being gray-headed and overweight—you're not a temptation to other women!

However, if you've already started something at work with someone—shut it down! Quick!

Here's a good rule of thumb: "Don't say things to another female co-worker that you would not say in the presence of her husband and your wife." This includes statements, compliments, or physical contact.

(Prov 6:27-29 KJV) *Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?*

Solomon wrote the above scripture. I believe he was speaking from experience. He indulged in every lust thinkable. He said he withheld nothing from himself.

It's true some of those living in the Old Testament had concubines. However, we're not living in Old Testament time—we're in the Kingdom age. Christ has raised the bar of expectations. There's no record to conclusively say Solomon made it to heaven.

(Mat 5:28 KJV) *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

Solomon's question could be rephrased as such: "Do you really think you can manage sin?" The answer is no.

Sin will take you farther than you want to go.

Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay.

And sin will cost you more than you want to pay.

Your testimony is really not difficult to maintain. We just simply do what's right and proper. It's very difficult to restore.

I wonder about men who've been caught in the "snare of the fowler." I wonder if they ever think, "Why didn't I do as Joseph did—run from sin." Sexual sin is not a sin to play with. It's not a sin to see how close you can come without stepping over the line.

(2 Tim 2:22 KJV) *Flee also youthful lusts:*

Don't even think about starting an improper relationship with a female co-worker, vendor, supplier, or customer. It's a no-win situation. (Fortunately, I'm not speaking from experience but from observation.) If you've already started something at work with someone—shut it down now! Don't even think about an improper relationship!

Review

- The culture of the business will be set by the leader.
- Let your Christian values be reflected in your business.
 - In your product quality.
 - In the value you provide with your product or service.
 - In the excellence of your customer service.
 - In the ministry to your employees.
- Pursue excellence, be successful, and yet bring glory to Christ. “There's no inconsistency between those goals.”
- Be a role model to your employees.
- Show them it's possible to balance your family and your career.
- Show them it's possible to work with people who genuinely follow the Golden Rule.
- There's a place where the spirit of helping other people thrives—your business.

Resources

Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International

"Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International are businessmen, men of high status, as well as ordinary men. Our vision is that the light of Jesus shall shine forth from each of our men into every culture, nation, race, language, and creed."

www.fgbmfi.org

The Spirit Savvy Business

"Spiritually empower business people while helping them integrate the best business principles."

www.spiritsavvybiz.blogspot.com

Faith in the Workplace

"Helping you integrate your faith into the workplace."

www.faithintheworkplace.com

Men's Fraternity

Men's Fraternity was designed to help men come together and strengthen each other through weekly sessions that combine biblical teaching and small group interaction.

www.mensfraternity.com