

Living Life Backwards

I'd like to begin 2011 with a question for all our *QwikConnect* readers: What is the single most important ingredient in any human relationship? This isn't a trick question, but few people get it. The answer is trust. Trust is the foundation, the single most important ingredient in human interaction. Trust is like the air we breathe. When it's there we hardly notice it. But when it's missing, we all start struggling, gasping and heading for the exits.

At Glenair, we talk a lot about win/win relationships. The win/win is an honest, trustworthy, fair, long-term deal, viewed in any direction. The needs and aspirations of all parties are considered and honored. The win/lose? Short-term self-interest dominates, and before you know it, grabbing, dishonesty and breach-of-trust creep in. In a win/lose deal somebody always winds up unhappy.

"Win/Win" deals, based as they are on honest and fair dealing, leave us in high standing with our associates: trusted, valued, and well positioned for tackling the next problem or opportunity. And as any good business manager knows, it's the next deal, and the next, and the next that translate to real success.

The 19th century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said, ***"A life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards."***

Kierkegaard's observation is one of humanity's most important. Most businesses leaders, it seems to me, rarely pause to consider life or business "backwards." They often succumb to the temptation to take advantage of the other guy, to grab that prize right now, to disregard any long-term consequences. It feels natural, it feeds our competitive juices, but does it build trust? Kierkegaard understood that it's only at the end of the road that we get to view the totality of our life-actions and enjoy (or regret) the results.

Herb Kelleher of Southwest Airlines got it right when he said, ***"Put your people first. If you treat them right, they'll treat the customers right. The customers will then come back, and come back, and that will make the shareholders happy."***

This is a business philosophy worth emulating, and certainly one which will build that most precious of all business commodities: trust.

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