

Neglect the first four commandments at our individual and corporate peril



It has been stated before that corporate and personal success (however you like to define success) is driven by absolute values just as much as by vision and mission statements. Here is how the Ten Commandments, if expressed in business (or personal) terms, could articulate absolute values that would provide standards for making basic life and business decisions that are more meaningful and could result in fulfilment in all aspects of life. They are:

Show proper respect for authority: There is no doubt that most of us, depending on our point of view, can identify what we believe are good laws as well as bad ones. For example some believe that as far as business is concerned the employment laws are to a great extent bad ones. They seem to be punitive to the employer and do not promote a balanced work/life ethic that considers the good of others, including the employer, just as much as they do the good of the individual.

But, irrespective of that employers have to respect the law and work within it, otherwise anarchy would rule. But is this true of the society we now live in? It seems to be one of the major issues facing our Province that many now do not show proper respect for authority - whether it is political, business, church, family, sport or some other authority. We seem to have lost the respect for authority that once was the pride of our Province and envy of others throughout the world.

But there is an onus on those who have authority over us. They have to earn our respect, not demand it. They have to show by example, not dictate, that they are good leaders.

So it is also incumbent on all of us to respect the European, UK and Local Government legislation and work within them. We must also work within Company policies and procedures and perform our duties (as well as demanding our rights) in good faith, prudently and in a professional manner.

Have singleness of purpose: Corporate and personal effectiveness can really only be achieved if activities are focussed on a single purpose. Divided purposes dilute effectiveness and so no organisation, or individual, can operate effectively while serving two masters.

So it is essential that if employees are to be effective then they must have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and values and then ensure that they are consistent with and integrated with those of their employers. Too often people who move jobs do not do their research into the values that their new employers adhere to and find very soon after joining that they are a square peg in a round hole.

Employees should therefore try to anticipate the business, political, financial, cultural and personal influences that could compromise their integrity with that of the organisation.

Again there is a big onus on the (prospective) employer to ensure that all employees know, preferably in writing the mission (or purpose) of the company and use job descriptions to clearly define each individual's responsibilities, levels of authority, and expected standards of performance. Then the employees can align these with their own career development aims and provided both are in agreement then there is every likelihood that there will be a productive relationship with the organisation.

Use effective communications in word and deed: It is wrong to assume that effective communications are the sole responsibility of the employer, both are parties to such a value. The important thing about effective communications is that the intended message must be clearly received, interpreted and returned to the initiator with an understanding and spirit consistent with the initiator's intent.

Also when the employee or the employer enters into an agreement to act following the communication it is imperative that there is trust that it will be completed as agreed. This means that keeping one's word literally means keeping promises, pledges and confidences. Again in today's business culture expediency this is often viewed as being more of the norm. In other words the end justifies the means even at the expense of keeping one's word.

So the organisation should have clear organisation charts showing the channels of communication, lines of authority and avenues for resolving conflicts and misunderstandings. Marketing and advertising campaigns should be truthful, accurate and even tasteful. Business deals should be based on meeting quality standards, delivery dates, and acceptable profit levels.

The employees' responsibility is to adhere to the company's policies and procedures, treat their colleagues and managers with respect and approach the annual performance appraisal as an opportunity to positively review progress and articulate and agree actions for the benefit of both employee and employer.

Provide proper rest, recreation and reflection: These are hallmarks of western democracy and free enterprise and are essential if, as individuals, organisations and countries we are to maximise creativity, productivity and motivation. Think about it: "rest" is essential for effectiveness: "recreation" clears the mind and guards against mental and emotional fatigue: and "reflection" allows personal and corporate aims to remain focussed and united.

There is no doubt that knowledge, competence, creativity and commitment of employees are directly related not only to their own health but also the productivity and profitability of the company.

It is incumbent on employers to provide realistic staffing levels for anticipated workloads and ensure there are adequate breaks, holidays and “days off” to produce individual and team effectiveness.

It is also incumbent on employees not to abuse sickness and time off which again often we as a community have let slip. There is a claims culture that is becoming very prevalent in our society and this rather than lack of entrepreneurial flair, products or finance that is killing economic growth. Certainly experience shows that employers who are making a reasonable profit will not expand as to do so will only create “employment” problems they could well do without.

These are the first three commandments that we often neglect at our individual and corporate peril.

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