

Coach's Corner Articles

by Tracy Trotten

Tracy Trotten will be a featured speaker during the NASPD 2019 Summer Conference in Montreal in June. As an introduction to Mr. Trotten, we have gathered a sampling of his "Coach's Corner" articles that NASPD received.

Coach's Corner #48 - Improving employee relationships at work (April 24, 2019)

The Four Season's Hotel Chain is one of the most prestigious properties in the world. Its attention to detail and commitment to service is legendary and far exceeds its closest competitor.

Isadore Sharpe launched the first hotel in Toronto in 1961 with the following mission statement: "Observing the Golden Rule is the emotional fuel that drives our culture". The chain now boasts over 100 properties in 46 different countries.

Why would a Founder mention the Golden Rule in his mission statement and what is that rule? The Golden Rule is very simple. You simply strive to treat others the same way you'd like to be treated. It is the first thing you learn in kindergarten and a life skill that will enhance your life and make it significant. Mr. Sharpe knew that this simple rule was just good old common economic sense.

Why would he choose the words 'emotional fuel' as the driver for his employees? We don't equate emotion with the business world, do we? If your employees have an emotional attachment to your brand, they will go the extra mile to please every customer. My wife & I stayed at a Four Seasons in Scottsdale last year and she discovered a bed bug (yes, they do exist!). We called the front desk and within 10 minutes a team swooped down, moved us to an upgraded room with champagne and jelly beans, along with a gift certificate! All because of a bed bug!

Do your employees have an emotional attachment to your brand? You might begin by treating them the way you'd like to be treated and watch what happens! It might begin with celebrating Professional Admin Day today!

Coach's Corner #46 - Brief essay on communicating (March 30, 2019)

Have you ever heard the expression 'do not throw your pearls before swine'? It simply means that knowing your audience is the key to effective communicating.

If you're too technical in your approach, your concepts may never be truly understood. If you simplify it too much, you might appear to be elite or condescending which can offend. It may be best to speak to the middle of the room verses trying to connect with every single person.

The same goes with training or implementing a new procedure. Anything new, takes time to sink in and digest. Many tasks take great repetition before they become instinctive and the first response that is needed in a crisis. How do you know your audience without becoming intrusive and invasive? It takes diplomacy and discernment to fully understand another person's comprehension levels.

The thing you want to avoid is a quiet room where nothing is getting through yet everyone is too embarrassed to ask questions. Regardless of how awkward and uncomfortable it might appear, ask questions and seek honest feedback that what you're trying to say is being clearly understood. A policy is only as good as its ability to be implemented effectively with the greatest amount of positive change as a result. Policies that are ignored may not be because they are resented but simply the fact that they're not clearly understood with all the 'how's and why's explained.

Another helpful tip is to have another set of eyes look at a policy before you roll it out. It may be very clear to you but very confusing to someone else. Don't manage in a vacuum.

Coach's Corner #43 - Wealth management (February 26,2019)

As business managers, we tend to gravitate toward one solution to all problems..."just throw more money at it"! We even feel that by paying people more money, we will get more productivity out of them.

The truth is that money does not always iron out the rough patches we face. Don't get me wrong, the American Dream has always been that of seeking a better life and it should be. Where it gets messy is when a better life is exclusively defined as a larger house, a nicer neighborhood, a larger IRA, a tuxedo like you saw at the Oscars, etc, etc.

I worked with a warehouse superintendent who often said 'please, don't pay me more money. I can't give you any more than I am. Just help me solve my problems'. Sometimes the best raise you can give an employee is taking the stress and confusion out of their job so they can sleep better and spend more time with their kids.

I have attended many funerals where there was a large pension waiting to be spent and many golden years waiting to be lived but tragedy struck suddenly or in some cases a stressful working condition weakened an immune system thus claiming a life far too early.

Should we work hard to insure a life of leisure and contentment? Absolutely, but some common sense must prevail where we on occasion decide to attend a ball game with the kids in lieu of some nice overtime on a Saturday.

You will never see a U-Haul behind a hearse or a confession from a terminally ill patient that they wished they'd spent more time at the office. A life well lived is a life lived well by enjoying those who you're working so hard to provide for.

Coach's Corner #42 - Leadership (February 15, 2019)

There is an old saying that 'an empty wagon rattles the loudest' meaning people that desperately need to impress, really don't have much to back up their verbal accomplishments.

When you rise in an organization, your ascent does not pivot on how well you sold your self to your boss. The promotion simply is a life achievement award recognizing your ability to do the little things well and not taking any credit for it.

In fact regardless of how sterling your resume is, there will always be a testing period where your boss will observe if your actions really do back up your bravado.

Putting others first and deflecting all accolades to those who put you in a place to succeed will be the character witness that will keep you at the top.

George Washington Goethals was appointed by President Taft to take over the Panama Canal Project in 1909. The project had been started by the French in 1870 and up to that time was only 50% complete. Goethals finished the project in 1914 by removing 100,000 cubic yards of earth, and designing/installing all the locks for the waterway to reach across the isthmus. How much soil is 100,000 cubic yards? That quantity is the same as loading rail cars that would circle the globe four times at the equator. His leadership was exemplary in that he never talked about himself but led by example in building a team and simply being available and accessible to everyone in the Canal Zone.

He also had a unique approach to the job. As a member of the Army Core of Engineers, he was in the army first! You don't quit that assignment. Duty and call to his oath was the single greatest motivational factor in completing the work. He never boasted about his accomplishment. In fact few people remember him but without his focus and commitment, the canal would have not been completed.

Does your wagon rattle? Your call to duty and focus on others is all you need to insure a satisfying career. Let the weight of your accomplishments be what people see & not your words.

Coach's Corner #41 - Having a perfectionist personality (February 8, 2019)

Many companies have a standard of excellence or some kind of bar to aim for. These goals are wonderful and can be very helpful if they are realistic. It gets complicated when either an employee or the CEO has a perfectionist personality.

In Professional Baseball, if you have a career where you fail two out three times at the plate, you get into the Hall of Fame. Yes, a .333 batting average is rare and almost nonexistent over the course of a career. In fact, since 1876, there have been at least 102,240 major league players making a plate appearance with only 24 batting .333 or being perfect just one out of three times at the plate.

Perfection is a great goal but if it defines who you are, you will be miserable. Realistic goals that are achievable can bring excitement and enthusiasm to the marketplace but once those goals become a 'pie in the sky', that unreachable desert loses its appeal.

Do you have an employee with a perfectionist twist to their approach? How do you recognize it? What is a healthy attitude toward goal setting? If an employee takes a few days off at the end of a sales contest where they did not hit their personal best, it might be a good idea to sit them down and share the MLB stat with them. If you simply improve 7% a year, you will double your output in ten years.

It's all about perspective and not obsessing over getting a hit every time you're at the plate. Simply the fact that you get the privilege of being in the game should make an employee very excited to contribute.

Coach's Corner #40 - Respecting our competition (January 30, 2019)

Guess what? Our world is not always like Burger King where you can have it your way. In fact, in life, you will lose some battles but never throw in the towel and lose the war from letting your emotions have the best of you.

In my career, I've seen competing department heads hurt a company by fighting over the smallest of details. I've seen competing CEO's almost drive their companies into bankruptcy by racing to the bottom price wise for market share when there was plenty to go around. I've also seen co-workers so hate one another that they hardly spoke a word to each other for years.

Does this anger and cut through competitiveness help a company's bottom line? Of course not! The sooner you can learn to respect your enemies instead of hate them, the sooner you'll sleep better and think with more clarity.

An opposing point of view that happens to not be yours is healthy for a company's overall perspective. The biggest weakness a company can have is to have subordinates never question a leader's direction because their anger compels them to hope his initiative fails and he gets fired. This kind of delusional rational can throw a company into turmoil.

So how do we respect our competitors instead of hating them? Maybe one approach is to be grateful that this experience is making you stronger, more efficient, and more innovative just to keep market share. The end result is a better and more profitable company that now only competes with itself to become number one in its class.

Coach's Corner #37 - Fidelity (January 3, 2019)

Fidelity is an odd word. Most people would struggle defining it but many companies in the risk management or investment world use that word in their name or mission statement.

Fidelity is the opposite of adultery in the broad sense of that word. Yes, strange but true but how does that apply to the business world? Is your company defined by sticking to the same core values year in and year out, decade in and decade out regardless of the season and trials that you face?

Character that stays the course over time is known as integrity. It is a word that describes a life that has been true to their convictions and beliefs in spite of the challenges that surface.

Every day, your company is challenged to cut corners on quality, procedures, and disciplines to squeeze out an extra margin of profit. When a CEO's bonus is paid as a percentage of the company's net profit, the temptation is to no longer embrace fidelity as a value but wander down that slippery slope known as moral relativism.

In my spare time, I officiate at funerals at Rose Hills and I've never heard a eulogy praising the loved one's pursuit of wealth. The tributes have always focused on one's being faithful to: family, friends, and this forgotten word we know as fidelity.

Have a great year being faithful to your mission statement, employees, customers, vendors, and stockholders.

To explore more Coach's Corner article, visit Tracy Trotten's website: www.Strategicmetalsolutions.com