

MIND YOUR MANNERS

By
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A few years ago, I wrote a paper on corporate manners contrasting two different workplace environments in two different companies within the same industry. Though the comparison involved a regionally based savings bank versus a nationally known mortgage bank, the findings are applicable to companies conducting business across industries and countries.

This is especially applicable to the hospitality industry whose primary purpose is to deliver customer satisfaction daily.



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Premise

"Company manners" in the banking industry impact the productivity of internal team players more directly than the professed corporate culture. That is to say, the manners of senior management in an organization ultimately define its corporate culture and success more than the written mission statement or creed.

Company manners is defined here as the ethics, management style, accountability and professional decorum embodied in the performance of senior management on a daily basis and is used interchangeably with the expression, corporate manners. Top managers, in particular, can set the tone for a culture and for cultural change.¹ They communicate the vision and influence the practices of the organization.²

As conducting business becomes more global with deregulation and the use of advanced technologies, the organization's structure becomes more team-oriented in design. John Naisbitt, noted trend forecaster, foretold in 1995 of the increased power of the individual as globalization occurs when he wrote "the bigger the world economy, the more powerful its smallest players". He identified the individual entrepreneur as the smallest player and the big corporation as needing to become smaller through horizontal restructuring in order to compete.³ This trend empowers the individual team members with greater importance in the success of the organization.

In today's business strategies, management's task is increasingly one of setting direction and then motivating and harnessing the collective and creative energies of everyone involved.⁴ The effectiveness of the team in terms of ability and willingness to perform is influenced by the atmosphere created by a positive or negative attitude. Team attitude towards work and senior management, therefore, is crucial in producing successful results.

The Arbinger Institute tackles the subject of workplace attitude in a discussion on the nature and impact of self-deception in business. Based on their work experiences with organizations, they explain why self-deception is so central to leadership and then offer a solution to the problem. In essence, they identify the state of self-deception as "being" in a mind-set or attitude of self-importance and self-focus when dealing with other people. A manager who is in this mind-set often exhibits a leadership style where he takes credit for all successes of the team, betraying his attitude of self-importance and inviting resentment, mistrust and resistance from those he leads. Both sides are preoccupied with their attitudes toward each other, thereby exemplifying collusion with end results of non-

¹Organizational Behavior seventh edition by Schermerhorn, Hunt, Osborn pg. 275

² Reengineering Management by James Champy, Chapter 4, PP, 55,57+58

³Global Paradox by John Naisbitt, pg. 5

⁴Danger in the Comfort Zone by Judith M. Bardwick, PP 129-131

productivity. The solution comes when those involved honor each other as people with needs, hopes, and worries as real and as legitimate as their own.⁵

The underlying attitude of management reveals itself in the manner with which they conduct business. The team players discern the difference between what is said and what is done, and as a child follows the example of a parent's actions, so does the team function in accordance with the example set by senior management.

Participation, innovation, accountability, bottom-line results and growth are the direct result of corporate manners. The performance of the team is influenced by how the team is managed. How the team is managed is the direct result of management's attitude when conducting business. Mutual respect promotes a positive atmosphere and spirit of cooperation within the organization, increasing the chances for successful results.

If successful results are the goal, then earnings are key. Doctor Judith Bardwick explores the psychology of Entitlement versus that of Earning in the business world today with her book, Danger in the Comfort Zone. The rush to compete in the global environment has businesses implementing a new employment contract with a psychology of Earning. The new contract says "If you are productive and add value, if you keep on learning and your skills are current, you'll be okay. In fact, our half of the bargain is to keep creating opportunities for you to achieve. Your half of the bargain is to keep on achieving." Gone are the days of job security without performance. The anxiety created by job insecurity exerts a pressure and motivation for everyone to produce. She writes, "Three conditions are needed in order for employees to feel enriched: challenge, empowerment, and significance. These are also the three ingredients of Earning".⁶

Senior management influences the creation, maintenance and balance of these three ingredients needed for Earning success. At the heart of the organization's Earning success, then, is the rapport between individual people as they work together for a shared goal. Corporate manners establish a living culture and successful companies recognize that good manners are very important in business as in life.

⁵Leadership and Self-Deception by The Arbinger Institute, PP 102-110,123,124,144,165+166

⁶Danger in the Comfort Zone by Judith M. Bardwick, Ph.D., PP 55,58,129-131