

Busse: Cultivate an owner attitude among your employees

by Commentary

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Have you ever done business with a company and dealt directly with the owner? What kind of experience did you have? Did you feel valued and appreciated and treated as if you were their only customer? If so, how did that make you feel?

What kind of experience do you have if you are dealing with an employee of a company? Do you get that same "royal treatment" you get when you're dealing with the owner, or is it sometimes indifferent or even horrible treatment?

Close your eyes for a moment and imagine if every time your customers dealt with your company they felt valued, appreciated and treated as if they were your company's only customer. I'll bet they would not only continue doing business with your company but they would also tell their family and friends about your company as well.

Unfortunately, many employees see themselves as one-dimensional in relation to their company "as a salesperson, or an engineer or a supervisor. What would it be like if everyone in your organization started thinking and acting like owners of the business? What if your employees shared the same beliefs, both in their abilities and in the purpose of your business? What if they focused all their energy on making your business successful, knowing that they, in turn, would become successful as well? That is the power of an ownership culture and you can have it in your organization. If employees acted like owners, customers would never again hear the words, "That's not my job, it's not my department and they don't pay me to do that." These words are the sign of a person who not only doesn't love his work, but also doesn't have an owner mentality.

So without giving actual stock certificates to your employees, how do you get them to think and act like owners?

The first place to look is in the mirror. Look at the way you are treating your employees. The way you treat them is the way they will treat your customers. You model the behavior you want them to demonstrate. Treat your employees well and they will do the same to your customers. Yell and scream at your employees and you can almost guarantee that your employees will do the same to your customers.

Empower your employees. Give them the knowledge, skills and tools they need to do their job and to exceed your customers' expectations. When people are empowered they don't look up the hierarchy for answers; they take responsibility to solve problems where they occur. They have the freedom to act and are also accountable for the results. When a mistake is made, they do whatever it takes to recover.

Eliminate the policies and procedures that get in the way of them thinking and acting like an owner. Oftentimes, when customers are upset and they ask to speak with the

owner, they wind up getting exactly what they wanted in the first place. Why put your customers (and your employees) through that exercise in the first place? Tell your employees, "I want you to handle it like you own the business. You're a smart person. You'll do the right thing." Just watch what happens with performance when you express sincere confidence in this way to your employees. They will soon become owners. Watch how efficient and effective things become when we push decisions down to their lowest possible level and cut the tape required to get everything but the major decisions done.

You have to carefully breed a culture where employees feel they can take risks, implement their ideas without incurring the wrath of bureaucracy and benefit personally from the outcome of their actions.

Your employees are your company's most important asset. Treat them as such, and you will create a culture that has everyone acting like an owner.

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