

Mending your manners affects business

By DONNA CHEVRIER
Special

Where are all the rebellious 60's kids who didn't trust anyone over 30, who denigrated the establishment, rejected the etiquette of the time, wore outrageous clothing, long hair and scorned all attempts to teach them manners?

Those kids are now in their 40s and 50s. Many have *become* the establishment in management and executive positions. Recognizing the need for business social graces, they hire consultants for their own personal coaching and for employees whose success of wooing and winning clients depend on business social skills as well. Table manners, corporate etiquette and social/business interactive skills are an expected part of being a professional. Appropriate wardrobing and grooming are also essential eti-

quette skills. And, better late than never!

Studies have clearly indicated that consideration, kindness and manners (etiquette) in the workplace not only improve productivity and customer service, but also increase company morale. Customer service begins within the organization itself by providing a work environment that values people and practices courtesy and kindness.

The way employees are treated by the top level in any corporation is how the customer will be treated. If it's missing at the top, it won't likely be found at the bottom either.

In the past few years, the sluggish economy, employment equity and downsizing have rapidly changed male and female business interaction and overall company morale.

These changes can't be ignored. Sexual harassment, job security,

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day care facilities, health issues, and even fitness levels of employees need to be addressed because they are powerful emotional issues that impact on productivity.

We can learn new communication and behavioral skills but moral support is also essential for the overburdened and the rapid life style changes facing remaining employees. That skill is not often found within an organization.

Outside specialists/consultants play an important role by being supportive change agents. They can impact dramatically on company direction and successful change.

In tough economic times, having a competitive edge is not simply

advisable, it's essential. When companies invest in training, they invite their employees' involvement in tough decisions that affect the bottom line, then support these changes by consulting with specialists. Those companies have enjoyed the most success and have even grown during this recession.

Lance Secretan, PhD, in his book *The Way of The Tiger*, says: "during my seminars I ask the participants what courses they would prescribe if they could re-design the MBA program to equip tomorrow's leaders for the real world of work. They usually suggest such subjects as communication, listening, writing, perception, empathy, inspiring, delegating, customer sensitivity, responsibility and taking initiative."

Moving away from teaching the management of things, to teaching the art of leading people shows great insight into modern stress

and distress. As Ross Perot said: "inventories are managed, people are led."

There will continue to be rapid changes in the way we do business in this decade. Success and survival means listening and looking at new ways to serve your customer.

Key components for success in the 90s will be powerful communication skills that demonstrate caring and respect, inspiring leadership and team work for increased employee satisfaction, self motivation when given responsibility and positive interactive skills in transactions with others.

The rebellious 60s kids have some great challenges in today's business and professional world. I've worked with many of them and I believe they're up to it!

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