



Ask SCORE for Business Advice

Treat Employees with Respect

By Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

A few weeks ago, I was shopping at a local sporting goods chain when I heard yelling in the golf department. Thinking it was probably an unreasonable customer, I was surprised to see the store manager hollering at two of his employees. The manager didn't think they were getting enough done and guessed they might benefit from a public tongue-lashing. I felt humiliated for the employees, but even more embarrassed for the store manager.

"Everyone wants to be treated with respect. When anyone sees someone else being treated disrespectfully, you automatically sympathize with the person getting yelled at, regardless if they deserve it or not," says Paul Lotto, a SCORE volunteer and Marketing/Business Teacher at Ashwaubenon High School. "Most people will ignore the issue at hand and just see that the boss is being very disrespectful to the employee's feelings. This will create an image in most customers' minds that the management is not professional or caring."

As a business specialist, Lotto understands the connection between treatment of employees and business success. A good manager will be adequately trained in employee relations and have a program that makes employees feel like they're part of a team.

Lotto explained, "Every manager, in every business, should be trained thoroughly. Knowing what you are doing in that particular job doesn't mean you will be good at managing other people to do it."

A well-trained manager will know that it is never appropriate to discipline employees in public. Lotto said that it should always be a private conversation, never in front of other customers or employees. The criticism should be constructive with advice offered on the correct way of accomplishing a task. It is the job of the manager to lead by example, and when the example is good, the employees are likely to follow.

"Managers need to clearly communicate with employees so that employees feel they are part of the business and understand their roles. It is common sense that everyone wants to be treated with respect and feel important, yet often this is not done in business," Lotto stated.

Employees will do their best when they feel appreciated. If treated negatively, it is likely to bring about negative behaviors on the job. A good leader will compliment employees and reward those who go above and beyond what is expected. He or she will seek the input of employees and value their ideas. “Encourage the behavior you want without threats or negative behavior,” Lotto suggested.

As to the vocal manager, Lotto said he might have said something. “Letting them know you don’t like what they are doing may be enough to teach them to improve the way they talk to employees,” he concluded.

If you’d like further information on employee relations or other business concerns, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE “Counselors to America’s Small Business.” Visit www.greenbayscore.org or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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