

ATN Business Sense  
May 2011

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Transport operators need to think about how they lead their businesses. They set the values and style of how the business runs. They must remember that their people follow both the leader's good and bad habits. If the leader does good professional work employees are encouraged to do the same. If they are unprofessional and sloppy employees will emulate those habits.

Professionalism is how leaders treat their people, customers, suppliers and the community. All should be treated with respect. Their people (staff) should be clearly told their tasks, responsibilities and how they are accountable and measured. All dealing with staff should be truthful and fair. Employees should be encouraged to develop and improve themselves. They should be given on-going training. Coaching and mentoring should be part of how you do business. Support them during difficult times is the right thing to do. Find a way to put energy into your people. As the late Russell Ackoff; a Wharton professor emeritus, quoted in the March 2011 Harvard Business Review said "A leader is a cheerleader for the vision" He added "People need to be cheered into the worldview we're trying to get them into."

Under performing staff should be counselled and given guidance on what needs to be improved. They should be given regular, constructive feedback. If after being given ample time to improve an employee is still under-performing they should be managed out compassionately, fairly and in accordance with law.

Customers should always be dealt with courteously, fairly and truthfully. That goes for all customers including those who are distracting, low profit or even loss incurring. When a customer is identified as "unworthy" for any of those reasons they should be managed out. That can be done by changing work practices to make them less distracting and become profitable or increasing their rates to make them consistently profitable. Customers should not be referred to inappropriately internally. They can be described as not presently suiting us and thus requiring changes to their terms and conditions. Tell customers the truth. For example, if you were late with or missed a delivery, say so and apologise. Never lie; you'll be found out sooner or later and look silly to your customer and your people. All customers should be treated with respect.

Suppliers should always be treated similarly. Be frank about what your needs are and be prepared to pay a fair price for good and services. If you don't like being chiselled it's not fair to chisel suppliers. Make sure suppliers clearly understand what you want, the quality expected and when you want it. Also, pay within the supplier's terms. Stretching out terms without agreement will eventually lead to a decline in service. If you cannot pay within the terms negotiate alternative terms. Don't just string a supplier out.

A great overview of how to business is given by United Parcel Service, "UPS". CEO Scott Davis said: "The trust that people place on us requires us to conduct business

fairly, honestly, and ethically. It is about creating an environment where good people can make good decisions. It is about doing the right thing in every business situation...every time.” He added: “UPS's strong reputation for ethical behaviour has enabled us to attract and retain the best people and loyal customers.”

UPS encourages its people, at all levels to always act with integrity. Australian leaders, when confronted with a difficult issue, should ask themselves, and encourage their people to ask “how would I like to be treated?” “What is the right thing to do?”

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