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BUILDING A VALUES-BASED BUSINESS

One of the most underestimated tools for any successful business enterprise is the foundation of values upon which it has been built. If a company's goal is simply to make high profits, to close a lot of any sales, or even to deliver huge quantities of products or services, it can lead to problems with the end serving to justify the means.

For instance, if the objective is to finalize sales, one might be tempted to make whatever promises are needed to accomplish that – even if the promises cannot be met. Or if maximizing profits is the ultimate goal, it could become easy to justify cutting costs, even if that means compromising the quality of the product or services provided.

However, when a company starts with a clear, well-considered framework of values to guide and govern its operations, chances of both survival and success are increased dramatically. These values essentially define "what we do," "why we do it," and "how we do it."

Many CEOs that are followers of Jesus Christ share a desire to influence their organization with principles from the Bible – which they understand to be the Word of God – while also being sensitive to those team members who may not embrace the same faith. One of the best ways to shape a company culture in an effective, non-offensive manner is to focus on values, principles of conduct and practice that everyone in the organization can be asked to embrace.

For instance, a value of placing high priority on customer service is one that few can argue with; we don't even have to explain this value is based on "doing to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). We might embrace the value of doing the best we can at all times, without having to insist that our staff "work at it with al your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23).

Since many of the values we commonly endorse come right out of the Bible, formulating our core beliefs can serve as a non-threatening way for communicating God's standards and values. Developing these foundational values and holding your team accountable to them can give you the opportunity to lead the way to doing business God's way.

As the psalmist expressed in Psalms 119:130, "The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." To achieve success – and then to sustain it – it is important for every key member of the team to be able to understand and explain what the organization stands for. What are the basic values and principles that serve as guideposts for how it conducts business on a day to day basis?

If you desire to shape the culture of your organization in God's way, try determining and articulating your core values. Next, model them, and then communicate them consistently to your team. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice" (Philippians 4:9).

Reflection/Discussion Question

1. Would you consider your company to be a values-based business? Explain your answer.

2. If you do believe your organization is values-based, what are those values? Are they articulated and presented in some way so that everyone has the opportunity to review and understand them as guidelines for everyday operations and practices?

3. Understanding that not everyone in a business may hold to the same spiritual beliefs, would it still be appropriate for them to understand the source of the organization's values if those are drawn from the Bible? Why or why not?

4. What if an organization has not established a system of values by which to govern its operations – how do you think they could begin to work toward becoming a values-based business? Or do you think that if it has been operating without an agreed-upon statement of values, there is no need at this point to change that?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 11:1, 14:5, 15:33, 20:14, 29:4; Philippians 4:8, 2 Timothy 2:2