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By Robert J. Tamasy

THE VIRTUE OF EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

Often people in business deal with a temptation to do the bare minimum, to satisfy the requirements but not go the “extra mile” in serving the customer, the supplier, or even the employee. Such thinking, however, can be very short-sighted. Not to mention self-centered, rather than others-centered.

Contrary to this type of approach to business, I have been delighted to work with a number of companies whose expressed desire and goal is to “exceed expectations.” They want to be certain to do more than they had contracted to do. They want each customer’s experience to be so memorable that they will be eager to do business with them again. Not only that, but to provide services in such a manner that “satisfied customer” recommendations and referrals would be virtually guaranteed.

Recently my wife and I took part in an 11-day group tour to many parts of Italy. It was truly one of those “exceeded our expectations” experiences. It wasn’t perfect; some of the hotels we stayed in were better than others. But our guide for the entire tour was exceptional; the motorcoach in which we rode was new and comfortable; the driver was first-class; and each of the stops on our tour had been carefully chosen to provide a broad cross-section of Italian life and culture. Especially for first-time visitors to Italy.

I do not know if the tour agency had this in mind, but a commitment to exceeding the expectations of whomever we happen to be serving – customer, supplier or employee – is reflective of Jesus’ admonition that we should, *“in everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you” (Matthew 7:12).*

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Not long ago several friends were talking about their differing experiences at local restaurants. For one, when the meal order was clearly inaccurate, the worker simply responded, “Well, I don’t know what you expect me to do about that.” Wow! Would that motivate you to return to that restaurant?

Another friend had a very different experience, however. He and his wife had eaten at another restaurant several times, enough for a particular server to recognize them and remember their dining preferences. This type of service, which definitely exceeded their expectations, has made them loyal and frequent customers – ones that reward their good service with generous tips.

In doing business with others, it is easy to become memorable: memorably good, or memorably bad. If we want to develop lasting relationships, “memorably good” is always the better option, don’t you think? Several places in the Scriptures, including Romans 13:8, Galatians 5:14 and James 2:8, we see the admonition that we are to “love your neighbor as yourself.” It is doubtful that we could conceive of a greater core value than that.

Making a profit is important. As is staying in business and growing the business. Mastering our craft is essential. But if we are loving our “neighbor” as ourselves – our customers, suppliers, and those who work for us or with us – profits and growth are almost certain to follow.

If my wife and I ever decide to take tour another country, you can bet we will be quick to consider the company that unpretentiously succeeded in exceeding our expectations. And keeping our recent trip in mind is a good reminder for me to strive to exceed the expectations of others.

*© 2018. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Tufting Legacies*; coauthored with David A. Stoddard, *The Heart of Mentoring*, and edited numerous other books, including *Advancing Through Adversity* by Mike Landry. Bob's biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.*

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. Describe the last time someone exceeded your expectations? What did they do that seemed so exceptional – or how did they do it to make such a positive impression?
2. Why do you think it seems so rare to find a business truly dedicated to surpassing the expectations of their customers?
3. How about your own approach to work and those you encounter in business: Are you more inclined to do the bare minimum to satisfy requirements, or do you have a conscious goal of not only meeting expectations but also exceeding them, if at all possible?
4. What do you think is the long-term benefit of having an attitude that strives toward exceeding expectations? Is there a downside to this type of approach to business? If so, what do you think it is?

NOTE:

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

Proverbs 3:27-28, 11:25, 16:7; Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 6:31; Acts 20:35

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