

Common Business Courtesy by Richie Dayo Johnson



In one of the principles of life enrichment, it says “each of us must model integrity in the making and keeping of our commitments”. The trust between an organisation and its clients (both current and potential) is further bonded by simple courtesies of apologising when running late for appointments, responding promptly to requests for information, honouring contracts, responding to invoices as and when due and advising service providers of delays in payment when necessary.

I received a duly signed dud cheque drawn on a UK high street bank from a company executive a few years ago for a speaking engagement. This bloke despite enjoying a jolly good evening at my professional expense at a prestigious London venue promised to replace the offending legal tender when I confronted him shortly afterwards. I am still waiting for him to make good his word. Conversely, recently decorated Bisi Akiwumi-Jones MBE, Chief Executive of a thriving not-for-profit organisation in London never keeps her clients waiting unnecessarily. They were on my client list for several years with all invoices honoured without delay. What is the difference between these two examples? Attitude and Integrity!

In the corporate environment, businesses are like people. Each has its own personality. Their leaders shape that personality through the purpose and values which they communicate and these in turn influence the attitude and behaviour of everyone else throughout the organisation. It is the sum total that determines a company’s reputation and license to operate.

The impact of business on customers results from the way business behaves and this bears on the magnitude of the success it can record. This boils down to the decisions and acts of individuals and groups within the business. If a business is to have a deliberate, positive and consistent image with its clients, then its leaders need to ensure that its purpose and values are shared by all those who may influence or benefit from it. Some leaders do this very

informally, by personal example. Some have a formal process that involves everyone. What really matters is the outcome. In the most successful of projects the purpose is clear. Everyone can see how their role works with others' in pursuit

The celebrated former chairman and chief executive of General Electric, Jack Welch, was once asked the three most important things you need to measure in a business. "Customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction and cash flow" he said. If you are growing customer satisfaction, your global market share is bound to grow. Employee satisfaction gets you the productive quality, pride and creativity. Cash flow is the vital sign of life in a company.

If the client gets the message that you do not care – whether it is by unreturned phone calls, avoiding paying for services, late deliveries or keeping them waiting in the reception for an hour – then pretty soon, that client will begin to doubt the quality of your core business. You may be the best in your profession, but unless your client believes you are, then it is a secret between you and your diary.

Let us be about setting high standards and shunning mediocrity. Setting high standards raises our game and makes every day worth looking forward to. A good relationship built and nurtured over time can be lost in a moment. People don't tell you when they stop trusting you. Business failures don't occur overnight, they are an accumulation of errors committed over time and carelessly overlooked. Courtesy is more than being nice but good business. Let's work together to make it common.

Cheers,

RDJ

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