

A Key for Your Business

Written by Steve Marr
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Reciprocity is a simple yet effective principle that will have a positive impact on any business. Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you- good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over. . . . For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return" (Luke 6:38, NASB). What a great word picture of giving a customer the best deal. Customers who receive such a measure will be delighted to come back-and they'll tell others about your business. Practice the principle of giving your best, as the Lord taught, and your business will do well.

How do you give "good measure"? First, deliver everything your customers expect and go beyond what is anticipated. Seek to delight your customers. Ensure that every promise made is a promise kept. Your integrity will encourage integrity on the part of your customers. Just imagine if you were the customer, receiving that full measure, pressed down and running over.

Next, be a peacemaker and treat your customers with the utmost courtesy. We've all run into obnoxious customers who seemed to want to pick a fight with anyone in their path. Solomon advised, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1, NASB). I have found that even the grumpiest customer softens after the second or third gentle word spoken in reply. A gentle word de-escalates anger. When you assume the role of peacemaker by using kind, respectful words, and by keeping your voice down, invariably the situation will cool down rather than heat up.

Another key is to treat your employees as respected colleagues. "For oppression makes a wise man mad" (Ecclesiastes 7:7, NASB). Managing by intimidation will cause hard feelings and undermine staff loyalty. Ensure that employees are always given fair treatment if discipline is needed. Paul instructed the Colossians, "Grant your slaves justice" (Colossians 4:1, NASB), and we can do no less with our employees. As you treat people justly, you will receive justice in return. If you treat your employees arbitrarily, you will likely receive the same in return.

Develop the habit of listening to employee concerns and ideas, and your employees will soon

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develop the habit of listening to you. Communication is a two-way street, between manager and staff, and involves both listening and speaking. A common employee complaint is that management doesn't listen. By stopping what you are doing, looking your employees in the eye, and listening effectively to their concerns, you will build respect and win the right to be heard.

Help out. When you are willing to pitch in and help when your colleagues are swamped or facing a tough deadline, those same colleagues will be much more willing to help you. Model the behavior you want your staff to develop. If you want to be trusted, trust others. If you want to encourage cooperation, cooperate with others. Your pleasant, positive, encouraging demeanor will set the tone and others will follow. Develop the habit of timely communication, and your coworkers will likely return the favor.

Paying your bills on time, and honoring commitments, are two other important aspects of reciprocity. Solomon instructed, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due" (Proverbs 3:27, NASB). If you have not delivered as promised, how can you hold others accountable? When others see that you're quick to respond and faithful to honor commitments, they will tend to reciprocate.

Wise business leaders determine which behaviors are desired in others-whether it be customers, staff, or suppliers-and take the first step by modeling those behaviors. Not everyone will catch on and respond immediately in kind, but most people will come around after they've seen your long-term commitment and faithful follow-through. The payoff will be an effective and well-run business.

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