

What You Accept, You Get

Here's a secret I've discovered about millionaire and multi-millionaire entrepreneurs: they want what they do and their companies do to be right. Not 80% right. Not 90% right. Right, period. They are, therefore, very much disliked by a lot of people, and if they are "big" enough, by the media. Jobs. Bezos. Trump. Working for them, many ex-employees say, was hell. But maybe it was being incompetent in their employ that was hell.

Winning isn't just a statistic on a spreadsheet or a bank account balance. It is the customer, Mrs. Matilda Smith, in Rockford, Illinois, getting what she asked for on her pizza or the right product in the delivered package or a human answering her call in fewer than four rings. Customer appreciation is not a once a year sale or an automated thank you e-mail. It is an authentic attitude, top-down, permeated throughout an organization, actually occurring – and measured, policed and enforced – every day. I don't care how big your company, if you don't actually care about the people, *the individuals*, giving you money, they will drift off in search of a place where they feel valued and appreciated.

Another secret about rich entrepreneurs: they don't *just* seek success. They HATE failure.

They often react to it violently. Martha Stewart was known to drop into a K-Mart store, find her branded goods sloppily stocked and throw the entire inventory from shelves onto the floor. Eisner instantly fired a group of Disney Park employees caught not smiling. Walt had a fit over one's lousy delivery of The Jungle Cruise script. I saw Trump tear an empty towel dispenser from a restroom wall in a Trump hotel and throw it 20 yards down a hall.

These people are said to *terrorize* their employees, their associates, their vendors. But how calmly should you accept failure? Should you "stay calm and carry on"? Only if you want more of the failure you calmly accept. If your blood doesn't boil and offenders see fire shoot from your eyeballs, your lesser response will be taken as permission. If there is failure and new training, new controls, new supervision is not installed as remedy, the "let's TRY and do better" will be taken as permission.

There *are* places where incompetence as failure has dire and instant consequences. The jailer who forgets to lock the inmate's cell or misses the razor blade in the body search may wind up quickly dead. It's a fine object lesson for other jailers. The cruise ship captain who is busy texting and gets into too-shallow water and capsizes and sinks the whole thing, and injures and drowns passengers, goes to prison. As it should be.

Creating *dire and instant* consequences for incompetence and failure is a good thing in any and every business. I've told of Chuck Sekeres' "3 strikes and you're out" for his in-bound telemarketers: three calls in a row without a set appointment, you're out. Next batter up. No quarterly performance evaluations. Don't even wait to be told. After 3, get up and slink out. Minute by minute. Drop three passes in a game, butt on bench. If possible, traded. Fail at managing the V.A., the IRS and Benghazi, shouldn't three strikes be enough? They tried to impeach Clinton over *one* intern. I used the word RUTHLESS in my book title "No BS Management of People and Profits" because, damn it, we desperately need a lot more ruthlessness in a lot more places. In homes, in neighborhoods, in small businesses, in big companies, in government. You can start with you.

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