



Show Me The . . .Compass

by Steven D Huff

In 1900 an unusual ad ran in London newspapers: "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success."

The ad was placed by explorer Ernest Shackleton, who was seeking volunteers for his South Pole expedition. Who would be foolish enough to respond to an ad that assured pain and danger to those who get involved? It turned out that many people were. Commenting on the results of the ad, Shackleton said, "It would seem as though all of Great Britain was to accompany me."

One of the most powerful appeals we can make in business is the promise of a great challenge. Smart people are not saying, "Show me the money!" They are saying, "Show me the compass!" In other words, show me what this company is all about. What direction are you heading? What guides you along the way? What are you trying to accomplish? What role can I play in helping to "take the hill"? Show me someone asking these questions and I'll show you someone who will never have to worry about seeing the money.

The best companies have the right compass reading on the following issues:

- A Clear Direction - Woodrow Wilson, U.S. President, rightly stated, "No man that does not see visions will ever realize any high hope or undertake any high enterprise." The question is: Where is your business headed? If you cannot answer immediately, odds are your compass is still spinning on this issue. Someone once said, "The whole world steps aside for the man who knows where he is going." While that's true, here is even better news: The whole world seems to want to get on board with a business that knows where it is going. Pick a clear direction and set sail now.
- A Balance of Corporate and Individual Success - The best companies know that when their ambitious people succeed, the company succeeds too. Mark Twain once advised, "Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great." Remember, businesses and people succeed or fail together.
- An Ethical Playing Field - Stormy weather strikes every business. The ones that are anchored to their principles are the ones that will survive the storms. Robert Haas, as chief of Levi Strauss, said, "A company's values - what it stands for, what its people believe in - are crucial to its competitive success." No one can successfully navigate in today's marketplace without an ethical compass.
- Stimulating Challenge - People who become successful are almost always more motivated by a stiff challenge than a possible material payoff. One television talk show had a panel of millionaires. Each of them was asked, "What is your goal?" Not one answered, "To make money." For each, the goal was the challenge of making it to the top