



SUCCESS IN BUSINESS MAXIM 10

WHENEVER COMPANY POLICY GETS IN THE WAY OF
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, CHANGE COMPANY POLICY.



he cornerstone of Harry Shapiro's business *sachel*,

**NEVER, NEVER, NEVER FORGET: YOU NEED THE
CUSTOMER; THE CUSTOMER DOES NOT NEED YOU**

means that the need for customer satisfaction in any business is as certain as death and taxes, as binding as gravity, as perpetual as the sun, the stars, and the moon. It's carved in stone. It's *the* sacred truism of business success. And there's no getting around it.



I have no idea why anyone in business would even *want* to get around it. If you make it your own, if you live it, if it's in your bones, you can't fail.

Company policy, on the other hand, should only be as permanent as words written on water, sentences penned in the wind, paragraphs fashioned in smoke. *There must not be anything sacred about it.*



Company policy, as a concept, reminds me of some of William Shakespeare's deathless prose:

“. . . it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

And yet, whenever customer satisfaction and company policy conflict, countless people in business sacrifice the former while adhering to the latter. Even though it means losing customers!

Amazingly, they don't seem to understand that without customers, there *is* no company. There *are* no jobs. But they keep doing it anyway. I tell you, it's a form of insanity.



I have no idea where they get this tendency to commit commercial suicide. Business schools? Accountants? Attorneys? Business/Management consultants? All of the above?

Every day, customers all over the world stop patronizing some company or other and start doing business with one of the discarded company's competitors. In all areas of commerce and trade, too — retail, wholesale, service. It doesn't matter.

Obviously, I can't tell you why in any specific case. But in my judgment, in the overwhelming majority of them, the company involved was suffering from a very common, but little known, business ailment that I call the "revolving door syndrome" — or RDS for short — a disease that's almost always terminal. Indeed, economies all over the world are littered with the corpses of the companies that have fallen victim to this insidious commercial malfunction. It's an epidemic that has risen to catastrophic proportions, wiping out reams and reams of business ventures every year. And, like the Stealth Bomber, RDS is well-nigh undetectable.

But not to worry, Harry Shapiro to the rescue!

You see, Harry knew all about RDS from the get-go and, therefore, was able to easily recognize its symptoms — the marketing, sales, PR, and advertising people work very hard to pull in customers and company policy that's at odds with customer satisfaction works equally hard to push them out again. It's as though they're passing through a revolving door.

Once he was aware of those symptoms, being the brilliant businessman that he was, Harry was able to develop a foolproof strategy that works 100% of the time to prevent this dreadful ailment from ever getting a foothold on any business venture:

**Never, never, never forget: you need the customer,
the customer does not need you.**

Works every time. But only after it becomes an obsession!

But now suppose that your organization's already been infected

with this unspeakable malady, and you weren't aware of its existence until now? In that case, there's only one course available to you: perform immediate surgery on management by (1) removing the person responsible for the company policy that first brought on the RDS — even if it's you (but, of course, you can always reform) — and (2) replacing him with someone who's seen the light (that is, of course, after you've shown it to him), who's a born again businessman (even if you have to conduct the baptism yourself), and who, to his dying day, (upon threat of instant removal from the company, if necessary), will never, never, never forget that the company needs the customer; the customer does not need the company.

There *is* no other cure.



By the way, it's a good idea to let the employees who have direct contact with the public set company policy. That's what Robert Townsend (CEO of Avis Rent a Car years ago) did when he first took over, and the firm's earnings immediately went from a very embarrassing minus to a vigorous chest-thumping plus.

You know, if all the people who ran companies in this country were to do that, RDS would disappear from the face of the earth a la the dodo bird. And America would once again be the land of the booming economy and the home of the self-made millionaire.

Before taxes, of course. ■

