

frank talk

As I meet with specialty store owners around the country, I often hear them vent about employee performance level, motivation and attitude. Somehow, they feel that the quality of employees has declined over the years. When I delve deeper, I frequently discover that the belief is that once an employee is hired, the owner or manager's job is done.

The reality is that even though it takes time and energy to find an employee, the work really just begins with the hiring. It is at this point the manager must share his or her vision for the business, convincing the employee that their hard work and energy makes a real difference and that their efforts are important to the organization. If done properly, the result is an employee who takes pride in their accomplishments and a manager who evolves from being boss into one who is a leader.

Many times managers look at their staff and see attitude problems, missed goals or general disinterest. "With better people, I could be a great leader," they think.

Is it really a people issue or a leader issue?

A look at history shows that true leaders take ordinary people and by sharing their vision, building confidence, and working side by side they achieve great things.

Great American generals didn't win battles with just West Point graduates

True leaders take ordinary people and by sharing their vision, building confidence and working side by side, they achieve great things.

by Frank Brady



Lead The Way

good management breeds great employees

but with ordinary American kids off of the streets of New York, Chicago and San Francisco. These young Americans won wars and took great pride in doing so, willingly risking life and limb to follow real leaders.

"Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way."

—General George S. Patton

Being a leader is a privilege because others have given you the opportunity to create a vision for them. Being a leader in the housewares industry today is a difficult job filled with unique challenges. It isn't a job for everyone.

But, when you as a retailer made the decision to start your own business, making yourself into a great leader became one of the most important responsibilities you took on. Ultimately, how you lead will determine your success.

"If a leader demonstrates competency, genuine concern for others, admirable character, people will follow."

—T. Richard Chase

By being a leader, you can develop a vision to motivate your team to achieve common goals. However, to achieve that vision, you have to let go of the idea of doing it all yourself. Many senior managers fail in this regard, feeling it is their responsibility to tell employees how to carry out every aspect of their jobs. In the end, such leaders fail because they don't provide a direction that empowers others and allows them to gain the satisfaction that comes from achieving mutual goals.

"The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it."

—Theodore Roosevelt

When my company was a small startup, I knew my personal capabilities and counted on my own hard work to do all the things necessary to achieve my goals. One day however, I realized that by being so "I" focused, I was limiting the future of my business. My wife also noticed how tired and stressed I had become and suggested that we search for our first employee; someone who would buy into our vision and share in our future success as we grew the business together.

While at first I was reluctant, I knew that something had to change if I was going to get our company to the level of success we dreamed of. It simply had to be done.

For a true leader, finding the right people, sharing a vision and motivating people to achieve company

goals is a major key to long-lasting business success. Your employees have choices and those who see themselves as the best will gravitate toward other business owners, even your competitors, who have the same commitment to excellence.

"Organization doesn't really accomplish anything. Plans don't accomplish anything either. Endeavors succeed or fail because of the people involved."

—Colin L. Powell

No one wants to work for a dictator. You have to listen to your employee's hopes, passions, ideas and plans. A word of encouragement or praise for a job well done means more to employees than most of us realize, and will be paid back through extra effort. Good leaders want people to be happy, challenged and satisfied in their jobs.

Having passion about what you do is another hallmark of a great leader, one that is key in attracting great employees. In a world with compromised standards, maintaining the highest level of ethics and integrity has to be a cornerstone of your company.

Great leaders are never afraid to open up and ask questions. As a leader, you have to be committed to a life of learning. Through learning you will constantly refine your vision and goals that will continue to attract others to help you get to where you want to go.

Learn, Share, Lead. Start right now.

Frank Brady has more than 30 years of experience in the gourmet housewares business as founder and president of Brady Marketing, a San Francisco-based sales and marketing company.