

Straight shooter

HOW TO BE A MORE EFFECTIVE LEADER BY GETTING TO THE POINT

BY ERIK CASSANO

Joshua Ungier is in the air rifle business. It's probably fitting then that his keys to successful business leadership read like a set of bullet points.

The owner and president of Pyramyd Air says success in business results from several key factors — doing what you love, hiring great people, delivering on your promises and making sure that others deliver on their promises. It's an approach that has helped Ungier grow Pyramyd Air from a start-up, which he founded with financial assistance from his wife, to a company that generated \$18 million in revenue last year.

"I love this stuff," Ungier says. "I love coming to work each day. I have customers around the world that I talk to in their own language, be it German, Russian and so forth. I go to work with a big smile."

Smart Business spoke with Ungier about how you can lead your business by getting back to the basics.

Q. What are some keys to effective communication with employees, and what do employees want to see from the head of the company?

The only way to be a leader is hands-on. You have to stay involved with the business each day and work with your people. And you have to make time for that communication. I have my door open, and I always try to be accessible. If you can do that and keep doing that over time, then your people won't be afraid to talk with you, even if it's something bad that has occurred. People do have to be willing to communicate something bad.

In business, you can't be afraid of the people you

speak with, ever. It goes for communicating within the company, with customers and everywhere. If you are afraid, you might as well not speak to that person, because you've already lost.

Q. As a leader, what should you ask of employees when they walk in the door each day?

Be there on time, and be ... proud of what you do. How simple is that? If you don't like what you do for a living, get the hell out. That goes for you, and that goes for the people that work for you. If you don't like what you do, but you still stick around and keep doing what you do, you're infecting everyone with your negative attitude, and that's a bad situation for all involved. You need to have that positive attitude and willingness to take initiative. I tell people that if you work for me, you're going to get yourself fired, but if you work with me, you're fine.

Q. How do you keep employees motivated and performing at a consistently high level?

Recognition is all about ego. We all know that funerals aren't for the dead, they're for the living. So recognition is all about saying nice things so other people can hear them. What I do is I recognize people by talking to them and telling them that any improvement they make will find its way into their pocketbook eventually. From where I stand, given the choice between some recognition and a financial

reward like a bonus, people aren't going to (care) about the recognition. They're going to want the reward. They're not going to want you to do what you already should have been doing for them, which is to treat them nicely.

Q. How do you keep yourself motivated to perform your own job at a high level?

It's not about the money. You hear that sometimes, but in this case, it's true. What drives me is this work that I do is the fact that I am working to try and achieve something. Sometimes, you talk to somebody in this world of business and they really don't know who the hell they are. You have to find out what defines you and why you are in business to begin with. Working with people, teaching people about air guns, how to buy the right gun, how to safely use it, helping to teach children how to safely fire a gun, that is my passion. That is why I love what I do.

Q. How do you turn a first-time customer into a loyal customer who wants to do business with you time and again?

The way I see it, we're not here to sell every customer the most expensive gun that we can. We're not going to sell you a \$20,000 rifle if that is not what you want or need, if you are not adequately trained to handle that kind of a gun. What we are here to do is service the customer, take care of the customer and make sure they get the product that is right for them. Taking care of the customer is how you make your money, not by selling them the most expensive product.

You have to be honorable in your business dealings. If you do dishonorable things, cheat customers or lie to them, that is a sure way to kill your business. You should be willing to tell someone the worst possible truth before you tell them a lie. I say that business is about balls, and sometimes it takes balls to have honor like that. <<



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HOW TO REACH: Pyramyd Air, (888) 262-4867 or www.pyramydair.com