



Leadership Give and Take

By Doug Fleener

The first time somebody told me that "to keep it you have to give it away" I thought he was talking nonsense. But over time, the more I have learned about being a good manager and a good person, the more I have realized the truth of that seemingly contradictory statement.

These are the four most important things a store manager must give to his/her staff so the staff can give it back to the store and customers.

Loyalty. Loyalty is a two way street. If you want loyal employees, you must be a loyal manager and employer. There are many ways to show loyalty to an employee. It's being willing to adapt a work schedule when an employee is having challenges at home or dealing with other concerns. It's figuring out how to give a leave of absence to a person who needs one even when doing so creates some challenges for the rest of the team. It's spending that little bit of extra time when an employee is struggling to learn a new skill or obtain new knowledge. It's delivering performance reviews and merit raises on time.

Respect. I have had the pleasure to work for and with some wonderful people; people I had great respect for. I've also worked for and with some managers I didn't respect. The reason I didn't respect them is because they weren't people of their word. They lived by the code of "do as I say, not as I do." They didn't keep their word. They didn't keep confidences. They put their own needs above others, believing that rank had its privilege. For a manager/owner to lead a team he/she must have the respect of the team. Respect isn't really that hard to keep but it is very tough to earn back when it's been lost.

A positive attitude. I've always said that you can walk into almost any store and within minutes determine how positive the manager/owner is without even meeting them. Their attitude sets the tone for the entire team. Chances are if an employee greets you with a smile and friendly welcome that they too were met with a smile and friendly welcome when they arrived at work that day. My wife jokingly tells our children that "when mama's not happy, ain't nobody happy." The same principle holds true in a store, too. When the manager/owner is in a bad mood or is stressed out there is a dark cloud over the entire store. It impacts everyone working that day but most of all it impacts the customer and the day's sales.

The store priorities. A manager's/owner's actions - not what they say but what they do - communicates to the staff what's really important. What matters is not what a manager says that is important, it's what a manager does that makes the real impact. I've seen so many managers stand up in a store meeting and babble on about the importance of customer service, how much they respect the customer, blah blah blah. Then immediately after the meeting they spend their entire time focused on merchandising or preparing for a store visit and completely ignoring customers. Every day you must show and do what is necessary for the store to succeed. If that's what you do then your team will do the same.

So let me ask, what are you going to give away today?

Dynamic Experiences Group, LLC



Retail and Customer Experience Experts

About the author: Doug Fleener is a veteran retailer with over 25 years of hands-on retail experience with world-class retailers including Bose Corporation and The Sharper Image. He has also owned and operated his own specialty stores. In his ten years at Bose, Doug grew the Retail Direct Group from four to 100 stores and was instrumental in developing Bose's unique and engaging retail methods.

Doug is now president and managing partner of Dynamic Experiences Group LLC, a Lexington, MA based retail and customer experience consulting firm dedicated to helping retailers improve their customer experiences that results in higher sales and profits.

Fleener is the author of the book *The Profitable Retailer: 56 surprisingly simple and effective lessons to boost your sales and profits*. He is a frequent speaker around the world on retail issues and his insights has been covered in leading business media including *The New York Times*, *Entrepreneur*, and *Shopping Centers Today*. Along with partner Matt Norcia they write the popular retail blog *Retail Contrarian*.

Doug lives in Lexington, Massachusetts with his wife and two daughters, where in his free time he barbecues while listening to Jimmy Buffet music.

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