

"Just do it"

November 19, 2007 - Construction Design & Engineering

To my mind, there is no greater measure of an individual's worth than his reliability. Saying you'll do something, then following through on that commitment â€” whether it be as simple as promising to call on Tuesday or as all-encompassing as committing to love, honor and cherish â€” speaks volumes about your character.

It's often also a good predictor of business success. Successful businesspeople are those who develop a reputation that allows others to feel, "If he says he'll take care of it, I can forget about it. It's done."

How does one achieve this reputation?

1) Don't make commitments lightly. Think about what you're saying, always keeping in mind your capabilities and limitations.

2) Be clear as to the specifics. Make sure all parties understand what is being agreed to, time frames, allocation of responsibilities, costs, etc. Use written communication, in the form of memos, where appropriate, or simply make notes for yourself of whatever commitments you've made.

3) As soon as you see a problem, inform those concerned about the situation and adjust accordingly. Do not, under any circumstances, expect or hope the problem will go away or magically resolve itself. Even if it does, you're better off appearing overly cautious than irresponsible.

4) If you say you're going to do something, DO IT! It's as simple as that. Treat every statement like a promise. If you're not sure, either don't commit yourself or clearly qualify your promise so it's consistent with your likely action.

Why are these rules so important?

* Every time you don't honor a commitment you've made, it chips away at your credibility. People love to do business with those who do exactly what they say they will. When you fail to deliver on minor promises, like returning a call, it gives people reason to believe you won't come through on more important items as well.

* Coming "pretty close" won't cut it either. The message you're sending out is, "Even though I come close, you can't rely on me to do exactly what I said." For many businesspeople, that's not good enough.

* What you may not regard as important may be critical to someone else. For example, being a day late in delivering a price quote to a customer may not strike you as a big deal, but what if that

customer is relying on those numbers as part of a larger job he is bidding? Don't ever assume you know everything about someone else's plans or what's going on in their mind.

* Your failure to deliver as promised can cause aggravation and stress to others. If they're making plans and promises based on your commitments and you let them down, they, in turn, must let others down. The perfect example: You tell me you're going to pay my invoice this week. Based on that, I tell my supplier I'll be sending him a check on Monday. You renege on your promise, and I look like a deadbeat to my supplier. And I won't forget why.

As much as anything else, I will consider myself a success in this life if those who know me remember me as someone who did what he said he would. To me, that's pretty high praise.

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