

Serve Because You Are Already Blessed

Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2011, published in the *Savannah Business Journal* on Monday, November 28, 2011

Are you familiar with the law of reciprocity? Here's one version: the more you help other people without expecting anything in return, the more other people want to repay you in some way.

This law is a bit paradoxical, however. The more you **expect** something in return, the more people feel manipulated. Their independence and resistance kicks in. Some individuals, willfully or otherwise, withhold their commitment and loyalty. So, be careful not to abuse this principle!

What does this have to do with your performance in a leadership role? Everything! Let me explain.

Everything you do in your organization involves relationships with either external or internal customers. External customers are those who pay for your product or service. You know you must serve them well, or they'll buy from a competitor.

Internal customers are those who receive information or some raw material that needs processing. You may not think of employees as customers, but they do receive interim product or service in your operations. And they are just as free to leave, choosing at any time to work with another employer.

There is a "quid pro quo" involved in both external and internal customer transactions. An external customer trades money for your organization's services or products. Internal customers trade their time, creativity, energy, and commitment for a paycheck and various employment benefits.

Imagine if you wanted to improve the services you offer to customers and employees. What could you do beyond assuring the accuracy and completeness of the transaction? Many leaders think the answer is "nothing." Delivering on your commitment is presumed to be the best you can do.

You, however, being an enlightened leader, understand the paradoxical law of reciprocity. If you give of your blessings, anticipating nothing in return, many people (employees and external customers) will want to repay you with intangibles, such as their loyalty and referral to their friends.

If you attempt to manipulate your employees with bribes, they may submit, but they will give you the minimum required of your transactional demands. You'll generate a passive, compliant culture.

If you genuinely care about each person, and if the employment relationship is a way to help each individual accomplish what's important in his or her life, your employees will more likely volunteer their dedication, innovation, and loyalty. You'll generate an enthusiastic, collaborative culture.

The key to proper leadership thinking is to serve not for what you can get, but because you are already blessed. You may wonder what blessings you already have at your disposal.

Because you are in a leadership position, you are blessed with perspective and years of experience. Serve the people in your organization because you are already blessed.

If you aspire to be a leader, someone contributed to building those desires within you. That drive is a motivational gift, so serve the people who you influence because you are already blessed.

If you are in a leadership position, you already have authority over individuals. They don't need you to remind them. They need the support that you are able to so freely give. Serve them because you are already blessed with the insight from this article.

If you struggle with a scarcity mindset (addressed in my most recent article entitled "Abundance and a Serving Mentality"), you'll tend to pervert the law of reciprocity. Your belief might be that "they had better give to me because I've given to them!" When your demanding disposition is resisted, your scarcity mentality will likely be validated. You'll proclaim, "The law of reciprocity doesn't work for me!"

If you naturally have an abundance mindset (or if you are working, as I am, to experience this reality in your world) and you serve because you are already blessed, you'll be continually surprised at how people want to give to you. Your collaborative culture will repeatedly "come through" for you, meeting tough challenges in ways you had not expected. You'll want to express thanks for the good results that come your way!