

## Get the Big Picture

By Jay Goltz

I just came from a family funeral. My 77 year old Uncle Leo seemed healthy. I saw him at the annual family picnic on Saturday, and on Sunday he died suddenly. It makes you think. Makes you think about your father, your mother, your siblings, your own mortality. What are your kids going to say about you after you're gone?

What does this have to do with picture framing? Everything – and nothing. That's what struck me. Family is about relationships. When you think about it, so is business. That's the common denominator. Some of us spend 50, 60, 70 hours a week taking care of customers, dealing with employees, trying to make a profit. We read trade publications, we go to seminars. We think about what we're doing right; we wonder what we're doing wrong.

Then business stops. Someone dies, gets married, graduates, or has a baby. All of a sudden, instead of thinking about business, we're thinking about life. Are they mutually exclusive? Instead of making business your life, make life your business.

While we've all read plenty of articles on, or been involved in, dysfunctional families, is there a such thing as dysfunctional businesses? Yeah - most of them. About the only permissible slam you can make on any group of people is bosses.

It's even become a popular theme of television commercials - the screaming boss character. Can you imagine commercials with a mother or father screaming that way at their children? That would be politically incorrect. People would be picketing in front of the television station by the end of the day, as they should be. But how did "the boss" get such a reputation? Simple. There are a lot of bad bosses. Unfortunately, that's all you hear about. While it's become a big running joke, it's not funny. Just like bad parents aren't funny. As bosses or managers, we should worry as much about being a sensitive, caring person as we would being a parent.

As the boss, we have the unique ability to make a profound difference in someone's life. I would hope that when someone moves on from my company, they can say things like, "I learned a lot from him", "He really helped me out at a difficult time", "He gave me the self confidence to feel good about myself", or "For the first time, I really felt like a team member in the business". We can use our power for good or evil.

Don't misunderstand. Being an effective boss still requires holding people responsible to follow the rules and get the job done even when they don't feel like it. As the boss, we have the opportunity to not only provide jobs, but to make lives better. Unfortunately, in business,



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people mix up being a pushover with being a good boss, and being demanding with being a bad boss. Great bosses know that you can be both demanding and sensitive.

Here are some examples.

1. Telling someone “Not to worry about it” when they accidentally scratch a picture (unless, of course, it happens regularly).

2. Asking someone how they’re doing a week after their father died.

3. Not yelling at people even when you feel it’s justified. (I’ve learned if I’m ready to scream at someone, then they shouldn’t be working for me.)

4. Knowing when to cut someone some slack when you know they’re under some stress.

5. Visiting someone when they’re in the hospital.

6. Firing someone behind closed doors while trying to preserve self-dignity. Resisting the temptation to giving them a long laundry list of what’s wrong with them.

Life is difficult. We’d all be better off if everyone in the world would spend more time trying to be a good human being as much as a good boss, or employee for that matter. Treat your employees like family, but choose your family well.

Call your mother. ■

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*Jay Goltz started Artists' Frame Service in 1978 fresh out of college. Artists' Frame Service now employs 120 persons at its main location, a 35,000 square-foot showroom and production facility in Chicago. Goltz has received numerous business honors including induction into the Arthur Andersen and University of Illinois Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame (1992). He regularly speaks at business conferences on topics ranging from entrepreneurship to customer service. Goltz is best-known for his straight-talk on how to succeed in business.*