



by Jay Goltz

Goltz On Business

The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly

By now, I assume that everyone has had a chance to catch their breath after a (hopefully) busy season. Now is probably a good time to look at your staffing requirements. For those of you that don't have many employees, or perhaps some anxiety about hiring people because of past experiences, I'd like to give you some perspective. As of this moment, I have about 100 employees. I started my company by myself, so I know all about the trials and tribulations of hiring, firing, having people quit, and everything in between.

There are basically three kinds of employees. There are good employees. They show up on time, do what they are asked to do, don't have attitude problems, are pleasant to customers, and are efficient with both material and labor. Sound good? Too good to be true? I'll answer that later.

Then there's the second kind of employee. Rather than "bad," let's call them mediocre. They are not unpleasant to customers, but they are not overly friendly either. They don't design bad framing, but it's not inspiring. They are not the slowest person you've ever seen, but they could have a little more pep in their step. They generally don't take initiative and every once in a while, they go back to not doing things that they are supposed to do. You don't fire them because they kind of get the job done. But when you think of them, you don't get warm and fuzzy feelings all over. My guess is that this type of employee represents 50% of people working out there.

This leaves us the last group—the ugly. Just today, I was reminded of what one of those people acts like. I hired a young college graduate to work in my store. She's been here for three weeks. She's been late about five times. She's been talked to about it three times, and that doesn't include the first time when we tell all new hires how we don't have time for babysitting. Today, she came in two hours late because she thought she was working the 11am to 7pm shift instead of the 9am shift she was scheduled for. As she punched in, she told the assistant manager, "I am so totally fired." She is so totally right! I could do the old, "The kids these days don't..." I won't. And that's the point. This is nothing new. People have been coming in late since the beginning of time.

For the first time ever (above example excluded), I can look at each and every one of the 100 people that work for me and feel good. Very good. The weak economy and my growing intolerance have resulted in making painful decisions in who belongs here and who doesn't. Which gets to the major point: It might be a good thing to tolerate your neighbors, pain, the weather, your in-laws. Those are things you can't change, and it's best to tolerate and accept. But when it comes to management, tolerating and accepting can be the first steps to becoming truly mediocre.

My company is in much better shape today because everyone that works here is willing to

accept the responsibilities of their job. Responsibility knows no favoritism. Whether you are the owner of the company or the lowest paid employee, taking responsibility is critical to getting the job done. It is very easy to grow comfortable with people and either lose your objectivity or take the path of least resistance. If you truly want to have a great company, you have to have the right people working for you. It is very easy to become complacent and get into a bind before you do what you need to do.

Which brings me back to the question of: Are good employees too good to be true? No. In some cases, the problem is that you don't look for a good employee because you don't have the stomach to get rid of the mediocre one. In other

cases, no good employee will want to work for you or stay working for you because you are not a good boss. It is your responsibility as the boss to create an environment where people want to work and they are treated well.

Lastly, there can be one more reason to consider if you don't have great employees. You don't know how to hire them. A particular behavior that I have seen in this industry is that if an applicant has any framing experience, they are hired. References are not checked. The fact that the competitor has let them go is not taken into consideration, and there is usually more to the story than the applicant is telling. You probably need to interview five people on average to find one good one. It is easier to train a

good employee picture framing than it is to train someone who knows how to do picture framing how to be a good employee.

Being in business is like being a Cubs fan. Wait 'til next year. This is next year! You now have the opportunity to get your business in the right direction and improve your business skills. My good news is that I feel great about my employees. It took me 25 years. Be patient, but be persistent. Constantly improve. ■

Jay Goltz, Business Editor, started Artists' Frame Service in 1978 fresh out of college. AFS employs over 80 people at its main framing operation in Chicago, IL. Goltz is also the founder of FramerSelect. He has received numerous business honors and is best known for his straight talk on how to succeed in business. He has taught at the National Conference.