



by Jay Goltz

Goltz On Business

The Ultimate Payoff

When I started my business I was working by myself. I thought that my job was all about the customer. Get them what they want, when they want it, where they want it. That philosophy served me well—for a while. As my company grew from just me to hiring the first employee, then the second and the third, things began to get more complicated and more difficult as I had to adjust to working through other people.

Since I was no longer doing everything myself, more mistakes started to happen—bad quality, missed deadlines, running out of materials, missing tools, and the like. I realized that I needed to become better as a hiring person, trainer, and manager. My good intentions were now overshadowed by my inabilities. I remained in this stage for many years as I worked to improve my skills at being the boss. It was quite a relief when things started to run smoothly and it was clear that I had a handle on what being the boss meant.

I recently had an epiphany (I have about one a year—sometimes they're meaningless;

this one isn't). Most of the managers in my company have been with me for at least five years, have matured through their 20's and the learning curve that comes along with management. I've come to realize that ultimately in business it's not about the customers, it's not about the boss, but rather it's about the employees. They are the ones taking care of

the customers. They are the ones who determine whether you succeed or fail. The ultimate job of the boss is to groom people. And to help *them* groom people.

Good management does not happen by accident and good managers do not develop in a vacuum. It requires training, coaching, mentoring,

supporting, leading, challenging, holding people responsible, and giving recognition.

The results are gradual and the payoffs come in small doses. If I was smarter, maybe I would have brought in experienced managers early on and benefited from their previous experience. In some cases I did attempt that with mixed results. The difference with the "homegrown" variety that you find, discover the potential in, groom, and stick it out with

*Good management
does not happen by
accident. And good
managers do not
develop in a vacuum.*

is that the payoff is different. You not only have competent managers schooled in your way of thinking, but you also have the satisfaction of a mutual success.

Over the last year or so, I have noticed numerous things that have occurred in my company that have happened without me—good things. These are things in which I would have previously been involved, which I am now not. Hiring, daily management responsibilities, customer issues, insurance... too many to even mention. Voila! I have a capable staff. But this was not my epiphany. This was more of a satisfying revelation.

The epiphany actually came through one of my managers. Lori has worked for me for six years. She's one of the few people that I hired that had experience in the picture frame industry and she has blossomed as a manager during her time at my store. While I was talking with her last week, she said something to me that took me aback. In talking about management, she said, "You really haven't become the true manager until you can enjoy the feeling of seeing the results of mentoring someone else." Wow! All this time I was thinking about training my managers and I didn't even think about the fact that this is a perpetual activity—they're doing the same thing.

What have you done in the past week, month, or year that has effected change in your employees—either positive or negative?

And now I realized I don't just have a capable staff... I have an organization. The reality is if you do bad things as a manager (and I know I've done my share of them), it can drag people down and be a negative influence in their life. That part I figured out a long time ago. (It's usually obvious because it has bad consequences.) But I don't think I ever recognized the impact of effecting positive change. As a manager you either drag people up or drag people down. The problem is that most of us aren't even aware of when we are doing it.

So here is my challenge for you, Mr./Ms. Manager: what have you done in the past week, month, or year that has effected change in your employees—either positive or negative? Have you thanked them lately? Have you noticed improvement and mentioned it to them? Have you taught them a new skill, sent them to trade show, or training class? Have you showed them an article that would help them? Have you told them what they are doing wrong? What they

need to do to improve? Do they know where they stand? Are you developing a staff or just putting up with them? Are they just putting up with you? It's easy to lose sight of your impact on employees when you feel like they are helping you fail, and in some cases they are (when you have an employee that doesn't fit for one reason or the other).

At the end of the day, people are in business for different reasons. Most include the need to make money, enjoyment of the craft, a reason to get out of the house, and probably several others. There's another reason that could end up being just as important as any of the others: it's helping other people that work for you succeed.

That is the ultimate payoff. n

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. 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.