

The Difference Between An Employee And A Dog

by Jay Goltz

I was walking my new dog, Rocky, the other day when I had a startling revelation. He does what I tell him to do. He's always happy to see me. He's never in a bad mood. And I don't have to wonder what he's thinking. To someone who's been managing people for some twenty years and has three kids, the change was both refreshing and thought provoking.

Employees are not as simple (and kids are a whole different story). They have their own agendas. They have their own needs. They have their own problems. The biggest difference, however, is that I've never met a dog that could frame a picture. Therein lies the problem. If you're going to grow your business beyond yourself or family members, you have to hire employees – people!

While a dog is known as man's best friend, I have found employees to fall somewhere between two extremes. Some of my greatest personal and business satisfaction has come from my employees. I feel good about my relationships with them, and I am thrilled to have them with me in the adventure of growing my business. On the other hand, some of my great-

est grief and anguish has come from employees. People have lied to me, stolen from me, and disappointed me in ways I didn't think possible. Dogs are definitely easier.

And that, my friends, is why you will seldom find a person that will say business is easy, but will find that most people love their dogs. As in any other labor-intensive, customer service, kind of business, the people you hire, manage, and keep, will make you or break you. The right employees

will make customers want to come back, do great framing, and make it a pleasure to come to work every day. The wrong employees will result in the opposite effect. So what's the magical difference? You make magic, and you do that through management.

As the owner or manager, I've learned that you're in control. You are ultimately going to determine what your company is going to be like. You train a dog and they're pretty much trained for life; management is a never-ending proposition.

If you want to have a "well trained" company of happy, usually energetic employees, I would offer the following tips:



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1. Hire happy people.

Interview people thoroughly, and talk to as many candidates as possible.

2. Have well defined rules.

Don't assume everybody will figure out what you expect.

3. Put together a training

outline. It doesn't have to be a 400-page document, but it should at least be able to remind you to be complete in training.

4. Get rid of jerks. You're going to have to learn to distinguish between undertrained and impossible to deal with.

5. Be sure everyone understands the mission. If you don't have a mission, you ought to figure one out.

6. Stop whining about your bad employees. It's a waste of time, and is merely showcasing your management deficiencies.

If you want a best friend, buy a dog. If you want a great business, learn how to manage. ■

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.