

## Right Makes Might

How many times have you listened when watching perpetrators of various bad deeds defend themselves on television with statements such as these: "I did nothing wrong. I followed company policy." "We broke no laws and were within our rights to act as we did." "What I did is perfectly legal." Sometimes the interviewer presses in with the question, "Yes, but was it right?" *Make them answer*, I whisper to myself, but I never hear anything very satisfying.

I have a simple but compelling fantasy when I watch such people being questioned: I dream of hearing the words, "No, it wasn't right. It was legal, but it was still wrong. It was a rotten thing, and I apologize." I'd love to hear a politician come clean (even though I know it will never happen)—"We thought it was going to be a great thing for the city/state/country, but it turned out to be a disaster. We've got to figure out how to rectify the mess that's resulted."

What a glorious day it would be if a CEO or a senior VP told employees at a company meeting, "We let ourselves be carried away by all the wrong motives. We weren't thinking about consequences. We were so wrong." (Honesty—what a concept! So many executives avoid it as though it is rat poison.)

I can dream! I consider the feelings I'd have if I heard an honest "please forgive me" from the president of a company caught doing irrefutable wrong. I might be moved by the risk he or she was taking in making an admission of guilt. If I saw that company stepping up to make restitution in some significant way, my estimation of that company's integrity would skyrocket, because don't we want to be associated with people who do not just what's expedient, but what is *right*? Don't we want to frequent businesses we know react by showing integrity?

If an establishment finds members of its sales team are misleading potential clients and it fires the reps and makes amends to the potential clients, wouldn't that be a sign to everyone that this company really *does* care about its customers? New customers might actually be gained as a result. Think of it: reputation can result in revenue.

If a business discovered its service manager wanted to charge a client thousands of dollars to rectify a problem the service department caused, wouldn't that client be delighted with an upper management that stepped in to make repairs or replacements at no charge in order to preserve the business relationship? That client just might tell others about the great service received.

If an executive gets drunk and propositions a colleague at a function and the CEO sees or hears of it and either heavily censures or fires the executive, wouldn't that send a lightning bolt of trust throughout the organization that the president has some scruples?

What if a member of the management team is consistently arrogant and disruptive, never missing an opportunity to sow mistrust and anxiety? Wouldn't a president who fearlessly addressed such discord by firing that employee's behind be setting the stage for increased productivity and loyalty? And I'm talking about a president who has the guts to address these things directly—not one who passes it off to an associate because it's uncomfortable. (What in the world are you doing in the president's seat if you're afraid of confrontation? Go find a landscaping job. Please.)

The bottom line is this: people will line up to follow those who exhibit character strengths such as courage, self-regulation, and prudence; who won't hide behind a closed door to avoid dealing with unpleasantness. They want to work with people who haven't let their titles go to their heads. They will usually interact admirably with those who display mature behavior and don't laugh loudly to pretend they weren't saying something rude. Clients will be pleasantly surprised by the rare business establishment where they are treated honestly and sense that leadership is executed intelligently. Business value increases when the values of life are applied. Morale goes up, performance is affected, and customers respond. Companies see decreased turnover, fewer lawsuits, greater creativity and camaraderie, and no need for whistleblowing. We've all heard stories of workplaces managed with generosity and kindness, with transparency and wisdom, and we think to ourselves, "Wish I worked there." What are your employees wishing?

My hope for the new year is that I will be working with organizations, small businesses, various institutions, and individuals who desire to liberate the timeless strengths that make workplaces and people exceptional and let them fly. It's time to consider more than simply what we can get away with. It's time to start doing what is right. ♪



*Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her consulting skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.*

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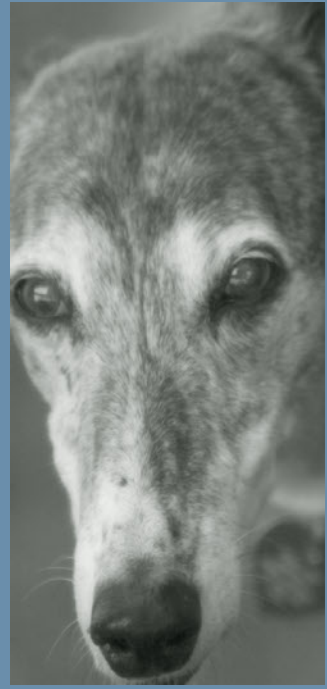
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# Teddy Bear Says...

The Teddy Bear does not let it be generally known that she is a reader, but it's true. I peruse articles in *The New Yorker* and I'm not oblivious to the covers of *People* and *Us*. I cast an eye at *Vogue* photo layouts, wondering why in the world photographers don't pair models with the supermodels of the canine community—Greyhounds. It would increase readership, I'm sure of it!



It's a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* that has my ears standing up. The headline says, "Dress to Impress, UBS Tells Its Staff." The first sentence states, "First impressions count." Ha! Hasn't the Teddy Bear been explaining this to you for several years now?

The retail banking staff of UBS has informed employees in a number

of test branches that they must consider their clients as they groom and clothe themselves for work. Why? Because UBS is concerned with "re-establishing confidence in the Swiss bank's brand and mending relationships with clients."

Men and women are instructed to wear well-fitting suits in the traditional banker's colors of dark grey, black, or navy blue. Women are encouraged to wear a touch of makeup. Everyone is told to avoid foods containing garlic and onions.

These and other guidelines are provided so that customers will "immediately know that they are at UBS when they are entering the bank," says a UBS spokesperson. These same guidelines have been provided to temporary workers for years so those who may have never worked in a financial services environment will know what's generally expected. Now it's necessary to remind regular employees of the importance of presenting a professional presence that indicates the reliability and competence of UBS. One of the ways this is done is by applying some effort to the outward appearance.

You know that UBS has put a lot of thought in the way its bank branches appear to customers. They've surely hired trained architects and employed gifted designers to create and build a space that suggests sober attentiveness to customers' assets. They've probably decided to prominently feature the door of the bank vault, as so many bank branches do, because it shows people how thick and sturdy and protected their assets are (even though their assets are mostly somewhere else). I'm sure a Swiss bank would use a lot of wood accents and subdued colors, transmitting the seriousness with which the bank considers its work. No slackers around here—no lazy mutts playing with your coinage! No ridiculous little terriers running around yapping and trying to look cute! Only thoughtful and professional guardians of your dollars will be on display at UBS!

## Quotable

Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.

*Abraham Lincoln*

Contact Sue today to learn how she can meet your business needs

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Just as the physical appearance of the branch itself plays a role in communicating attributes, so does the physical appearance of the people who work there. They must look like they belong in that context in order to complete the picture. One would not enter a bank that looks like a solid, reputable, international brand expecting to see men and women dressed like tow truck drivers manning the teller windows. It would not fit. A confusing subliminal message can cause people to leave feeling a little confused without knowing why. Of course, some will know why. "With a name as respected as UBS, why in the world do they have tow truck drivers as tellers?"

This is why it makes good sense for all humans to consider the messages they are sending to customers and clients by the clothes they wear to work, assuming they are not required to wear uniforms (such as hospital scrubs or doggie groomer white lab coats). It makes good sense for humans who *do* have to wear uniforms to pay attention to their grooming and accessories. These things tell clients you are a competent contributor for no other reason than you look like you belong there. You are in context and, in fact, you look a cut above everyone around you.

Beyond that, you must provide the education, the skills, the talent, and the courtesy to treat customers with what's expected. But remember that people are reading you, and it's always best to address the opening sentence: "First impressions count." 🐕

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