Running clubs with an ethical eye on the bottom line

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Candor

Assumption: In ethics, the manager must get below the surface to discover the real issue. In the business arena, for instance, a club manager who assumes his competition is simply other clubs will soon find himself unemployed. Any other form of recreational and social activities are really competitors. The manager must realize that to survive.

The same is true when a community attacks a club's membership. "The assumption is what people want, anticipate changes in their desires by getting ahead of market research and then act accordingly."

Turnabout: Turnabout involves fairness. That is, discovering a middle ground between what is fair in the manager's mind and what is fair in the employee's, customer's, or member's mind. A manager can't do that if he is only concerned about what he thinks.

How can these first three ethical tools help a manager better run a business? A good example is the success of the Nordstrom's department store chain, the most highly regarded retailer in the country in consumer polls, Pastin said. "That is perceived as an ethical way of doing business and people are willing to pay a lot for it," Pastin explained.

Truth: The president of Scandinavian Air Lines said that customers base their decisions on whether to continue buying from a company on brief, face-to-face moments of truth with company employees. A manager who assumes his competition is simply other clubs will soon find himself unemployed. Any other form of recreational and social activities are really competitors. The manager must realize that to survive.

In ethics, the moments of truth are the times when something goes wrong and there is a question of integrity. The person looking in a staff member's eyes and wondering "Is he going to go with me or is he going to go with himself?" That's the moment of truth. We all judge ethics not what's written in the policy manual, but in the moments of truth," Pastin said.

Managers need to give staff members the opportunity to handle such situations without having to worry about their jobs.

Risk: The only way to adapt to a changing world is to take risks. Taking risks creates knowledge, growth, satisfaction and motivation. Even risks that don't work are worth taking.

Candor: Managers need to encourage board members, club members and employees to tell them when something is wrong. Most ethical problems can be solved if addressed soon enough.

People will tell managers what they need to know if they are encouraged to do so, rather than being punished, Pastin said.

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