



Respect is a two-way *street*

All too often in business, success is judged by how much wealth can be generated – and sadly, it’s not the kind of wealth that’s measured in the milk of human kindness. No. More like: What’s the operating profit? How high are dividends? How much capital gain is accruing?

So is lining your own pockets, and/or those of your shareholders, the only goal of business entrepreneurs – a goal that’s entirely at odds with promoting staff well-being?

Not necessarily, if you listen to the hardboiled cynics who point out that the 100 companies ranked the best places to work in the US outperform competitors by 25%. The goal is still maximum profit – but they know they need happy, motivated and productive staff to get there.

I’m lucky to have built up Davidson with associates (or employees who came up the ranks) who share my very different vision. **We believe a company is a common working tool whose value lies not in its capacity to deliver increasing yield, but in its power to create value for clients AND staff** (groups that overlap, when you consider a company’s staff as its first clients, who therefore deserve a significant proportion of our attention). This view translates into an operational intent, based on a virtuous circle:

- each individual’s personal commitment fuels organisational performance
- leading to better results, both in terms of quality and profit
- allowing us to refocus funds and efforts on staff well-being by offering benefits, a great working environment, and some cool perks.

In this way, the cycle continues and you get out what you put in – staff recognise that their investment in the company is valued and rewarded, and in return their commitment to the firm will deepen.

I think it would be reductive to summarise this concept of the two-way street as simply sharing out the profits fairly. To get the full picture, you need to look at how the virtuous circle works in the other direction, which may seem less obvious:

- management build close working relations with their teams – open-door policy, approachable attitude, multiple communication channels, informal atmosphere with plenty of opportunities for paths to cross, and a management response to all ideas in the intranet suggestion box within a fortnight
- managers are quick to help staff with private concerns, particularly by working on their empathy (real caring, based on sincere active listening). They’ll be willing to use the

company's clout and put pressure on partners or suppliers to resolve certain situations, for instance doing business with only one bank and asking it to 'find a creative solution' when someone has a problem debt.

- decisions are guided by what effect they will have internally, not simply by how they impact ROI. We want to send a clear message that the company values 'me' – 'connected' to our core values – above outsiders – shareholders who are only 'connected' to the annual balance sheets.
- given our rationale of promoting a strong sense of belonging, we share decision-making – which calls for staff to think creatively, since most decisions stem from their ideas. 'I feel good because my firm gives me a lot, and in return, I do my bit by contributing strong ideas.'

Once this two-way street is well established, we had to make sure it was sustained, especially in a phase of rapid growth when new team members were coming on-board and the Davidson corporate culture wasn't self-evident. We generally assume that the bigger a business grows, the more 'dehumanised' it gets – and yet we all know people who are miserable in tiny companies, and we also come across execs who are happy in much larger firms. We decided not to allow

ourselves to go down that route. To make sure we don't, we give ourselves a little shake-up every year by applying to be ranked in the Great Place To Work listings.

Although we've done well in the rankings, the reason we do it is that it fuels another virtuous circle – it drives us to constantly question the way we do things, and seek out new ideas to keep our company moving along the right path. Essentially, this company is our baby and we do everything we can to nurture the atmosphere in the workplace, and uphold our values.

Bertrand

Ça vous inspire?

Managers

Adoptez la réciproque attitude !

Pas de posture hiérarchique (j'ordonne, tu exécutes), restez accessibles, et légitimez-vous par votre capacité à écouter et à accompagner vos équipes dans leurs évolutions. Soyez un G.O. et amenez vos équipes à se comporter de même !

