



Lessons Learned in the Business World

Some of you may not know me. I am a parent of two students here at CCS and currently teach math in the High School—specifically upper-level math (Algebra 2, Pre-Calculus and Calculus) and programming. As scary as those subjects might seem to many adults, I am constantly encouraged by the achievement of our young people who not only make it through those classes, but actually get the concepts and find them interesting. (Well, some more than others!) I find teaching these classes quite rewarding.

Before coming to Cherokee Christian, I was a businessperson—specifically, a marketing manager. My fifteen years in the non-education world left me with many thoughts of some “best-practices” which I think can apply here at school. Bear with me if some seem like a stretch, but I do believe there is application for these ideas. Here are a few of them:

- A successful businessperson is a product of good management. In business, a good manager is conscious of the needs of the workers. Managers must praise strengths and address weaknesses to help workers succeed. The news is not always good—no one improves if they are only told what they do right. With students, over-sight and involvement by parent-managers is a necessary part of a successful venture.

- Consultants can influence behavior, but cannot control it. When businesses need help with areas in which they do not hold expertise, consultants may be called in to assist. Consultants study the situation and advise managers about what to do, but management must decide what action to take. As those called to assist you in rearing your students, teachers are really like consultants who work to help students prepare for what lies ahead. Parents are the managers. However, while teachers can advise parents, we cannot make the final decisions about what action would be best. And in the business world, when action is necessary to fix problems or keep things going in the right direction, inaction can be worse than inadequate action.

- When a worker needs help, they should ask. Problems usually do not go away and often just get bigger. Stumbling ahead can be so inefficient and ineffective. No worker can know all things, and all will need help at times along their path. That is how one can learn and grow. So it is with students. They need their mentors to help them know what to do, when to do it and how. Sometimes, though, those over the students do not know when help is needed or to what extent it is needed. Better to ask before things go too far.

- To meet objectives, utilize all

resources at your disposal. When tackling tasks on the job, it would be silly for someone not to use all available resources. Those might include previous research done, reports of past activity, industry publications, peer input and so on. Sometimes, those resources are not at an employee’s fingertips, and sometimes there may be a price associated with those resources. In school, students receive instruction as a primary resource and do homework as another point of learning. However, sometimes students need more than offered in the classroom. They may need to work more problems, use other texts, try using web sites, or seek out other resources for learning. No one source or means of information serves all needs, and students may need to go above and beyond to find what works for them.

- Be on time and be prepared. I have had to deal with employees who were late and unprepared for work. They are less-than productive and often pre-occupied with other matters. They can be a drag on management who must compensate for the disruption such employees cause. Similarly, students need to be punctual and ready for work. They may need help in these areas in part because they are learning from their experiences and do not know the importance of being on time and prepared. Like good managers,



we want them to be as productive as possible.

• When you miss work, they miss you. When someone is not on the job, the business can suffer. And the employee suffers for missing all that happens while gone. That is why you plan in advance to cover work that will be missed when you know you will be out. You also may arrange to be in the loop about what goes on while you are out. In the end, most managers try to miss as little work as possible since digging out after can be so tough. Same with school. Students should miss class only if they really need to. Taking time off may seem desirable, but can be hard on a school career. If a student misses class, they should be planning ahead to do work that will be missed, which may require help from parent-managers. When an absence is unavoidable (say for illness), work, like school, does not stop and wait for you to catch up. It may be tough, but avoiding unnecessary absences and making up work as soon as possible is the best route.

• Dress and appearance affect your attitude toward a job. Remember when we did not have business casual? It used to be that people dressed more formally for business (and even for being out and about in the really old days of our parents and grandparents). Appearance speaks a great deal of a person's feelings of self-confidence

and attention to detail. It can impact how they present themselves and how they are perceived by others. That's why bankers and lawyers still wear suits. In short, dress affects a person's attitude toward the job at hand. School uniforms can make it easier for students to avoid the distractions clothing can bring, but wearing the uniform poorly can have the same impact as wearing jeans to an important business meeting.

These are just some thoughts about the similarities between what your student is experiencing now and what they will some day. Even if a girl ends up as a stay-at-home mom, her job is similar in many ways to a normal paying job, and these ideas will apply in various ways.

Throughout this consideration it may seem odd that I have not quoted Scripture or mentioned any outwardly Christian ideals. But in reality, these ideas are really based on the Christian mandate to be diligent in our calling. Many times in the Bible we are called upon to "make every effort" to accomplish various goals. I believe such cajoling is meant to convince us to be the best we can be. Only then will we be successful. My perspective on success in a job, just like success in school, is based on a successful relationship with Jesus Christ. That does not mean non-Christians cannot be a success in business! Instead, I

would argue that true success in a calling is not measured by how much money one makes, what title one carries, or what sort of power one wields. Worthwhile riches come from a life lived to the fullest in the pursuit of the Christian life. A successful businessperson is truly only a success if the Lord blesses the efforts made. The parable of the talents is a clear example of how those who have much and those who have little will be rewarded not based on what they have, but based on what they do with what they have. Students are in the same boat: their jobs are being students, and their goal is to learn what they are being taught so that they can be promoted to the next levels and benefit God's kingdom.

In the end, that final thought is the concept that I believe is most important in this essay. A student's job is just that—to be a student. The job does not require non-stop work and no fun, but the work is a priority that will only be as successful as the effort put in. Some have to work harder than others, but all can go far given meaningful instruction, well-balanced oversight, adequate access to resources, and sufficient effort on their part. Then they can be a true success as they find their roles in God's plans as He continues to build His kingdom.

~ *David Jennings*

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