

Integrating Christian Values in the Workplace



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Many Christians struggle with three questions in the workplace. Is it right to try to integrate my faith with my job? If so, how can I incorporate Christian values and principles into a secular workplace? And can I be successful at my job and my Christian faith if I try to mix the two in the marketplace? Here's the good news: God's wisdom covers every aspect of our lives, including the marketplace. If we will utilize four key principles found in God's Word as the basis of our business decisions, they will form a solid and reliable framework for a successful enterprise.

The first principle is very simple: "Do for others what you would like them to do for you" (Matthew 7:12 NLT). On the job, we will interact with a variety of people: customers, suppliers, managers, and fellow employees. In every instance, we should put ourselves in the other person's shoes and act accordingly. If as a customer we expect to receive a quality product, friendly service, and a reasonable return policy, then we shouldn't treat our customers like the owner of a refurbished-computer store who once bragged to me that when the 30-day warranty ran out, he would "hang up the phone on any customer who demanded assistance, even if the warranty had expired by one day." Is that how he would want to be treated as a buyer?

The same principle applies to owners and managers when they interact with their employees. Thriving businesses are built on respect, reasonable work demands, and fair compensation. The best managers develop a 360-degree perspective when making decisions. They consider the effect on their customers, employees, other departments, and higher-level management. Regardless of your position, if you want to make fair and balanced decisions, don't forget to view the situation from the other person's perspective.

The second principle is to "give full measure" to your customers and employees. As Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you- good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.... For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return" (Luke 6:38 NASB). Giving your customers good value for their money is the secret to earning repeat business and referrals. In a restaurant, "good measure" means serving a full portion hot and fresh-and keeping those coffee cups and water glasses full. Your customers will be delighted, and they will tell their friends. Smart managers know that if a dinner sits on the warming tray too long the food becomes second rate. It's better to serve a fresh replacement than to hope the customer just won't complain. Absorbing the cost yourself, rather than asking your customer to suffer the consequences, will create future goodwill and repeat business.

The third principle to practice is "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). At times we allow our emotions or personal perspective to color our thinking and govern our actions, but the Bible tells us to discover and discern the truth. Instead of jumping to conclusions, develop the habit of drawing out the facts and asking questions before you make decisions or take action. If an employee complains

about the work of a colleague, for example, remember, "The first to plead his case seems just, until another comes and examines him" (Proverbs 18:17). Follow up, ask questions, and discover the truth before you respond. Apply the same principle to customer complaints and comments. Discover the truth, and then don't forget to treat your customers the way you would like to be treated. The best business decisions are made in the full light of the truth.

Finally, establish high standards of quality and focus your energy on consistent performance. The outcome of your efforts will be the basis on which your work is evaluated. As King Solomon wisely observed, "Wherever the tree falls, there it lies" (Ecclesiastes 11:3). Make sure that every product and every customer interaction conforms to a high standard of excellence. Work with diligence so that, at the end of the day, you can look at what you've done and echo God's assessment of His own creation: "It was very good" (Genesis 1:31). We will never attain to God's level of quality, but as Solomon advised, "Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Successful employees and businesses will develop a genuine enthusiasm for quality. I like the sign I saw posted on a company's shipping dock. It read, "If you're not proud of each product, don't ship it." If you focus on quality, your customers and your company will be effectively served.

Integrating your faith with your job, and implementing godly principles in your business, will improve your results and make you a beacon in the marketplace.