

Lift up

"You should never stoop to someone else's level. You should rise above it." -- Ellin Berlin, wife of Irving Berlin

I've been reading a biography of the composer Irving Berlin ("White Christmas," "God Bless America," etc.) on my Kindle this week, and I ran across the quotation that starts off this week's Monday Motivation. It brings to mind other similar themes in quotations I've heard over the years.

Boiled down to their essence, they all give similar advice: in order to raise someone up, you have to be there yourself already, so you can give a hand up, not a push from below.

In the last few years, it seems many of us are willing to ignore the old advice for proper decorum: "Never wrestle with a pig; you both get dirty, and the pig likes it." In fact, much of the time, people seem to consign themselves to getting down and dirty with the worst of them, pulling the same dirty tricks they pull, telling similar lies to what they might tell.

As a result, two things happen -- many of us become worse for wear, and the truly great people and organizations stand out for the ethics and integrity they offer.

If you will, look back on your own experiences for a moment. If you're like most of us, I imagine you've dealt with a few unscrupulous people over the years -- the salesperson who tells you a lie in order to make a sale; the politician who changes his story, depending on who he's talking with; or the hell-bent manager who tells you whatever lies it takes in order to get you to do the job the way he would want it done.

And I imagine that you have said the same thing I've said after such an encounter: "Never again will I allow myself to deal with that person."

Liars and hypocrites are all around us in modern business -- but they soon find that their credibility rating suffers -- sooner or later, even the stupider people among us will realize that integrity counts.

Like many people, I'm a fan of Costco Stores. Costco lives or dies not by the prices they charge -- which are good by the way -- but by the value they deliver to their members. Some places may charge less for a similar item, but Costco

guarantees the purchase by offering a money-back guarantee. There's no hassle, no problem -- heck, I once saw a person returning a Christmas Tree on the day after Christmas -- and the quality of the items are usually top-notch. Costco, like so many of the organizations that stand out in our economy, has learned that integrity counts, and treating people right pays off in the end.

There are numerous other companies, large and small, which have similar customer-centric values -- but there are also countless companies which treat their customers like they are dupes or criminals, and suffer in the process. People may patronize them once, for the price, but they rarely stick around to be humiliated twice.

So what does that mean to us? Each of our lives follows this same destiny. When we lie, cheat, and steal, it catches up to us. When we become a greater person, and are able to lift up others to our superior life, it catches up to us as well.

When we wrestle with the pigs, we soon start looking like a pig -- but when we avoid the mud and muck around us, we start to shine.

It also extends to our learning and experiences. We must be a master of a subject to teach someone else well. We must learn from our experiences to keep our trek upward and onward through life's challenges. We must become the master, and as a result, be able to help others behind us master those same challenges.

In order to help someone up, we must be at a higher point, ethically, morally, and through our personal experiences. We should be the one who gives others a hand, and we should lead companies with the same values.

The New Testament speaks of a city on a hill. No matter what your religious persuasion, that mental image is one that can stick with us -- a city (or a person) on a hill that beckons others to come to it (or to us) and be elevated in the process.

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