

The importance of adopting a loving attitude towards stakeholders¹

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In the business environment, love is commonly seen as a feeling totally alien to the cultures of most organisations. Some renowned authors have even observed that love could undermine important business variables or Key Performance Indicators (e.g., productivity, quality levels, competitiveness, efficiency, etc.). Most companies focus on improving these indicators, instead of centring on love. It is important to pinpoint that these indicators are always the result of the interactions of an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders.

Therefore, when a company adopts a loving attitude toward its stakeholders, these indicators tend to improve naturally. An organisation with a loving attitude develops continuous goodwill and mutually beneficial relationships with all its relevant stakeholders; this company is more likely to succeed in the business arena.

Stakeholders are individuals and organisations with an interest in the company; they can be external (e.g., suppliers, intermediaries, competitors, communities, media, government, etc.) or internal (management and the rest of the employees). All stakeholders have their distinctive objectives and agendas. A company which develops beneficial relationships with its stakeholders is more likely to be supported by them when needed. When a company acts in a considerate manner with stakeholders, they tend to respond in a reciprocal manner.

In order to strengthen its bonds with its stakeholders, an organisation should identify their distinct needs and expectations in order to cater for them in the most effective way. Some specific tools (e.g., meetings, open telephone lines, emails, surveys, focus groups, etc.) can be used to discover stakeholders' specific interests. A company should always take into account stakeholders' unique needs when it develops its strategies and makes relevant business decisions. When a company continually cares for its stakeholders, its public image tends to improve significantly.

When a company adopts a loving attitude, all its activities (e.g., buying, selling, developing, and launching new products, etc.) are based on the development of mutually beneficial relationships with internal and external stakeholders. Strong relationships with stakeholders are always a relevant source of power, which gives an organisation an edge in the marketplace.

A company with a loving attitude performs business activities which do not benefit some stakeholders at the expense of others. This type of organisation, for instance, offers quality products to customers, pays good salaries to employees, develops fair agreements with suppliers

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and also adopts a caring attitude for the environment. In this case the company cares for the well-being of all its stakeholders (customers, employees, suppliers, and community); no stakeholder is considered more valuable than the others.

A person with this loving attitude focuses mostly on the good qualities of others. This love is kind, forgiving, inclusive, grateful, generous, compassionate, caring, and supportive. This love is also trusting, non-judgemental and undemanding. People with a loving attitude toward others can connect to the human side of each person inside and outside an organisation. When people working for a company adopt this loving attitude toward all stakeholders, the latter are more prone to feel acknowledged, recognised, and appreciated. Consequently, a loving attitude creates an atmosphere of deeper communion among people, which in turn improves business activities in a more effortless fashion.

A very important aspect of a loving attitude is affection. When people are truly affectionate with others, they relate to them in a respectful and caring manner. A loving person avoids any negative form when addressing others (e.g., slandering, gossiping, criticising, guilt-tripping, etc.), but makes continuous and supportive comments to them, especially when they go through challenging times.

A loving person makes others feel at peace with themselves and in their own skins, which also makes them more co-operative and easier to deal with. On the contrary, when people are not treated lovingly, they are very prone to behave in an anxious, restless, scared, and even aggressive manner.

When a company adopts a loving attitude toward others, its conflicts with them are handled in a more peaceful and conciliatory fashion. A loving attitude helps people consider the interests of everyone involved in a conflicting situation. Loving people are more open to consider diverse perspectives on a topic, as these views enrich its discussion and understanding.

An interesting question for self-reflection is: “How can I adopt a more loving attitude towards our stakeholders?”

This is an excerpt from the book "The Art of Compassionate Business: Main Principles for the Human-Oriented Enterprise" (2019, Routledge - Productivity Press). This book can be found here www.bit.ly/2MAkr4k

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