

You Wouldn't Believe the Dividends

by Ken Young C.C.P. Emeritus.

A unique personal signature

I remember it vividly because it was my very first full-time summer job. My eyes were wide open to see, hear and learn what was going on in the real working world. The company was a large department store and the office I was in was the consumer credit office. There must have been at least a couple hundred people working in that department. What I saw stuck with me forever.

My boss, who I thought was about five years older than I was, seemed to me to be on the young side not only in age but also in attitude compared to most other managers at the firm. The section of the department he managed had about 40 people, most of whom were middle age women.

Every morning employees would start their work day around 8 or 8:30, so we were all hard at work when our boss arrived at 9 am. What I saw happen daily was a great lesson on how to build morale. Every morning when this manager arrived, he would hang up his coat in his office, and then proceed to walk around his entire department, saying good morning to everyone. Each employee was greeted by name (or by a friendly nickname) and often given a word of encouragement.

Employees couldn't wait to have that Manager appear and "give them the time of day" by referring to them by name and saying a few words to acknowledge their worth. It was a nice way for the manager to let them know they were important. People who had their heads buried in work would look up when he came by with big smiles on their faces.

To me, it seemed like this simple gesture on the Manager's part made their day. It was the only time I would see some of them smile during the day. It literally lit up their faces. I knew he was like a hero to them and if he ever asked them do anything, you can be sure that he wouldn't have to ask twice. They would get back to him with an answer and be glad that he came to them to ask for assistance. I don't think he intended for his daily round to motivate staff or build their self-esteem, but this was the result.

It was pretty powerful stuff for a young guy to see in an office environment – firsthand – the way this manager treated people, built rapport, and demonstrated caring. Although it was just his way of starting the morning – as for others it might be checking their flood of emails – it made a huge impact on the department's morale and results. His unique, personal signature of interaction with staff probably only took him an additional ten minutes per morning, but the payoffs were very evident.

Things don't always go well, but it's a lot easier to cross the river when you've taken the time and effort to build a bridge. *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is a great book, but to see an aspect of it in action at my first experience in an office environment was something I'll never forget.

In leadership, if you establish yourself with a reputation as a supportive team player and unite the team with enthusiasm for a common vision, you are well under way to achieve success and reap immeasurable dividends.

"Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see." ~ Mark Twain

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Ken has been a credit management professional for over twenty-five years and has global experience in a broad range of industries including the food (aquaculture and beverage), chemical, manufacturing and transportation sectors. Most recently he was the Credit & Collection Manager at Pepsi Bottling Group in Canada.

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Ken has delivered a successful series of keynote addresses on credit in Kingston and Montego Bay Jamaica. He was also a part of a small team that designed and implemented enhanced strategies for the collections department of a large firm in Indonesia. He has served and still serves on numerous boards in the profession including the National Credit & Financial Executives Forum, the International Center for Professional Collectors and the Credit Institute of Canada.

Ken has recently co-authored and compiled a free e-book on Mentorship for the credit profession. He can be contacted at Young.ken@hotmail.com