

Back to Business Basics

By
KAZ

It seems lately that all I ever read about, hear about, or even talk about, is how things are changing so rapidly in the world.

I'm not really sure if I'm a Boomer or a Cusper, I guess it just depends on which research you follow. But I do know at times I get caught up with not only new technology, but also a plethora of new ways in which to apply these new discoveries.

I remember once listening to a speaker who told the story about coach Bear Bryant. They explained that although he was one of the most winning coaches in college football, he had a very, very small playbook for his team.

When asked how he could win so many college football games with such a small number of plays, he replied "my boys only need to know the basics, and they know them **very** well."

Doing business today and in the future will become exceedingly more challenging, yet I caution you to never, **never** forget the basics.

The basics of business will have slight variations from generation to generation, and technology to technology, but no matter how technologically advanced society becomes, good business ethics will always remain the same.

1. **Be honest** – I never met anyone who truly will tolerate a dishonest answer. If it will take you three or four weeks to repair whatever has been brought into your business, be honest. Or if you say you will call someone back that afternoon, do it! Even if you don't have the answer they may want. Teach all members of your team, no matter how uncomfortable, to always be honest in terms that the *customer* can understand.
2. **Be consistent** – I was once told the CEO of a very well known fast food chain said that consistency was the key to repeat business. He then went so far as to say "if you're going to serve a bad cup of coffee, serve a bad cup of coffee every time, everywhere." Odd as it may sound, people feel comfortable in an environment that stays consistent. That doesn't mean to avoid change, but to make sure when changes do occur within the organization, everyone knows about the change and implements all changes the same way, all the time.
3. **Be easy to do business with** – In a day and age where doing business should be easier and easier, I find it more frustrating than ever to give my business to someone. The word most used for the beginning of this century is **speed**. If this is the direction you and your company are heading, please do not sacrifice the simplicity of doing business with you.

How many times have you found yourself in line with a check cashing card or store card, and after writing a check you have to show a picture ID, have a manager sign it and then wait 3 minutes while the machine processes it. If this is for security, why not install something that can detect only you, such as a fingerprint or eye retina-coding machine. The more sophisticated we get in security the longer it takes to just get a few groceries. Will this drive more people to shop via Internet or fax in their grocery lists to food stores? My question then would be *“where would all the impulse buying go that so many retail stores thrive on in today’s business world?”*

- 4. Be responsible** – I find the term “Help Desk” to be a bit of an oxymoron at times. Most of the time I telephone a Help Desk person for a problem with my computer or my software, no one wants to take responsibility for the problem. Software people will say it’s another software application or something’s wrong with the hardware and hardware people always blame the multitude of software packages I use. On a rare occasion I will find someone who will go the extra mile in assisting me and usually this person is also very positive, upbeat and genuinely there for me not for the hourly wage.

Just once wouldn’t you like someone at the other end of the phone to say *“Not a problem, that may be a system flaw in our system, or possibly one of your other applications, but either way, I know I can solve your problem.”* For that response I’d gladly pay the exorbitant hourly rate.

- 5. Be flexible** – The one future ready trait that appears over and over again is the ability to deal with ambiguity. That’s not a concept that anyone over 30 feels truly comfortable with today though. One of the greatest things that I learned from my mother was to be open-minded in business. Over four decades ago, when she opened her flower shop she realized the importance of gathering all the information she could and then processing it in a variety of solutions. She never saw anything with tunnel vision and always treated her customers as friends. Each with their own personalities.

With the rate of information and technology doubling every 18 months, one of the most important business basics in preparing for the future will be flexibility.

What’s in your playbook for the 21st century? Did everyone on the team have a chance to contribute? If you were to ask your customers today how they would rate you on the five basics above, with a simple yes or no, how would you do?

How people do business in the next 5-10 years will change dramatically, but good business ethics will never change. Keep your playbook simple, review it often with all of your team members, and most importantly, always praise everyone for doing the basics well.

KAZ is an international speaker, author, consultant and coach who focuses on working with people who want to **BE** more and organizations that want to **DO** more. For a free booklist, more articles or a copy of **KAZ’s** speaking topics simply visit www.CompetitiveBalance.com and let us know how we can help you.