

OUR ECONOMY: BUSINESS ETHICS

Ethics are bread and butter of success



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The cola wars recently took an uplifting turn. In June, several Coca Cola employees in Atlanta approached rival Pepsi in Purchase, Westchester County, offering to sell Coke's trade secrets. Not only did Pepsi refuse, it notified Coke, which called the FBI and the plot was foiled.

While it would appear that three rogue Coke employees threw ethics to the wind, Pepsi's corporate ethics practices didn't bend. Given a similar "opportunity," how would Rochester-based businesses act?

On a daily basis, do we deal on an ethical and forthright basis with our customers, employees and each other? Would startup A act the way Pepsi did upon the surreptitious receipt of rival

startup B's proprietary plans? Fortunately, we've seen several positive signs.

For example, in a June 19 report in the *Democrat and Chronicle* ("City Hall looks to uphold integrity"), we learned of Rochester's initiative to systematically promote proper behavior and policies.

The Rochester Business Alliance believes that by conducting business according to core values of integrity, trust and respect, companies will prosper. In fact, Rochester businesses have received national recognition for business ethics practices and have fared very well in the marketplace. Last September, PAETEC Corp. won the American Business Ethics Award in the mid-size company category from the Society of Financial Service Professionals.

Another example is the activity leading to the annual Rochester Business Ethics Awards ceremony. This year, 93 businesses of varying sizes were nominated and invited to apply. Of that to-

tal, 18 applied with a comprehensive entry. These numbers represent a positive sign, for not only are they on the increase since the awards started four years ago, they represent one of the highest entry-per-nomination ratios in the nation.

As a past applicant and the 2005 small-company award recipient, Candace Walters, president of HR Works, writes on her Web site: "By stepping back and involving our executives and employees in thinking about our company's approach to ethics, we strengthened ourselves as an organization. Only later ... did we discover the bonus of learning how much significance our bankers, clients and vendors placed on this award."

On Sept. 12, the Rochester Business Ethics Awards will name the two 2006 award recipients. Guest speaker John Bogle, founder of Vanguard Funds and an industry beacon calling for a return to ethics and corporate responsibility, will further this discussion.

If you go

What: Rochester Business Ethics Awards.

When: Sept. 12, noon.

Where: Riverside Convention Center.

For reservations: (585) 383-1060; or www.RochesterBusinessEthics.com.

At the Rochester Business Ethics Awards committee, we hope to make ethics a year-round discussion in our community with a variety of other events. At the minimum, good business ethics should come to mind whenever anyone in Rochester drinks a product made by Coke or Pepsi. □

Cutrona represents the Rochester Business Alliance on the steering committee of the Rochester Business Ethics Awards, which is also sponsored by St. John Fisher College and the Rochester Chapter of the Society of Financial Services Professionals.