

I have been exposed to business from a young age. Growing up, my dad owned and operated a small landscaping business based out of the little town of Oswego, New York. I grew up observing both good and bad business principles without even realizing it. I loved knowing that his entrepreneurship is what provided for me and my family. Looking back and analyzing how my dad ran the business, I am able to identify both good and bad things that he did ethically and morally in his business.

My dad had two slogans that he religiously ran his business by. 1. The customer is always right and 2. Quality is more important than quantity. How can you disagree with those? My dad treated every customer like they were his best friend. He would stop working just to talk to the customer and hear what they had to say; he built real relationships with every single customer. My dad put all of his focus into taking care of the customer. He knew customers wanted quality work, and that is exactly what he gave them. We would never cut corners, we would always do exactly what we said we would do, and he would never charge the customer for something we didn't do. Externally, he ran a spectacular company; internally, there were a lot of issues.

Another slogan my dad ran his company by was, "It's my way or the highway." Employees of his never lasted longer than four months. I understand the turnover rate is going to be high in the landscaping field, but he went through employees faster than Joey Chestnut goes through hot dogs at an eating contest. My dad would yell and scream at his employees. He would never let them try a new way of doing something. His way was always the best way. My dad does not treat his employees with respect. He loses his temper and will fire people at the drop of a hat. My brother works for my dad and has been fired 5 times. They will get into an argument over just about anything and my dad will say, "You're fired; don't expect a ride home from work." But the next day, he will have to rehire my brother because no one else will work for him.

My dad's "ethical compass" points directly at the customer. He takes care of them, he doesn't cheat them, and he always leaves them happy. While he cares for the customer, he neglects his employees, which is ethically wrong. If my dad put forth more effort into taking care of his employees, he would be running a textbook example of an ethical business.

I was fortunate to observe how he ran his business as I grew up. It gave me an entrepreneurial spirit, I learned how to treat a customer, and I learned how not to treat an employee. Starting a business on my own has given me a wonderful opportunity to practice what I have learned growing up. I own and operate a small nut roasting business called Nat's Nuts. I sell at the public market in Rochester, at a flea market in Avon, and at Roberts Wesleyan College during sporting events. I am able to take what I learned at a young age and apply it to how I operate my business. I love interacting with customers. I build a relationship with them, I give them the best product I have to offer, and I make sure they leave my booth happy. I never cut corners when making the nuts and I sell exactly what I advertise. As a business man, I realize the importance of reaching the best possible profit margins, but getting there unethically is unacceptable.

Unlike my dad, I treat my employees with respect. I realize that I will not be able to do all of the work on my own. I need people who will come by me and help, who will have better ideas than I do, and who will treat the customer with just as much respect. I like to operate my business like it is a family. Immediate members of the family (employees) are the ones who deserve the most attention. They deserve to be taken care of the first. Friends of the family (customers) need to be loved and taken care of, but after the kids. If a company is not built on an ethical foundation from the inside, it will never really matter what it does on the outside.

I think ethics are important to business for a few reasons. An ethically run business will be more successful, will have a more significant impact on the world around us, and most importantly, will make God happy. Rather than running my business by one of the slogans my dad uses, I run my business under the instruction of Colossians 3:23, which says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters."