

This excerpt taken from

Nuggets of Wisdom for New Entrepreneurs
By Bullet Proof Your Business Now

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First Printing February 2015

Library and Archives Canada Cataloging in Publication

Bullet Proof Your Business Now,
Bullet Proof Your Start Up: Nuggets of Wisdom for New Entrepreneurs/ C.A.
Norman

ISBN: 978-0-9940168-1-2 paperback

ISBN: 978-0-9940168-0-5 eBook

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By C.A.Norman

Find'Em

You invest a lot of time, energy, and resources in finding and getting the customer to buy. You don't want to waste any of that effort. Let's discuss how to Keep 'em.

This is about what happens from the moment the customer places the order to the day you make your delivery or finish the service. Not to mention what happens as they use your product, and or experience what happens as a result of your service.

Think through the actual chain of events. How you will interact with them, deliver the product or service to them, when they finally pay the bill, and all the follow up in between and afterwards.

At each point along the way, deliver to the customer *everything* you promised. Keeping your customer is about two difficult-to-manage things: tediously mundane details and your people. These two things will make or break your sanity. Daily.

*NEVER NEGLECT DETAILS.
WHEN EVERYONE'S MIND IS DULLED OR DISTRACTED,
THE LEADER MUST BE DOUBLY VIGILANT.*

Colin Powell

THE TEDIOUSLY MUNDANE

Successful companies have a fanatical determination to deliver on their Purpose. They nail the details, write them down, refine them and standardize them. This standardized process is critical to their success in *Keep 'em*.

Details abound. With a product: the purchasing of raw materials, the manufacturing of raw materials into the final product, the final product on the shipping dock, the warranty work afterwards. With a service: the project plan followed for delivering, the execution, and the issuance of the final reports.

Think about *writing all those details down*. Think about how each must work – independently and co-dependently. I especially want you to start writing things down after a big snafu.

To start, you will do most everything by the seat of your pants, on the fly. Over time, it becomes intuitive. Which can work for a one-person operation, but not when you expand.

The bedrock of your business is your Purpose and Promise. By writing down the details, you reinforce them, and the Purpose and Promise they support. Your written document is your consistent way of doing business. It ultimately ensures you are doing everything you can to keep those customers.

In the beginning, you won't have all the answers; you'll need to look for them. You don't have to write anything complicated, nor do you have to do all the writing yourself. Your employees can often create better than you can. You *do* have to ensure that all the tedious and mundane is covered; that there are very clear points for check-in, for stopping, for gathering more information, and for not moving forward until certain criteria is in place. Standardization means expectations and responsibilities are clear and problems minimized. One big bonus is that you'll significantly reduce your role as firefighter.

DETAILS MATTER, IT'S WORTH WAITING TO GET IT RIGHT.

Steve Jobs

YOUR PEOPLE

I've never met an incompetent employee and I have no idea what the state of unmotivation looks like. My experience is limited to working with competent and motivated people. Sure, some were misguided, distracted, or in over their heads. Some of them weren't happy, some were tired, and some were even constantly angry.

But none of that had anything to do with being incompetent or unmotivated. It had everything to do with how they felt about the work they were doing, for whom or with whom they were working and whether they were making progress or not.

When you interview your prospective employees, explain your Big Idea, your Purpose, and your Promise. Size up the person and try to determine if they have the basic skills you want. More importantly, do they get excited about your Big Idea, Purpose, and Promise?

Then ask them two questions. What do you want to do? And how do you think we can help you get there?

It will take a few more questions to get to the answer you need. What do you want to have on your resume in six months? What skills do you want to use or develop? What do *you* want to get out of this?

Let them tell you what they want. Then you figure out if they can give you what you want. If there's a fit, sketch out how and what you want them to accomplish and how you will help them get what they want.

You depend on your staff to share your enthusiasm, spread your Big Idea, and follow you in fulfilling your Purpose and Promise. Your objective is to help them get what they want within the larger context of what you need.

Does this seem like a completely bass-ackwards way of dealing with your employees? Please bear with me. Your highest priority is to push on delivering results. Be very clear in communicating exactly what your business needs to accomplish. Ask the folks what they want to get out of the project/job/career. Then move heaven and earth to help them get there.

TO SUM UP

Keeping the Customer has everything to do with the *way* you do business. You want to deliver exactly what was ordered, in exactly the time frame committed, at the exact level of quality, service, and attention promised. Every time.

To do that? Define, standardize and write down your unique and distinct way of conducting business. Link everything you do and want to have happen back to your Big Idea, your Purpose and Promise. Ensure your employees have full access to and understand your way of doing business. Help your employees get what they want within the context of what you need.

► **Bullet Proof Nugget:** Solid, documented processes free your people to be extra-ordinary

Along the Yellow Brick Road

I was managing a contract packaging facility. We had a quality problem –an unacceptable number of bottles with a tiny hole or imperfection. Each carton contained at least six bottles and it only took seepage from one bad bottle to ruin an entire skid. Rework was royally annoyed, Production was frustrated, the Customer was very close to walking away and my patience had all but disappeared.

One day, the fellow who managed both the scheduling and the return of product completely lost it. I can still hear his voice echoing across the room: ***Where on this P.O. does it say that the customer wants the bottles with holes in them? Nowhere! No reference to holey bottles, anywhere on the P.O.! This has gone on waaay too long. Let's give 'em what they ask for!***

We want back to basics. Back to the standardized, written processes and procedures that we'd so carefully developed. And once we did that, the root cause was discovered. Stopped from ever happening again.

Happy Rework. Happy Production. Happy Customer. Best of all happy me.

Focus on driving results, not people. I promise. You will get everything you want and more!