

What Has Happened To Good Old-Fashioned Business Courtesy?

We all know that the rate of change in the business and tech world is hard to keep up with. The opportunities that the new economy has presented us are huge and I like to think that the positives of change far out way the negatives. However, is it me or is basic business courtesy generally less prevalent than it was say 10 years ago? Talking to some of my peers and partners it seems so unfortunately.

Today I was booked in for a meeting with my colleague to meet a Hiring Executive with a well known company to discuss a critical hiring campaign for a senior level commercial leadership appointment. We turned up on time and due to a fire drill in the building the meeting was slightly delayed. We rang ahead of time to let the person know that we had arrived.

Some time later we received an SMS message to say that we should come back next week instead! Not a phone call, not an apology not even a quick meeting to apologize in person. Just an assumption that we should come back next week. No sorry, nothing, just come back next week.....!

Call me old fashioned perhaps but I would feel awful if the tables were reversed and I had a meeting scheduled but was unable to see that person once they had arrived, not knowing if they had travelled 5 minutes or 2 hours to see me. I'd do my best to apologize in person at the very minimum or at least send an email to apologize and suggest that I come to see them instead next time. Whatever, I'd do the right thing to make the situation better and even then still feel pretty bad about it.

The reality of the situation for us was that it did not cause a real issue to our schedule but it made us realize that this was likely the experience that a candidate would have if placed in the same circumstances. We imagined how a candidate would feel had they prepared for an interview (as we had for the meeting) and turned up on time after investing time and money in attending only to be turned away with an SMS suggesting that they come back next week.

This is the culture of that company – Period. This is not a company that cares a great deal about candidate experience or that of their partners either.

This is how some companies can turn from being target clients to candidate source companies in the space of a few minutes in the eyes of a headhunter. More fundamentally, it drove home to us just how critical good business behavior and manners are, and how a lack of them can completely change your view on a person or the company that they represent.

We work in the people business. Most people reading this article will work in the tech sector but lets not forget that it is a people business too. In fact, just about all of us work in the people business. When hiring, many companies talk about a great candidate experience and there seems to be an ever-growing number of software companies that sell solutions for driving

enhanced Customer Experience but it amazes me just how many forget about candidate experience or partner experience.

In this world of “great experiences” I hear all the time from people who seem to receive poor experiences from potential employers, recruiters, suppliers and potential business partners?

Our experience today was the catalyst to write this article but from my own experience and that of my extensive network, I can absolutely see that in the eyes of some, it is acceptable not to return calls, reply to emails, not give candidate feedback, not to make any acknowledgement after a meeting or to turn people away without even an explanation when they have travelled to meet you.

Replying to email can be the biggest challenge and a delayed reply is certainly better than none at all. We are all guilty of delayed email responses, me included, with the ever-increasing number of emails to respond to. It can often be quicker to pick up the phone and speak to someone instead of crafting an email, reading it back, editing it, thinking about it some more and then sending the mail. A phone call is often more appreciated to email especially if we are letting people go from a process that someone has invested time and money into.

The digital revolution means that we are all busier than ever and corporate expectations seem higher than ever trying to deliver larger returns with less resource. Lets not forget that whilst most of us are trying to build perpetual revenue streams, no matter what business we are in, building healthy long term relationships is the key to success and it is after all the small things that make a difference.

Are well all so busy that it is OK to forget basic business courtesy? I hope not!

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