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# When Do You Fire Your Customer? (Case Study)

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## When Do You Fire Your Customer? (Case Study)



The senior management of Software Dynamics, Inc. had just completed its Business Roadmap, spelling out SDI's Vision, Mission, Values and Guiding Principles.

One section described the company's position toward its customers: "We realize we are dependent on close relationships with our clients, and will go the extra mile to assure we are meeting their requirements and serving their needs."

Shortly after, the purchasing agent for one of SDI's largest customers asked to meet privately with Paul, SDI's sales manager. It was soon clear he wanted more than good service, delivery and competitive pricing. He wanted a personal "commission," a percentage of SDI's next order, and demanded Paul's immediate response.

The loss of this key account would affect everyone at SDI. The company had, after all, committed to "go the extra mile" for its customers. But Paul considered a larger issue at stake, expressed in SDI's Corporate Values—to always act with integrity. Paul's very next words could impact SDI's future for years to come.

### DISCUSSION

- How often do corporate values get worked into day-to-day business conduct versus ending only in a fancy brochure or posted on a bulletin board?
- How might Paul use this situation to reflect both his and SDI's core values?
- Is there a way through this dilemma that preserves the business yet retains SDI's integrity, or is there no alternative but to "fire the customer"?

### REFERENCES

- Buy the truth, and do not sell it (Proverbs 23:23).
- And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous

(Exodus 23:8).

- Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9).

#### BEST PRACTICES

The culture of an organization is set by senior leadership, but validated or eroded by the everyday decisions of many—“moments of truth” as the president of a major airline once said. The healthy organization empowers its people to do the right thing, and backs them up wholeheartedly when they respond appropriately.

*This case is an illustration of the wisdom of speaking the truth, Proverbs 23:23. Click [here](#) to go (or return) to this passage.*

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