

August 15th, 1983

# Speech at National Franchise Convention

C. William Pollard

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NATIONAL FRANCHISE CONVENTION

C. William Pollard

August 15, 1983

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(Introduction included the joke about the Chicago Bears, White Sox, and Mayor Washington paying taxes.)

You know we can joke about our country, but often we fail to realize the great heritage and rich privileges of freedom we have in this great country. These past two weeks I had the opportunity of taking my family on our own freedom appreciation tour. Not here in the United States, but in countries of Europe that unlike America have in the past, and in some cases even today, experienced the hard life of tyranny. We visited England and saw some of the historical reminders of the system from which we rebelled and revolted. I had been to the tower of London before, but now as I stood there with my children explaining what had occurred under the Absolute Rule of Monarchy, I was truly thankful to be an American.

Our visits to Austria and Germany reminded us of the historical role the church and state had played and how some of these relationships had led to abuses of power resulting in great wealth for a few and poverty and misery for many, including conflicts and wars, for centuries an attempt to preserve this position of power. Once again I was thankful for the clear separation of church and state in America and for our heritage of religious

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freedom. Our visit to a small town just outside of Munich called Dachau, at the World War II concentration camp located there where over 50,000 Jews lost their life, provided a vivid picture of the results of tyranny in the 20th Century.

And then to West and East Berlin where, as I looked over the wall, I experienced some of the emotions of the people who are living under a system of modern-day tyranny. Our visit to the World War II battle fields in Germany and Holland were highlighted by spending time in an American cemetery where row upon row of white crosses in a "Flanders Field" reminded us of the price of freedom. "God bless America. Land that I love. Stand beside her and guide her through the night with your light from above. From the mountains to the prairies to the oceans white with foam. God bless America. My home sweet home."

You know one of the great freedoms we have in this country is the freedom to chose how we are going to earn a living, to be in business for ourselves. John Nesbitt, the author of Megatrends has identified ten major trends in our society that will affect our future. As he pointed out, the move to decentralization and independence, he commented on the entrepreneural explosion of the 80's. He noted that in 1950 we were creating new businesses at a rate of 93,000 per year. By 1980 the figure had expanded to over 600,000 per year. Of America's 11 million different types of businesses, 10.8 million are small businesses. 60 million of the nation's approximately 100 million work force

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are employed in small businesses. Recent studies have indicated that small businesses are responsible for most of the new jobs created in the past five years. In fact, two-thirds of all new jobs were created by businesses employing less than 20 people.

ServiceMaster is part of that explosive growth. We have been in business for over 35 years. But, did you know that those new businesses who have joined us in the last five years now represent over one-third of our total residential and commercial business? Our licensees are at work today and every day in the year in more than 1,000 homes. The providing of these services would not be possible without a franchise network of small business led my dedicated entrepreneurs.

But, what are the essential elements of a successful business? There are three that I want to focus on with you this afternoon: the customer, quality, and people.

It is essential in our type of business that we always keep our eyes on the customer. Who is the customer? For most, the answer to the question may seem obvious. But if I was to ask the question of a member of the 2300 corporate staff, I might get the answer, our MFC's. Or, if I was to ask one of our distributors I might get the answer, our licensees. Neither answer would be on target. What business are we in after all? The franchise business or the residential and commercial cleaning business? Is it possible for some of us who say we are in this

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business to do our job for an entire twelve month period and never listened to a homemaker tell about her needs or what she thinks of our service. Or listen to an insurance adjustor. Or talk with a manager of a commercial building about our service? The customer we must all keep our eyes on, understand the needs of, and be able to relate our service to, is the person who pays the bill. When was the last time you thanked your customers?

Several weeks ago I was at a meeting of bankers. One of the bankers was also one of our customers. He made a special effort to tell me about his last experience with ServiceMaster. We had done his living room carpet and refinished his front room hall. The job had been well done. What had impressed him most had been the call he had received a week later from a ServiceMaster licensee confirming that the work had been done to the customer's satisfaction. And get this, thanking him for the job! A little thank you went a long way. You see this licensee had learned the important lesson of the ongoing repeat sale.

How many of us really know our customers? If I were to ask you to make a list of your top twenty customers, how many of them would you call a friend? When was the last time they saw you on the job or you listened to them comment about your service? Could you list the names of the customers you have lost in the last year? What was the nature of your relationship with the key decision maker? Is there a tone in your organization that causes your team to respond as if you were on the verge of losing

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every customer?

The next point is quality. When we keep our eyes on the customer we also develop an obsession for quality. Quality in our business is based primarily on people's perceptions. In fact, we have the great opportunity to develop and create a climate for positive expectations. When we first think of quality we all relate to the physical appearance of the work product. But, in our business a clean carpet is not the finished product. Too many times we fall into the trap of being compared with awesome rams of \$22.50 per room without differentiating ourselves and the delivery of the whole service package. You see when people buy ServiceMaster they are also buying liability. They know or should expect that only trained individuals can do the work. That only proven ServiceMaster products and systems will be used. That nothing will be missing when we are gone. That satisfaction will be guaranteed and that we will be fair and honest in all of our dealings. They should also expect that added extra service, whether it be in timing the job to the customer's convenience or in responding quickly to an emergency situation. All of this is quality assurance, QA. As Denis has mentioned, it will become an integral part of our new advertising program. It is something we can all relate to and must be greater disciplined at in our organization to accomplish.

Now these two characteristics of a successful business, a love for the customer, and an obsession for quality, are nothing

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more than fine words in a speech if we do not have people in our business believing in it and living it. What does it take to create an organization of people who are loving the customer and pursuing excellence? It takes ordinary people like you and me who are motivated to accomplish extraordinary results. We all want to be a part of a winning team, yet also stick out just enough to be noticed. Do your people feel part of a team? How are you identifying with that team as a winning team?

A licensee recently shared with me a program he had developed for his two crews that included incentives for increased productivity and receipt of customer referrals and endorsements with a special monthly recognition for the individual who was the top performer for the month. You see, this plan provided both team identity and individual recognition. People want to be treated with respect. As adults, they need to be trusted to have positive reinforcements. Do not ever find yourself falling into the trap of concluding that "this business would be so easy if it weren't for people." We are in the people development business.

You know, my recent trip to East Berlin provided me with a vivid example of what happens when you treat people like machines. (Here tell story of first day on guided tour when everything looked great, second day when I went in individually and was forced to buy German marks and then couldn't get anyone to wait on me.)

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The system may have looked good on paper but it wasn't working. You see we weren't really a customer. We had no choice. We had to spend. The sales people really did not care about us, whether they sold one article or 100. It did not matter. We were a nuisance with no pride of ownership, no value or purpose in developing a relationship with the customer. They were doing their duty. The state was in control. Where is the people development for growth in such a system? You take away a care and love for the customer and the people providing the service and where is there meaning in one's work?

The meaning in our work comes from the recognition that the people we work with and the people we serve are especially created in God's image. They have value and worth and their work environment is contributing to the type of person they are becoming. You see it is for this reason that we put God first in our business. It is only as we understand that it is by Him that we find true meaning in life that we can fully implement the people development objectives of our business.

(End with letter from Roger Westrate to Bob DeJong)