

# Can working for a good company make you a better person?

Everyone knows that working for an unscrupulous company or toxic boss can be very stressful, but I've found myself wondering lately: Can working for a good company be good for you? I'm wondering if working for a company with exemplary values can be good for your character or make you a better citizen.

This was on my mind when I visited with Richard J. Green, CEO of Firsttrust in Whitemarsh. Firsttrust is family-owned with 23 branches and a growing consumer, real estate, business and commercial banking business. Its slogan is, "Everything is personal." It seems to me that one's character is about as personal as it gets.

I was looking into several statements to prospective employees I discovered on the Firsttrust website suggesting that working for the company might actually be good for your health! Here is an example: "As a Firsttrust employee, your growth is our growth" and "We celebrate the leader in you." I wanted to know: Is this for real? And what are the results of this kind of commitment to employees?

Green told me the story of his grandfather's commitment to building trust in the community. Samuel A. Green believed that a good banker is like part of your family. "How so?" I pressed. Richard replied, "Because the customer is entrusting their life savings to us. You'd better be able to trust your banker like you do your brother."

Green also said that the very fact of Firsttrust's being a third-generation family-owned business contributes to trust. Again, I said, "How so?" "Because we're not for sale every day," he answered. "Our employees and the communities we serve know that we aren't going away anytime soon. We're here to stay."

As Green spoke about his grandfather's values, they seemed to parallel a favorite formulation of trust I share with my clients: If you want to build trust, you first must be credible, i.e., know the in's and out's of your business. Secondly, you must be reliable, i.e., do what you say you're going to do. Finally, you have to truly commit yourself to the betterment of those you serve, striving to understand their needs and their concerns and then address them.

So being trustworthy is good for customers, but what about for employees?

It was the story about the food drive that told me.

Last summer, the Philadelphia Inquirer ran a story about shortages at local food pantries, which would leave 52,000 area children without food during the month of August. The day after the story ran, three Firsttrust employees — completely independent of one another — called the corporate office suggesting that the firm coordinate a food drive. This was not a centrally planned corporate PR ploy, this was a grassroots effort by concerned employees who reached out to HQ knowing their concern would be shared by their leaders. Employees and Firsttrust customers ended up donating nearly two tons of food.

A cynic might say that the employees who called corporate probably would



## Perspective on People

Richard McKnight

have taken action anyhow and didn't need corporate support to be good citizens. Maybe so. But the company's lead-

ers responded because they wanted to encourage and support good citizenship. Because they did, hundreds of employees and customers got involved who probably would not have otherwise.

I came away believing that everyone is better off because we have companies like Firsttrust in our community. I felt prouder of our community. Firsttrust is not the only company in the area that has a beneficial effect on its employees. As I've related this story to some of my col-

leagues and clients, several have said, mentioning other Delaware Valley firms, "You know, Company X is like that, too, and so is Company Y." We're lucky to have such good neighbors. We're all better off because of them.

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