

Morality and Ethics in Modern Business

A Christian Perspective for Today's Businessperson



Dr. Dennis Hocker is committed to living and running his business to the highest ethic and moral standards. He is a teacher and served as Chairman of the Board of Dellville United Methodist Church for nearly 20 years.

This is presented to show that biblical principles still work in the twenty-first century.

In the 2004 Presidential Election the number one factor cited by voters for re-electing President George W. Bush was that of morality and ethics. Knowing where Bush stood on fundamental values of family, faith, morality, and basic American principles turned the election in his favor.

Can today's businessperson operate under the same values as our founding fathers and still survive? Not only can they survive but they thrive!

In a world where legal technicalities and fine print are used to avoid paying for services or to void agreements, how should we operate? Whether you consider yourself a Christian or not, the following references will help you understand the Judeo-Christian beliefs that are the basis for our laws and give you a roadmap for running a successful business.

In my profession as a business advisor I find many business owners conflicted between the need for profits and their core values. What are the keys to true business success? Hard work, knowledge, respect for employees, honesty, forgiveness, generosity, humility, and reputation are all basic traits seen in successful ventures.

Hard work should come as no surprise to anyone. Starting and running a business is not a job, it is a passion and life-consuming task.

Prov 14: 23 All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

The businessperson must realize that family life and business life must be separate. That seeing your child's recital or spending quality time at home is more important than signing a new contract.

1 Tim 6: 9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

Determine what is important in your life then work hard to create your desired outcome.

Scriptures clearly tell us to seek knowledge. In our business lives the more we know, the more valuable we become to our customers and the more successful we become. While this may sound self-serving from someone that is a business advisor, I have found the most successful businesses have a solid team behind them.

Prov 15: 22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

*Prov 3: 13 Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding,
14 for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold.*

15 She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.

16 Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.

Seek help from those you trust and respect.

Would you rather have a business that wins awards for profits and growth or a business that wins awards for being a great place to work? Profits disappear but your impact on individual lives last long after you and your business are gone.

Col 4:1 Masters, treat your employees justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Prov 3: 27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

Prov 11: 12 Whoever belittles another lacks sense, but an intelligent person remains silent.

Treat employees with fairness, praise them often, and correct them privately and with compassion.

If you expect to be treated honestly, be a person of integrity. It is important that we live our business lives as we desire business in general to become. Every dispute has two sides, settle any disagreement quickly and fairly.

Phil 2: 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Rom 14: 13 Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.

Prov 18: 17 The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.

Integrity and honesty should be your top business value.

Humility is a trait that is shared by the most successful business leaders. You need not boast and attempt to impress others. Your actions speak of your true values to the community, your customers, and your employees.

Gal 6: 3 If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

4 Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else.

Matt 6: 6:1 "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Success should make you humble, not boastful.

Always deliver on your promises. Admit your mistakes. Treat others as you would like to be treated. Don't permit your company to use legal technicalities or simple misunderstandings to disappoint or cheat your customers or employees.

James 5:12 Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

The biblical approach to business, the moral and ethical approach, is common sense to most Americans. However; as we are faced with the trials of operating a business, we often forget these simple truths. American business is full of fair and just people with high ethical standards. In this post-Enron age we rarely hear of their accomplishments because the media does not consider it to be newsworthy.

Support those in business who live to the higher standard. Strive to have your business and your employees value and operate under the simple guidelines we've discussed here.

Improving the business climate starts with our own individual commitment to create a moral and ethical business. Set high values for your company and do not compromise. An ethical and fair business world starts with you.