



Marketplace Flash

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Leadership According to Fred

A June 2001 interview of Fred Smith, CEO of FedEx, by *Fast Company* provides insight into Mr. Smith's management practices. In part the article records the following comment: *"My leadership philosophy is a synthesis of the principles taught by the marines and every organization for the past 200 years. When people walk in the door, they want to know: What do you expect out of me? What's in this deal for me? What do I have to do to get ahead? Where do I go in this organization to get justice if I'm not treated appropriately? They want to know how they're doing. They want some feedback. And they want to know that what they are doing is important. If you take the basic principles of leadership and answer those questions over and over again, you can be successful dealing with people. The thing that I think is missing most in business is people who really understand how to deal with rank-and-file employees."*

Fred realizes that the inherent state of human beings is narcissistic, a condition that infects all of us to some degree. How does Fred take a collection of self-centered individuals and turn them into a coordinated team that efficiently accomplishes FedEx's mission? Self-centered people are not concerned about the team; they are only concerned about themselves. So what does he do? The key is to meet their needs. By doing this, he opens the door for teamwork. Satisfied, content people can put aside personal agendas and work together for the good of the whole. Perhaps this explains the success of Southwest Airlines. In the book *Nuts*, chapter 19 is titled "Customers Come Second". This chapter articulates Southwest's philosophy of putting employees ahead of customers. Satisfied, content employees pass on the good treatment to the customers. In other words, fill up the cup of your employees and it will overflow on to your customers. An amazing reality, but it is nothing more than the principle of sowing and reaping.

If you want to build a team, start by building your employees. Pour blessings into their lives. Value them and help them reach their potential. Provide them with vision, direction, resources, and tools. Then stand back and watch them work as team to bless your customers, reputation, and bottom line.