
WHAT'S IMPORTANT | Volume I, Issue 3 | March 28, 2005

"What's Important" is a universal concern. The phrase resonates with an infinite number of meanings. What's important is both a question and an answer, depending on the situation.

A friend of mine does management training at a national chain of convenience stores. Among the topics addressed in seminars is the retention of quality employees – a real challenge to managers when you consider the pay scale in the service industry. During these discussions, participants are asked, "What has caused you to stay long enough to become a manager?" A new manager, Cynthia, took the question and said, "It was a \$19 baseball glove."

Cynthia told the group that she originally took a clerk job as an interim position while she looked for something better. One day behind the counter, she received a phone call from her nine-year old son, Jimmy. He needed a baseball glove for Little League. She explained that as a single mother, money was very tight, and her check would have to go for paying bills. The glove would have to wait.

When Cynthia arrived for work the next morning, Tim, the store manager, asked her to come to into his office. Cynthia wondered if she had done something wrong or left some part of her job incomplete from the day before. Tim handed her a box. "I overheard you talking to your son yesterday," he said, "and I know that it is hard to explain things to kids. This is a baseball glove for Jimmy because he may not understand how important he is, even though you have to pay bills before you can buy gloves. You know we can't pay good people like you as much as we would like to; but we do care, and I want you to know you are important to us."

The thoughtfulness, empathy and love of this convenience store manager demonstrates vividly that people do remember how much an employer cares, not only how much the employer pays. An important lesson for the price of a Little League baseball glove.

Email me at chuck@durakis.com to share your thoughts.

Thanks,

Chuck