

Deception, lies and money

Where does truth-telling get you? It is foundational in your personal life and in business. Justin Brady from Test of Time Design thinks it's simple: just be honest.

Over the years I have worked on growing my business and developing strong personal relationships with new clients and business partners. Throughout my journey, I have taken notice of strategies that work, and those that don't. (And I am sure there are more lessons to learn.) One particular business strategy however, is fail safe. It can win clients long term and build unshakable respect for your company locally and nationally. It is flawless.

A few years ago I was listening to an entrepreneurial panel sponsored by Young Professionals Connection. Among others, Brian Hemesath of Catchwind talked about telling the truth to your clients and prospects; don't lie about anything. Fast forward 2 years later and I, being fortunate enough to sit on a panel with Ben Milne of Dwolla, overheard him say "People Lie." Of course he had a great point to follow, but you get the idea.

Just a few weeks ago, Character Counts In Iowa tweeted a quote by Edgar J. Mohn. "A lie has speed, but truth has endurance." This quote is elegant and beautiful, but certainly Edgar isn't the first to observe this truth. Adam and Eve observed this truth in Genesis 3, when they attempted lying to God. (Mental note: don't lie to God.)

Edgar's quote is shockingly accurate, and in Des Moines, the way a lie plays out, is sped up considering our size. Everyone knows each other, and when a lie is said, it travels like lightning around the business community, raising red flags to those who know the person or work with the person. Of course, that lie may have won a deal initially, or even saved face.

But when people find out they have been deceived that relationship has been lost. Forever.

Even if someone won't find out about your deception, most people know when they are being lied to in the form of a "hunch", and they will subconsciously stay away from you. They don't know why, but you just make them uncomfortable. (For more research on this read Paul Ekman's book, "Emotions Revealed".)

So, what is this flawless business strategy? It's actually quite simple: Be honest. There are a handful of deals I have most likely lost for companies and even myself, because I personally refused to continue the deadly deception cycle. If I just held my mouth shut I might have a few more "friends" (and happy bosses) but my character would be destroyed and my business certainly wouldn't last.