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Your company's image: A reflection of success?

Family businesses, both large and small, should be keenly aware that the overall attitude, appearance and behavior of their employees — from the receptionist to the CEO — are directly related to the overall organizational image and how the public and clients perceive the total enterprise. It is difficult for a business to appear professional, credible and successful, if indeed, its personnel do not reflect that image. For those reasons, as well as oth-

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ers, it is vitally important all employees strive to project a positive attitude, be knowledgeable of quality customer service strategies and company policies/procedures, demonstrate a willingness to help, communicate effectively, and present an appropriate professional image.

- Can you recall phoning an organization for information, and receiving a cold and curt, "Hello," from a voice that projected, "I'm busy, why are you interrupting me?," rather than a pleasant, "Good morning," from a voice that suggested, "We're so glad you called. How can we help you?"

- Have you ever walked into an

office and had to wait until the front desk employee finished her personal call, stopped reading a magazine or ended a side conversation before she acknowledged your presence?

- Have you ever waited in a reception area where the support staff sat polishing her nails, or better yet, licking her fingers while she devoured lunch at her desk, and the entire office smelled like a fast food restaurant?

- What about the profusion of sloppy, inappropriate and in-poor taste attire worn by so many in today's workplace. Perhaps, the idea of "you never get a second chance to make a first impression" has gone by the wayside.

Sound like extreme exaggerations? On the contrary. These are only a few examples of unprofessional acts of behavior that occur every day in many businesses, including family businesses.

The importance of company image and integrity transmitted by employees to the outside world has increased, and it continues to gain momentum. No matter what the job title, each person within a company is, in some way, by performance and behavior, expressing the overall image of the entire firm. Because competition, especially with family oriented businesses, and the need for quality service/products have increased drastically, organizations must change to meet those needs. Family businesses must realize their reputation and their success can de-

pend on how their employees are perceived by the customer.

So, what can be done? Managers within the family can develop and present specific professional development training programs, convey positive reinforcement, offer praise and recognition, and most importantly, role model behavior. For example, when it comes to dress and appearance in family businesses, employees often take visual cues from the owner(s) on appropriate attire. So, check yourself — is your professional dress representative of the public image you desire for your company?

In addition to family members, hiring the right people in the proper positions from the very start is important; however, your business must continue to help staff develop the necessary skills to project a high level of professionalism.

In today's competitive global marketplace, your organizational image is of vital importance. I encourage you to assess your company's image — is it one of professionalism, credibility, a high level of integrity? Or, could that image use a little enhancing? My recommendation is to dedicate the time and funds necessary to improve the overall image of the family business. It definitely will be an investment in success.

For more information on Dr. White's programs and publications, visit www.successimages.com or call (225) 769-2307. ●