

## Chapter 6

### Lucky #4 - Organizational Advocacy/Commitment

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One reason the mobile app succeeded so quickly was that we purposefully tied it to the company mission. And that's the basis of the second half of this core competency: Organizational Advocacy and Commitment, or Lucky #4.

In its simplest form, organizational advocacy and commitment involve understanding the company's mission and core values and entirely buying into both. If you envision a company

as a rowboat, I can offer this analogy: If you're not in the boat rowing, you're an anchor. Nothing more than dead weight impeding progress. The more people not rowing, the more difficult it becomes for the dedicated rowers to move the boat until, eventually, it's dead in the water. Once you grab an oar, you must commit to rowing with all your abilities until reaching the destination.

In my experience, focusing on this competency invariably leads to great opportunities for promotions. I've worked at companies where I found myself on both sides of the mission statement. At the company where

I disagreed with the core mission, I found it difficult to deliver any project regardless of personal effort, and ultimately that company never implemented the project I completed for them. The companies in which I fully bought into and believed in the core mission, I enjoyed much more success.

Fully understanding the company mission, whatever it may be, from absolute customer service commitment to pure product development, is the first step. Does this company's mission align with my goals, values, and vision of success? Will I like working for this

company? Can I buy into this company's mission and become an advocate for it? These questions should be answered honestly, and a decision made immediately. After all, what's the point in joining an organization with a mission you cannot buy into? If your mission differs from theirs, move on – and do it quickly!

I was once recruited to work in the Pawn industry. At first, I had many reservations. After all, I worked at large investment banking institutions and one of the largest consumer banks in the world. My view of the pawn industry as an adult had been fully embedded by

watching Starsky and Hutch as a kid. It seemed shady. I was hesitant but was encouraged to go and learn about this company. I was wrong...

Ultimately, they had a mission statement and operating tenets closely aligned with my core values. They offered a simple philosophy: act with a servant's heart, do the right thing, and always look out for our customers and co-workers. Immediately I knew I could commit to this company and be an organizational advocate since their mission felt like a natural fit for me.

I demonstrated my commitment day in and day out, providing

dedicated customer service regardless of the scenario, individually or by assisting colleagues in meeting, and often exceeding customer needs.

As a direct reward for my consistent advocacy and commitment, the company entrusted me with greater responsibility and a more significant role in the organization. They recognized me as not only a technology asset but as a significant brand advocate for the customer, from initial contact through transaction completion. I created measurable value by understanding and buying into the company mission, thus

succeeding with this particular organization.

This company operated roughly 900 locations across the U.S. As part of my job, I began routinely visiting them and understanding their operations and problem-solving methods, particularly related to customer service. My predecessor had chosen not to use this hands-on approach, and as a result, many locations lacked the client-centered mission of the company. On the other hand, I immediately bought into the mission, implementing it at the source and communicating directly with customers and colleagues to better understand and solve

problems. In fact, my methods became part of the base requirements for working in the Information Technology department of this company.

Within months, the entire IT organizational focus shifted with respect to customer service. A hunger and desire developed among our staff to be present, to understand the customer transaction at the source, to improve problem-solving, and to generally improve transactions and interactions at the locations on a day-to-day basis. Suddenly, everyone invested in learning how our locations operate under



my guidance, and things improved.

By completely buying into the mission and leading by example with viable, measurable results, I changed the organizational culture from a detached "can't do" to a "can do" mindset. Granted, the phrase 'leading by example' is an old cliché, but it undeniably works when you buy into a mission and – pardon another cliché – talk the talk and walk the walk.

My consistent adherence to the corporate mission created a domino effect with respect to commitment and advocacy for that company, which naturally translated to substantially a

better customer experience – which translated to more revenue.

I firmly believe the core competency of organizational advocacy and commitment emerged as a major differentiator in my career. I came into the IT industry with a desire to serve, listen to people and communicate, and, more important, to deliver on my word and promise to the best of my capabilities – just like Grandpa and my Dad.

Delivering my promises became a reality by taking proactive actions, such as personally visiting sites and promoting positivity. It is vital to get

to know and fully understand as many aspects of the business as possible. If you sell cars for a living, visit the service bay and communicate with the mechanics, get to know the finance department at a level beyond nickels and dimes, work with other salespeople and learn from their successes and failures. It can only benefit you in the long run if you grasp their roles in the organization and how they feel about their roles, then utilize that information when interacting with clients.

Without organizational advocacy, people tend to languish in their box, unable to

jump to a higher box or to the right. Team members rarely advance to upper echelons simply because they've lost the positive attitude, belief, and drive - the three key things that motivate people to advance the organizational strategy. They stop rowing the boat and become anchors.

Those who know me know I am a "focus on what's going right and do more of it" kind of guy. When you focus like that, advocacy becomes easier.

When *everyone* buys into the corporate mission, the results are often outstanding for the success of the business and your career. As a leader, you must

take it upon yourself to keep the rowers rowing and use every tool available to keep the anchors out of the boat. If they are in it – cut the line and throw them overboard!