

**The Eagle's Perch – April 2010**  
***Your Leadership Resource for***  
***Practical Insight, Powerful Impact***

The Proof is in the Performance  
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**Practical Insight**

Have you ever experienced excellent service? You know... the kind of service that you can hardly wait to share with others? In some cases, years after that experience, we recount the story to others. These situations are generally seen as “above and beyond” rare instances.

In working with business leaders, particularly around branding, marketing and business development, our early discussions often lead to one question: “How do we increase our profitability?” In other words, what can you do that few others are doing to set yourself apart from the competition, resulting in increased opportunities?

**Powerful Impact**

Recently, I went to a fast food restaurant, placing my drive-thru order five minutes before closing. Cheerfully, the young lady welcomed me, took my order, confirmed my request and told me that she looked forward to seeing me at the window. As the young lady continued taking other orders, the store manager gave us our freshly prepared food (it was actually HOT!). “Any time I have ever been here, this staff is consistently courteous, professional, exuding refreshing attitudes and such a pleasure to deal with,” I shared with the manager. She graciously thanked me, told me how much the staff would appreciate hearing that and reiterated how much that meant to her before we pulled away.

Why has this business experienced tremendous success, even in a so-called down economy? Because their performance aligns with their corporate purpose to positively impact everyone who experiences their brand. Unlike another restaurant with similar potential but varying results, they simply deliver what they promise – consistently! That IS your brand.

One of my favorite business books is The Personal Touch: What You Really Need to Succeed in Today's Fast-paced Business World by Terrie Williams. The book has been around for a while but the principles are timeless. In her chapter on reputation, Terrie reminds us that “to establish or enhance a good reputation, you must combine... character-building ingredients including hard work,

persistence, honesty and disdain for mediocrity...” If you really want to set yourself and your business apart, begin with delivering what you promise, when you said it would be done, with excellence and an appreciation for those who help make you and your business successful. Everything else should be added to that foundation. I know it sounds basic but many organizations and leaders do not deliver according to that standard.

Before discussing new and different strategies, I go back to the foundation – the basics – with my clients:

- What have you promised to deliver to your customers and employees? When you are courting and recruiting them, what promises do you make?
- How consistent are you at fulfilling those promises?
- What are your organization’s best practices, the personal touches that you add to increase the value to your customer?
- What are the specific gaps in what you have promised and what you are delivering?
- How do you plan to align your performance with their expectations?

Sadly, good, solid service graciously delivered with the customer’s best interests in mind is so infrequent that it seems more like an “above and beyond” effort when you get it. Excellence is reflected in your execution, not flashy marketing copy, the latest trend or short-term fixes. Your actions, results and profitability are positively correlated. What you do, and how you do it, speaks louder than any slick marketing materials or catchy slogans. The proof is in the performance!

### **In Other Words**

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”  
(Aristotle)

### **Lifelong Learning**

The Personal Touch: What You Really Need to Succeed in Today’s Fast-paced Business World, Terrie Williams