



## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE – TRANSLATED INTO YOUR BUSINESS...

I just recently discussed strategic issues with a small group of top bankers in our region. All of us knew a lot about positioning, market segmentation and things like that, but in my opinion **there are the small things in a manager's personal philosophy that are essential and deciding to be successful** not only with your company, but as well as with you personally.

I would like to take my brother as an example: 27 years ago he started his career as a trainee in a small retail shop for brown and white goods. He sold light bulbs, electric irons, TV sets, installation material for electricians and many other things. Today he's one of the top salespersons in his region and he still adores his job, because – as he told me – there is something special in his heart, which might be called the philosophy of life. And he gave me some examples:

One day an old lady with a shopping bag, already filled with goods she had bought somewhere else, came to his shop to buy some light bulbs. His boss was standing in the middle of the shop and was already waiting behind the desk to serve the customer. He put all the light bulbs the old lady bought into a plastic bag, so that she finally left with two bags, one in each hand. But when she came to the door (at this time they didn't have sliding doors in their shop like it is usual in today's modern shops), his boss jumped to the entrance, opened the door with some enthusiasm and said "good bye" to the old lady.

He was amazed, although he had some doubts, because "why open the door for someone"? He or she should put one bag on the ground and..." But from that time on he also opened the door for their customers, which they appreciated very much, and he said to himself: "It's great what you can achieve with just a small gesture."

I'm quite sure that you have already had the same experience, maybe not as a salesperson, but probably as a customer, regardless of whether someone opened the door for you or you just wished someone would open the door for you.

But let's now assume that you are a manager and you are walking on the floor, together with some of your employees.

- *When did YOU in your position as a manager last open the door for someone, regardless of which position he or she is?*

I believe it's not a must that just the other colleagues have to open the doors for their bosses; it would also demonstrate a manager's human behaviour if it went the other way around.



My brother's company ran three shops in our home town. One day the management decided that they should sell sewing machines, and he said to me: "I hope you can imagine how I felt at that time?! I as a 16-year-old boy was supposed to sell sewing machines???"

So, what to do? **It was the management's decision, but he hated it, and the result was that he didn't sell anything.** "I complained to everyone who would listen" he said "about the high price of our machines compared to other machines on the market, about customers who requested different features than our machines offered and so on."

It was at the beginning of December when all the local shops in the city organized a Christmas trade fair. Their shop was also represented at this event, and of course their sewing machines. And he couldn't believe it: his boss was selling their sewing machines like hell. But what was his secret? He demonstrated how to sew to all the ladies who visited the fair. Can you imagine, a man sewing...

He was again so impressed that he immediately tried to sew buttonholes. For those readers who are not so familiar with sewing, please ask your wife, girlfriend or mum how difficult it is to sew buttonholes with a sewing machine.

Anyhow, **at the end of the fair my brother was THE "attraction" and all the females were standing around him wondering how a young man was sewing buttonholes** (by the way: it was the only thing he could do with a sewing machine).

Let's now translate this example into your business environment:

- *Would you be ready to do something similar? Something that is probably totally against your attitude, that you most likely hate or is maybe also beneath yourself...*
- *Would you as a bank manager for instance, try to sell some current accounts or credit cards on your cashier's desk just to get a better feeling for your customers or to understand your employees, "who have to sell these products according to your order", a little bit better?*

Those two examples demonstrate very well in my opinion what especially young managers should have in their minds before climbing up the career ladder: **their own philosophy of life, which should be translated into their daily business as well ... and which, by the way, you can't learn on some MBA courses or read in certain management books.**