

From excellence to greatness: expanding the definition of business success

by LuAnne Speeter

The other day, an astute friend of mine who offers consulting services to businesses expressed this thought:

“Everybody uses the word ‘excellence’ as a business goal. I like to use ‘greatness.’”

While I don’t necessarily think one precludes the other, I agree that a business that strives toward greatness perhaps has a more expanded, holistic vision than what excellence would imply. To me, business excellence reflects the strategies and tactics that help the company achieve – and even exceed – its goals for revenue, growth, return on investment – even customer and employee satisfaction and other benchmarks and measurements.

But for a business and its leaders to achieve greatness means they’ve stepped beyond the goals of the single corporate entity and into the business community, beyond a particular industry and into a broader business model, beyond the current fiscal year and into the future. Greatness carries a sense of legacy – that what was achieved, and those who achieved it, can be held up as an example for other businesses and will live on for others to emulate.

Greatness incorporates values that can be applied even beyond business – into our personal ethics, our relationships, our social responsibilities. Greatness doesn’t go out of style; it reveals a truth that transcends time, race and religious or political affiliation.

Most of all, greatness inspires others to live with integrity – that our day-to-day decisions, expressions and activities are a manifestation of a deep commitment to a greater good.

So what will it take to bring you and your business beyond excellence and into the realm of greatness?

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