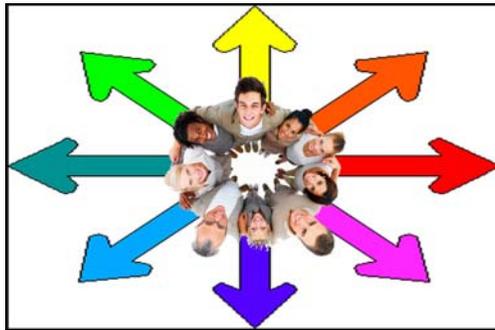


# See The Big Picture From The Inside<sup>1</sup>

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Many people in business today have a myopic focus on the bottom line. Of course, we should be concerned with the bottom line—it keeps us alive. But, we make a mistake when we put all of our focus on it.

Focusing on the bottom line is a *short-term* strategy, which definitely can boost profits in the short run. But, it does not guarantee profits in the long run.

Focusing on the *development and care of people* is a *long-term* strategy that builds a solid performance-based resource for increasing profits in the long run.

Your people are your most important resource, whether an efficient waiter in a restaurant, a highly trained nurse, a talented salesperson, or the conscientious porter who brings you your car in an auto repair facility.

Think about your experiences dining in a restaurant, going to a doctor's office, purchasing something in a department store, getting your car fixed. What stands out the most as you recall your experiences?

My guess is that it's the people with whom you dealt. The friendly, superb waiter who anticipated your every need. The patient, empathetic nurse who treated you with caring and understanding. The retail clerk who took the time to personally help you find exactly what you wanted. The service technician who carefully explained the problem needing repair on your car and got it done with no delay and quality workmanship.

My guess is that you return to those kinds of places for further services and purchases.

Nourish your people-potential. Focus on developing and satisfying your people and long-term profits will become a by-product instead of a goal.

This will be a challenge to you as a manager, if you have been reared in the traditional authoritarian, top-down style of management. Essentially, it calls for you to start from the center, *not* from the outside. Typically, managers focus from the *outside-in*. Their driving force is to please stockholders, to increase profits, to grow market-share. They often see their people as an expendable commodity used to get these things done. From their point of view, if Joe or Ginny doesn't work out in their jobs, replace them with someone else. But, above all, keep operating from an outside-in perspective.

If you are one of those traditional managers, I challenge you to change your view. See the Big Picture from the inside!

Change your driving force to putting your employees first. Care for them. Invest in developing and training them. Invest in their well-being. Invest in making every person see themselves as an important member of the company *family*.

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<sup>1</sup> From: <http://arniedahlke.com/timelytips.htm> —Please take a moment to look at Arnie's site: [www.arniedahlke.com](http://www.arniedahlke.com)

Employees who feel cared for, who feel important, who are fed new knowledge and trained in new skills, who feel that they belong to a family when working—these are employees who will go the extra mile, who will work more efficiently, who will serve customers with more sensitivity and caring, who will invent new processes and better ways of getting things done. A long-term investment in maximizing the potential of your people is a smart strategy for increasing your profits. *People make it happen.* Again, focus on people and long-term profits will become a by-product instead of a goal.

There is no better example of this strategy today than Southwest Airlines. As described in a delightful book by Kevin and Jackie Freiberg, at Southwest, from the CEO to the luggage handler, everyone knows that *people come first*:

“Southwest’s long-term customer satisfaction comes from service delivered from the heart, from choosing service over self-interest. Service is not the result of teaching employees to *act* like customers are important; it comes from employees who genuinely feel loved and who work in an environment that dignifies them by valuing their contributions. When employees feel they are being treated humanely, when *they* receive “legendary service,” they provide the kind of customer service for which Southwest Airlines is so well known. Perhaps this is why their willingness to serve is not an act but, rather, a true expression of the heart.”<sup>2</sup>

The long-term success of this philosophy is dramatically illustrated in these recent reports:<sup>3</sup>



**2005**  
Southwest Airlines launches its codeshare agreement with ATA Airlines, providing Southwest Customers access to more cities with more connections and generating almost \$50 million in annual revenue for the Company. Southwest announces its 32nd consecutive year of profitability, an industry record.

**2006**  
Southwest Airlines is ranked number one in customer satisfaction this year, as we add nonstop flights to Denver and begin service to the Washington-Dulles airport completely repealed in 2014, allowing us to have nonstop service from Dallas to any airport we serve.

**2007**  
We've been busy these past 37 years. And we promise that the next 37 will be just as fun-filled and exciting as the last. We've accomplished quite a bit, and along the way we've earned a title no other airline in the industry can claim: The only shorthaul, low-fare, high-frequency, point-to-point carrier in America. We are proud of our accomplishments, and it just goes to show that time really does fly when you're having fun!

Investing in their people, *looking at the big picture from the inside*, stimulated the financial growth of Southwest. This is a model for others and a lesson to learn.

But, there is one important caveat. Creating a people-focused culture, like Southwest did, must start from the top. If the people at the top of an organization do not place value on the nourishment of people potential, spreading that value throughout an organizational culture will be very difficult. The vision of the people at the top determines the focus of management in a company, which, in turn, determines how people are viewed and treated.

When people at the top do look at the big picture from the inside, change in the organizational culture can only take place through adversarial actions and revolutionary acts. When people at the top *do* view their futures from the inside, cultural change cascades throughout the organization, with a norm of cooperation instead of confrontation, with a self-initiated workforce instead of a manager-driven workforce, with a sense of eagerness and excitement instead of a sense of apathy and boredom.

***The end result is a more proactive workforce, united in the pursuit of growing a more successful organization, which can't help but grow profits.***

<sup>2</sup> NUTS! Southwest Airlines' Crazy Recipe for Business and Personal Success by Kevin Freiberg and Jackie Freiberg (Austin, Texas: Bard Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> From: [http://www.southwest.com/about\\_swa/airborne.html](http://www.southwest.com/about_swa/airborne.html)