

IT'S ALL ABOUT SHARING

Business lessons from a kids' holiday shopping spree

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A few months ago, I had the pleasure of going shopping with my kids. Since my parents and siblings live out of town, they sent checks to the kids and wanted me to have them buy whatever they wanted for their holiday gifts.

I tried to make the experience fun, exciting and, yes, a learning experience. The rules were pretty simple. OK, they were simple for me — perhaps not so simple for three kids under 11 years of age who want to do nothing but spend money and buy themselves some gifts.

The rules were:

- Each child gets to pick two stores he/she wants to shop in.
- Share with me the items you think you want to buy.
- Don't spend more than \$100.

See, I told you the rules were easy. As we started shopping, my oldest son bought a few items at Best Buy, and then spent a little more at Academy Sports and Walmart. Our next stop was Target, which was the store all of them wanted to shop in. As each gift went in the basket, I added up in my head what each child had spent. Then my daughter jumped into the shopping cart and started to play Barbie Dolls before we had paid for everything. I had this feeling that she

might be over her allowance and was bracing myself for a challenging time at the register.

Stand firm

As luck would have it, she went over by \$4.88. My first thought was, "Oh no — now what do I do? Give in or hold my position?" Decision time needed to be quick and firm. My answer was, "Baby, you went over by a few dollars, so which of the gifts would you like to not include in your purchase?"

As I was bracing for a meltdown and for her to start throwing things at me, my oldest son said, "Dad, I have a few extra dollars left out of my money and would be happy to share it with my sister so she doesn't have to return anything!" Wow! I didn't expect that response. My daughter lit up like a Christmas tree, and I couldn't have been more proud of my son.

Share year-round

My kids were sharing at the holidays! What a great message. Isn't business about that? Sharing 24/7/365?

- If you have a great idea, share it with your boss.
- If you've found a new way to do something and save time, share it with your colleagues.
- If you've had success negotiating a deal with a partner, share it with your business development team.

■ If you didn't win a project but your prospect gave you some incredible feedback, share it with other salespeople.

■ If your last proposal included some cutting-edge technology, share it.

■ If your profit margin on your largest account is amazing, share it.

I could go on and on with this list, but the bottom line is that sharing might be the most important thing a company and its staff can do day in and day out.

Adopt healthy habits

I would suggest that most successful companies have staff that share all the time, and companies that don't share a lot wind up suffering as a result. When I asked a few industry contacts about sharing, a number of them said it isn't something that happens too often within their company.

So I ask you:

- Does your company have an environment that shares?
- Do you highlight when people share with other team members?
- Do you reward people who share?
- Do you feel your company is much better off when everyone is sharing successes and failures?

If you don't, maybe you should take a look at how you could incorporate that into your 2012 strategy. <<



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